

ARTFORUM

Philadelphia
Tim Portlock
LOCKS GALLERY
600 Washington Square South
June 3–July 15

Tim Portlock's first solo show at Locks Gallery, "Ash and Gold" (a remix of "Cash 4 Gold," as American an image as the Hudson River, Air Jordans, and McDonald's), consists of nine large-scale archival pigment prints—fictional worlds resembling Philadelphia or San Bernardino—and two videos that displace the hills of the sublime into the strip malls and row houses of the "subprime and beautiful," to quote Fred Moten. In these urban topoi we see sneaker-chandeliers



Memorial, 2015, archival pigment print, 54 x 72 in.

dangling from power lines, busted sofas hallowing street corners, and a yellow amorphous inflatable dancer that likely once adorned a pawnshop. With mesmeric colors and shadows, Portlock envisions bankrupt cities as beautiful. A Gulf War–brown highway halos a lavender-hued mountain in *Memorial, 2015*, where relic power lines and a gas station are enshrined along with a paint bucket of red roses, cognac bottles, candles stickered with the Virgen, and a flock of silver heart-shaped balloons, which guides us to a wild wind-blown paper stream high in the air. The mood: elegiac Afrofuturism. Folks were just here. America massacres its dreamers. But could we be seeing the afterburn of insurrection?

Portlock brings the haptic to the surfaces of his laborious computer constructions that reveal the conventions of nineteenth-century American landscape painting. The presence of the hand in paint strokes conjugates with high resolution here. Portlock supplants pastoral antiblack national romance with luminous post-postindustrial urban worlds and shows American gentrification's deeper roots: Emancipation's false promise of freedom. These digital paintings eschew the collapsing of historical differences in phenomena like #WeAreOrlando (#NoYouNot). From the vantage of souls in flight, "Ash and Gold" holds slavery and its paradoxically beautiful afterlives in subprime debt art, AIDS art, black inner-city landscapes.

— Rachel Ellis Neyra

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