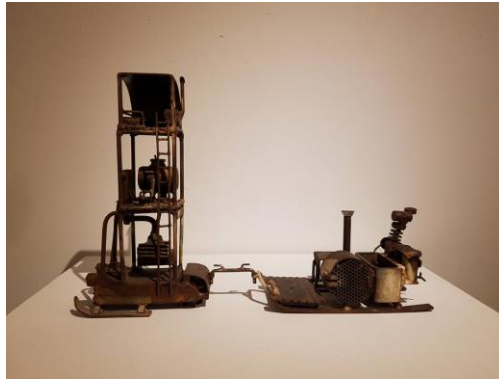


DOUGLAS MILLER
on
Jason Lake's *Trench Laundry Service*



Jason Lake's steel and repurposed metal sculpture, "Trench Laundry Service," is about two and a half feet in length, three inches wide, and a foot and a half high. The piece resembles an imagined steam powered laundry service vehicle, mounted on sleds. This month, it sits on your left as you enter Soup's middle gallery from the front door, and will be there until the end of July. Of all the pieces present, it grabbed me the most. Without describing every element, let me explain why.

Craftsmanship: When you look at the sculpture, you'll see that the base is in two parts—each a sled, linked in by a metal bar. From the base of the first sled extends a ladder, flanked by girders, that link to platforms, creating three stories. The artist has crafted—in meticulous detail—an engine room, a pilot's room, and a small bedroom. None of the stories are of even height; the bedroom, at the top, is the smallest, the most cramped, and the darkest. A quilt is etched into the bed. Similar detailing can be found on the next sled, which includes the laundry service equipment: tanks, chimney stack, etc. All the repurposed elements (unrecognizable to me on their origin) seem to have been painstakingly soldered on.

Overall Composition: Stepping back allows you to appreciate how repeating elements balance an asymmetrical piece. The rounded top and the smaller repeating drums on the first sled are balanced by the single large drum on the right; the tall girders and ladder on the left are balanced by the short chimney stack on the right. In addition, the height of the first sled is balanced out by the greater length of and width of the second sled. All these elements work together to bring balance to a piece that (given the subject matter) should be asymmetrical.

Narrative: In the words of a friend, the piece is very narrative, meaning that it encourages you to participate by imagining a scene or a context in which you can place the piece. This is easy to do, as the artist's craftsmanship is superb—it's intricate like a doll house. But comparisons with bourgeois' playthings stop there; after all, *Trench Laundry Service* at a human scale would be the size of a war machine from the new *Mad Max* film, though (I thought) more dour and subdued, as it hulks and spews through a future wasteland.

It's craftsmanship, composition, and narrative qualities make it a fine piece of art, but none of this explains why you'd find *Trench Laundry Service* in SOUP. Perhaps the Director's selection was informed by the history of steel sculpture. The work of metal artists that I'm familiar with—and truthfully, that's very few—is usually immense, indomitable, elegant, spare, monochromatic, and abstract. Like Richard Serra's "Band," they take up the whole room. In contrast, Lake's piece values narrative over abstraction and detail over monumentality, making it an interesting counterpoint to other most famous works in the genre. Whether that is the case or not, it's at least an intriguing idea.

Jason Lake's Portfolio
www.jason-lake.com/

Thank you Doug.

Sincerely,

SOUP experimental