

# Eleven Rivington

## Art Review:

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March 2009

### Future Greats

### Ishmael Randall-Weeks

By Jonathan T.D. Neil

One could chalk it up to my background in, and so weakness for, architecture, but it is not every artist who invokes the legacy of at least one of that quartet of high modernist masters—Mies, Aalto, Terragni and, of course, Corb—who manages to pay homage to, while extricating himself from, the suffocating weight of that architecture's worldview, one which took as gospel the idea of 'making' one's own reality. But Ishmael Randall-Weeks, a Peruvian based in Lima, treats that legacy with both a seriousness and a lightness that one has come to expect from the best artists hailing from South and Latin America—where, as we're wont to forget, Modernism found some of its most fertile ground. A recent series of Randall-Weeks's untitled photo-transfer drawings return to some of Le Corbusier's masterworks, namely his

Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles, France, and to the Palace of Assembly and Secretariat Building for Chandigarh, India (as well as to the Carpenter Center on Harvard University's campus, one of Corb's duds). The transfer technique alters the images of the brutalist architecture into rather delicate surfaces that Randall-Weeks then scores and cuts, creating both literal and suggested interventions. That such architectural traditions are present to the artist's mind is equally evident in other collages that draw upon work by Oscar Niemeyer and upon Lima's Palacio Municipal, a mid-twentieth-century recreation of Peru's colonial past.

But it is important to remember that what Randall-Weeks traffics in here is images, not architecture, and this is what speaks to the large-scale constructions that make up another facet of his practice. Pieces such as *Progreso* (2006), *Capsule* (2006) and *Nomad* (2007), all conveyances—carts, carriages, chariots—of one sort or another, invoke the mobility that artists such as Randall-Weeks (like the images of Corb's masterworks of modernist architecture) have come to rely upon. For three or four years now he has moved from residency programme—Maine, Ecuador, New York, Bolivia, Mexico—to residency programme. And as opposed to trying to defy this itinerancy, Randall-Weeks has embraced it; his work is of its place, we might say, given that its materials and ideas are contingent upon wherever the artist happens to find himself that week or month. Little wonder, then, that his most recent work, to be exhibited at Eleven Rivington in New York this April, in the artist's first solo exhibition in New York, has begun to resemble landscapes (carved from stacks of book pages and architectural plans) viewed from 30,000 feet.



Ishmael Randall Weeks, *Balances/Tensiones*, 2006, rocks from the Vilcanota River, used tricycle, cables, steel 227 x 436 x 122 cm