

praz - delavallade

Amy O'Neill

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Happy Trails

A queen's crown, a red rose, and a gold star can be read as symbols of good fortune.

These three signs are presented as abandoned fragments, fallen off of parade floats from the 1960s. They are part of a series of objects titled Parade Float Graveyard.

Two large-scale pencil drawings on canvas, entitled *Rose Queens* and *Happy Trails* define the context of the fragments. Documentary images of floats from past Pasadena Rose Bowl Parades were used as source materials for the rendering of these "memorial drawings." To memorialise parade floats aims to highlight their status as very temporary monuments of popular vernacular culture. The float fragments were made after details taken from the drawings. The gold star refers to the 6-point gigantic spur which can be seen in *Happy Trails*, the drawing depicting a pair of boot/floats sauntering down the street, while the red rose and the queen's crown are accessories found in *Rose Queens*, a parade float originally designed as a showcase for beauty pageant contestants.

For the past 113 years, the Rose Bowl Parade has been held on New Year's Day in Pasadena, California. The parade's organizers original intention was to show off their home's mild winter weather. As one organizer phrased it: "Let's hold a festival to tell the world about our paradise." It is recorded in Pasadena's Historical Library that another of the organizers had visited Nice and was inspired by the Battle of the Flowers.

Rose Bowl Parade floats are also remarkable because of their decorative guise so ridiculously whimsical in contrast to the propaganda they carry. A float of flowers entered in the 1968 Rose Bowl Parade by the Fraternal order of Odd Fellas and Rebekahs and titled *Hark, Hark, the Ark* is described in the event's official program as: "A depiction of Noah's great adventure to save the animal kingdom from 40 days and 40 nights of rain." The ark was originally covered in white chrysanthemums, pink chrysanthemums covered the roof, and a blaze of red roses covered the deck: An archaic fundamentalist biblical story dressed up as an oversized cuddly plush toy! Another monumental float, this time by Kodak, depicting *America the Beautiful* (1977) portrayed idyllic scenes of American family life on a rotating band that mimics a film. Each scene – presented as a photographic frame and devoted to a particular family value – is made up of organic materials (one was created with onion seeds). Last and most ironically, Union Oil Company of California once presented, in 1968, a revolving globe of 8,000 pink roses entitled *A World of Adventure*...

Amy O'Neill / November 2004