



*Glitter Island World*, Mixed media and robot, variable dimensions, 2011.

# *Wish you were here*

**a solo show by Sam Mogelonsky**

August 31st - September 24th, 2011

Reception: September 8th from 6pm - 9pm



The Red Head Gallery, Suite 115, 401 Richmond Street West, Toronto, ON, M5V 3A8  
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# Sentiment and Souvenir

A response to Sam Mogelonsky's *Wish you were here*, by Anastasia Hare

Accumulations of crafted and reclaimed objects form the crux of Sam Mogelonsky's artistic practice. She transports her viewer into spectacular fantasy worlds that are inhabited by small replicas. Expanding on her fluency in the use of the miniature, the works showcased in *Wish you were here* developed out of the artist's exploration of souvenirs, and the personal and cultural narratives associated with collected objects. She communicates these ideas through a language of humourous materials, exaggerated scale, colour and lustre, and robotic elements.

By integrating over-the-top artificial surfaces and manufactured objects into her crafted landscapes, Mogelonsky raises our attention to the desire and imagination -and constructed reality- inherent in all travel narratives.



The exhibition begins with a neon text piece, *Wish you were here* (2011). Simultaneously reminiscent of advertisement signs and cursive penmanship, it references the cliché last words written on the typical postcard message, which express affinity absent from a travel experience and offer the recipient inclusion. Though it is mass-produced, the postcard serves to recall personal memories and promote travel to the depicted site.

In *On Longing* (1993) Susan Stewart considers the souvenir and the collection as devices for the objectification of desire.<sup>1</sup> The miniature forms serve to claim the beauty of the monuments represented, and are collected to attest and safeguard memories of firsthand experiences.

Through representations and misrepresentations of places, one already has anticipations for one's encounters. Mogelonsky plays with these travel devices by presenting limited edition postcards, *Greetings from* (2011), and snow-globes, *Snowy Islands* (2011), which can fit in the palm of a hand. These works depict the island dioramas showcased in the gallery against stock photography skies, and the text, "greetings from..." ...an indeterminate location -*Glitter Island World* (2011), a constellation of metallic islands that sprout glossy and brightly coloured plastic flowers and miniatures modelled on natural phenomena. Displayed on a shelf and postcard rack typical of tourist souvenir shops, these works function as marketing for Mogelonsky's bizarre expedition, in which the scale and

fragility of the miniature and artificial facades become metaphors for real world constructions.

The sculptures emerged through Mogelonsky's intuitive approach to manipulating materials into abstract islands. The topography of *Glitter Island World* (2011) is composed of chicken wire and expandable foam, and covered with plaster bandage, tissue paper, metallic paint, glitter, and an assortment of handcrafted objects and manufactured stuff. These materials have 'low-grade', 'childlike', and 'DIY' connotations, further emphasized by an island which moves sporadically, circling, and weaving through the gallery.

From an aerial perspective, the tourist discovers a garden composed of plastic grass and flowers, miniature deciduous trees, and hand-made clay roses; a waterfall of silver and blue tinsel; a cave of crystals and beads; a volcano erupting glowing wire lava; and a rock formation containing toy dinosaur fossils. Like souvenir collections, the result is an odd mixture which strides beauty, sentiment, and abjection. The choice of materials, small scale and ground-level presentation retains imaginative child-like qualities of construction and intricate details of narrative associated with play, collection, and appropriation. By constructing utopian islands out of an assemblage of exaggerated scales, and crafted and manufactured objects, Mogelonsky counteracts a promise of a trip to paradise, and instead, creates a scene that resembles a strange hallucination.

The play of fantasy and reality is also fundamental to *Stone Roses* (2010), an alabaster sculpture that appears to have supernaturally weathered into a bouquet. This piece offers the viewer another enchanted destination to write home about.

The handwritten message and the photograph pictured on the front of the postcard are never able to capture the totality of personal experience, which is tinted with desire and illusion. Piled ashore, *Message in a bottle* (2011), a series of over one hundred and fifty miniature transparent resin casts, represent the secret sentiments that never get written and the messages that are not received at their destinations. From under the drift an app on a tablet emits pulsing light, a message in Morse code. By pairing new and outmoded systems of communication, Mogelonsky ultimately denotes similarity and continuity.

Other modes of hermetic meaning and obsolete communication are portrayed in *The molten word* (2011), a formerly decomposed wax typewriter. Cast in the commemorative medium of bronze, it withstands time and the elements, and represents the constructed reality of narrative.

Deceivably light-hearted, playful and naive, the exhibition, *Wish you were here*, emphasizes the capacity to endow objects with history and sentiment, and create narrative out of sequences, memories, and anticipations.



*Wish you were here*, Neon and acrylic, 36" x 6," 2001.

**Sam Mogelonsky** is an emerging Toronto-based artist. She holds a BFAH from Queen's University and an MFA from Central Saint Martin's College of Art, London, UK. She has participated in international residencies, including the Florence Trust Studio Residency Program, London, UK, the Château de la Napoule Art Foundation Residency in Mandelieu de la Napoule, France and A.I.R. Casa Marles in Llorenç de Penedes, Spain. She has exhibited in Canada, the UK, Ireland, and Portugal, with exhibitions in artist-run, commercial and publicly funded galleries. Her work is held in Canadian and international collections. Please visit [www.sammogelonsky.com](http://www.sammogelonsky.com)

**Anastasia Hare** is an emerging Toronto-based writer and curator. She holds a BFA in Art History and Studio Art from Concordia University, and an MA in Art History with a Graduate Diploma in Curatorial Studies in Visual Culture from York University. Hare is a member of the board of directors of Studio Béluga, Montréal.



*The molten word*, Bronze, 14" x 11" x 8," 2011.



*Message in a bottle*, Resin and tablet, 19" x 19" x 7," 2011.



*Greetings from*, Postcards, 6" x 4" each, 2011.



*Stone Roses*, Alabaster, 10" x 8" x 5," 2010.

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