

Art in America

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

ESTER PARTEGAS

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FOXY PRODUCTION

by *brian boucher*



NEW YORK Ester Partegàs's third exhibition with Foxy Production, "More World," marshaled various mediums to a pointed and funny statement in keeping with some of her customary themes. Past endeavors have focused on the refuse of modern consumer societies; a 2004 work shown at the same gallery, depicting a massive bag of trash towering over a tree, is sardonically titled *Civilization is Overrated*. She has also explored consumption and its discontents in more sorrowful tones. My favorite previous piece, from 2003, is a hand-drawn cash-register receipt for purchased "items" that form a confession: "Some/Days/I/Feel/So/Worthless." Born in Barcelona in 1972, Partegàs now lives in Brooklyn.

On this occasion, the main room was hung with black-and-white wallpaper depicting a chain-link fence, ragged small trees and the odd bit of trash, placing the viewer in a gray, postindustrial no-man's-land. All the wall works in the show thus appeared against that background. Offering an apparent escape in one instance was the 6-foot-wide backlit phototransparency *You Are Here (Lightbox)*, 2006–10, showing a seemingly unblemished forest, invitingly in color against the drab wallpaper. As the press release reveals, though, it's a photo of the boards surrounding a construction site in China—a countrified smokescreen for runaway development.

Three floor sculptures, each titled *Overcast* (all 2010), mimic potted shrubs, ranging from about 3 to 6 feet high. Little leaves in unlikely colors like pink or fluorescent yellow peek out from under plastic bags or a tarp—all meticulously crafted in polyurethane, down to the clothespins and duct tape that fasten the plastic in place—perhaps applied to protect them from winter weather (as asserted by the press release) or, as they appeared to me, wrapping them up to be thrown away like so much rubbish. So long, nature!

Two inkjet prints, each about 4 feet high, bear the deadpan title *Organized Fries* (both 2007–10). On bright backgrounds, dozens of chunky french fries are laid out in neat rows like hatch marks or a high-calorie Sol LeWitt—though the title, with its echo of mob crime, suggests they have a more sinister objective. Also focusing on everyday items are three works in acrylic and graphite on paper, each titled with a variation of "Studies on Mysticism" (all 2010), which consist of designs for candy packaging, but without brand names or other text. Each features abstract areas of color or cosmic motifs like starbursts, grandiosely marketing a sugar rush with the visual language of a spiritual experience. Shown in a darkened back room, meanwhile, a silent 1 1/2-minute video, *Ghost* (2009), depicts garbage-strewn pavement and a large puddle whose surface reflects an electronic billboard for the iPod. Here, the gadget can only call to mind the endless stream of disposable junk with which we keep ourselves amused.

Earlier in the fall, at Santa Monica's Christopher Grimes Gallery, Partegàs mounted a similar show titled "Less World." By contrast, the Foxy show seems to ask, "How could there be more world, anyway?" If our answer is to create more stuff, Partegàs implies, we may just drown in our diversions.

Photo: View of Ester Partegàs's exhibition "More World," 2010; at Foxy Production.