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Critic's Pick, October 2009

Rachel Foullon

NICELLE BEAUCHENE GALLERY

163 Eldridge Street

September 9–October 18



View of "Rachel Foullon," 2009.

"Grab a Root and Growl," Rachel Foullon's solo debut, features various oversize garments sewn from dyed canvases and hung from enormous nails stuck in stained wooden moldings attached to the walls with bolts. A floor-length blue neckerchief drops down from a slanting orange bar in *Independence (Everything They Needed)* (all works 2009); in *The Wrong Place, the Wrong Time, in a Sort of Rapture*, a rolled-up red apron is pulled between two gray uprights; knotted sleeves in *Only 4 Degrees More than the Temperature Outside* suspend a huge pale green shirt from a Y-shaped blue structure. The arrangement of the constructions on the walls faintly recalls the framing of wooden barns, while the utilitarian character of those few articles of clothing we can identify also points to a nostalgic evocation of the good farmer folk of yesteryear. Add to that the bleached and faded look of the dyed fabric (although equally reminiscent of acid-washed denim), and titles such as *Great Plains, Gold Dust*, for a cruciform configuration sporting an elaborate if unrecognizable, similarly hued piece of apparel, and it becomes clear that the artist wants to invoke the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression, an apt parallel, perhaps, for our own time of economic crisis.



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Yet Foullon's installation does not summon the ghosts of hard times and bygone agrarian lifestyles so much as it conjures an appreciation of formal decisions and sculptural finesse. The wooden moldings, impeccably milled from cedar, fit the dimensions of the gallery walls perfectly. A rack hanging from the ceiling, titled *We Were All Participants*, holds stacks of tinted lumber, as if more colored scaffolds for airing out the laundry could be constructed at will. The tints themselves are lovely, muted, carefully calibrated, and coordinated, one with another. Despite the air of Oldenburgian Pop lent by the scale of the sewn pieces, not to mention the nails, the overall effect remains far more abstract than representational, far more playful than social realist, far more Richard Tuttle than Dorothea Lange. The strange juxtaposition of those two names may be Foullon's sculptures' greatest coup and provocation.

– Joseph R. Wolin