

Liz Glynn

PITZER ART GALLERIES

In her exhibition “No Second Troy,” Liz Glynn made her own archaeological dig through the epic chronicles of “Priam’s Treasure”—the supposed gold of Troy discovered by the German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann in 1873—in order to trace (forward and in reverse) the movement of the people, objects, ideas, identities, and truths implicated in the story and its historical residue. Taken from Schliemann’s excavation site at Hissarlik (in modern-day Turkey), this resplendent cache of axes, pots, jewelry, and other such items was displayed in Berlin until Allied bombing campaigns forced its removal to underground bunkers, from which the Soviet Army seized the lot in 1945. After the war, a set of replicas was produced that are on view today at the city’s Neues Museum.

As vessels of symbolic value and fleeting power, these false riches—mere copies of relics that indeed never belonged to King Priam—are of great interest to Glynn, who, for this show, fabricated a full collection of her own from brass-, bronze-, and gold-plated papier-mâché. She displayed these small mimetic objects on double-sided plinths that approximate the actual vitrines used to hold the German copies. Surprisingly handsome, Glynn’s gilt items appeared in two cabinets, titled *Trojan Surrogates (Neues Museum Case I)* and *Trojan Surrogates (Neues Museum Case II)*, both 2011–12. The translucence of the artifacts’ golden coating subtly revealed the newsprint substrate beneath. A nearby sculpture, *Kreutzberg Hoard*, 2011, had been made using a similar technique, but rather than shredded wastepaper, produce served

Liz Glynn, *Kreutzberg Hoard*, 2011, shopping cart armature, produce, gold leaf, acrylic, 36 x 12 x 10".



as the material support. To this base Glynn had applied gold leaf and gold acrylic paint before strapping the bounty onto the sort of collapsible shopping cart typical of Turkish marketplaces. As the fruits and vegetables rotted, the organic armature shrank from its golden casing, leaving behind wrinkled ingots. Alluding to the ongoing friction between Germans and Turkish immigrants, this work was one of several on view that connected the story of Schliemann’s findings and their subsequent displacements to contemporary instances of one culture exploiting the resources (namely, goods and labor) of another.

While such sculptural critiques of current German-Turkish affairs were oblique and perhaps failed to communicate all that they could have, Glynn’s three videos, by contrast, were quite resonant. Rooted in conceptually driven actions (arguably the artist’s strength), *Untitled Epic Poem (after Homer on the shores of Gallipoli)*, 2011, shows Glynn standing on the beach—the shores of ancient Troy barely visible in the distance—

dropping a series of fabric signs into the water, each bearing a violent or forceful phrase from the *Iliad*: MAN-RUINING WAR, A DISMAL SCENE, THIS, LIVE FOREVER DEATHLESS, WITHOUT AGE. Here, Glynn inscribes Homer’s account of the Trojan War onto the site of a more recent battle, the First World War’s deadly Gallipoli campaign, from which the Turks emerged victorious. Yet Glynn’s poetic but straightforward action is more didactic than reverent, simply connecting one point in history to another, attempting to inhabit both.

The “pilgrimage” depicted in the video *Trojan Return*, 2011, is equally illustrative, with the intention of physically, if only symbolically, bringing the story full circle. This twenty-one-minute work follows Glynn’s journey from the Neues Museum and its cases of faux Trojan treasures to the Mediterranean grounds where Schliemann unearthed the original trove. There, Glynn ducks a railing, enters the excavation site, and buries in the grass five surrogate objects of her own making. It is a humble gesture of repatriation that at once acknowledges the mutability of history and, very efficiently, the pretense of the museum as the principal repository for historical—and often nationalistic—production.

—Catherine Taft