

Jeremiah Hulsebos-Spofford

HYDE PARK ART CENTER

5020 S. Cornell Ave.

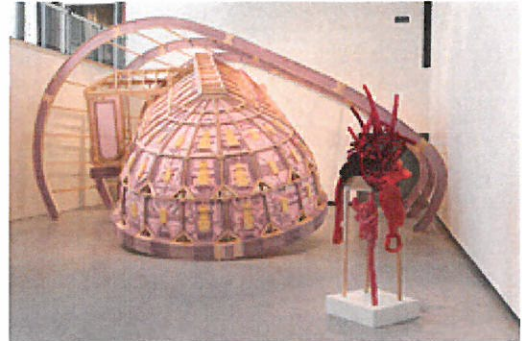
April 14–July 28

In “Hall of Khan,” Jeremiah Hulsebos-Spofford makes daring use of a vast gallery at Chicago’s Hyde Park Art Center. “Hall of Khan” is presented as a classical statue court, exploded into a carnival of perilously propped—and sometimes living—sculptures. The artist has updated conventional monumental statuary with tottering assemblages culled from cast and dyed urethane foam, pink polystyrene, lumber, glue, and a horse that occasionally shows up in the gallery to don the artist’s customized saddlery. The total spectacle turns a tradition of ceremonial civic statuary on its head. The artist’s installation suggests that the living-dead, bronze trophies that supervise our streets and squares must be rebuffed. Among those newly honored in Chicago by the artist are Genghis Khan, Joan of Arc, Italo Calvino, and the brand Polo Ralph Lauren, which was represented at the exhibition’s opening reception by a nude artist who posed as a jockey, bareback on a palomino. The movie *White Men Can’t Jump* (1992) also gets its own anthropomorphic monument here: Propped on lumber and Nike tennis shoes at the exhibition’s entrance, the abstracted figurine appears like a nervous effigy caught at the crossroads between history and entertainment.

Scaled to the size of a studio apartment, a replica of the 1851 Crystal Palace dangles from suspension cables. The quirky pink architectural folly, titled *Hall*, pitches dramatically into the space as if crash-landing from a distant dimension. Integrated into the structure are urethane blocks cast from the bricks of nearby university buildings, thereby conflating London’s and Chicago’s Hyde Parks. The bricks, like batteries, activate this replica relic as a sort of cultural time machine.

The artist’s hyperhandmade construction technique signals his intention to create a new type of public monument that is vital, urgent, and a little bit complicated, as life tends to be. With exposed facture and energetic mechanics, the artist’s mutant parade of sculptures asserts that every person is a seat of power.

— Jason Fournberg



View of “Jeremiah Hulsebos-Spofford,” 2013. Foreground: *Maid*, 2012. Background: *Hall*, 2013.