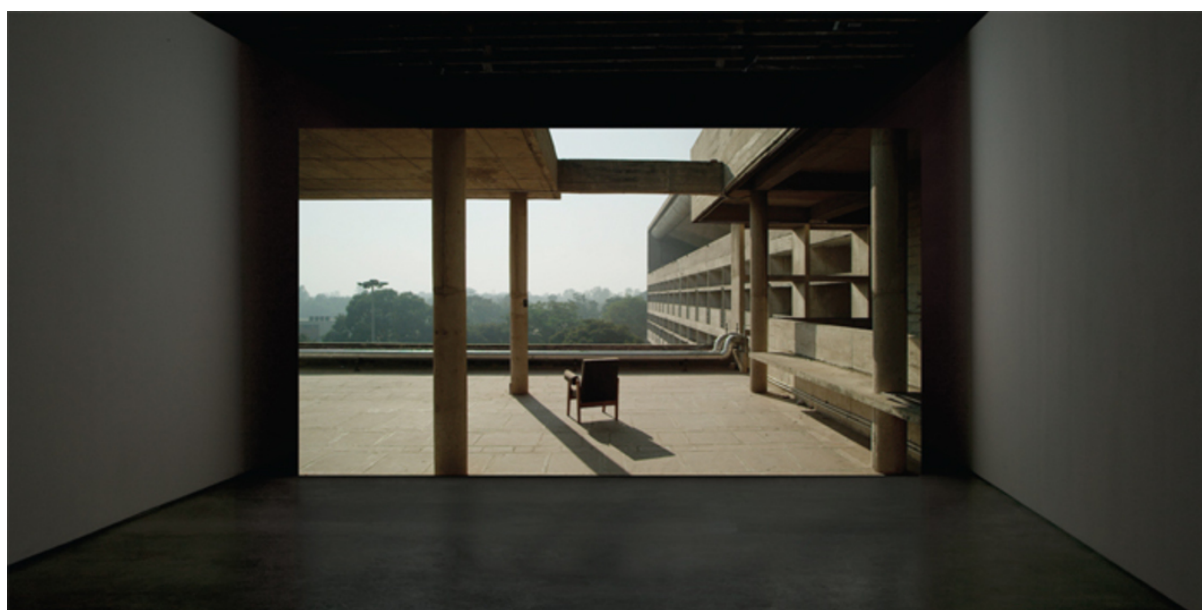


THOMAS DANE GALLERY

O'Neill-Butler, Lauren. 'Amie Siegel at Simon Preston Gallery', *Artforum*, Vol.52, No.4; online. December 2013.

ARTFORUM

Amie Siegel at Simon Preston Gallery



Amie Siegel, *Provenance*, 2013, HD-video projection, color, sound, 40 minutes 30 seconds.

Provenance, 2013, Amie Siegel's new video and the linchpin of her recent exhibition in New York, focuses on furniture pieces designed by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret for their utopian building project in the northwestern Indian city of Chandigarh, tracking these sofas and stools as they travel from India to the high-end homes of collectors in Europe and the United States. The video progresses in a counterintuitive fashion. Rather than start with the furniture's origin, Siegel begins with its destination, and then moves backward in time through each stage of the voyage. The work's first images are long, elegant tracking shots of stools, chairs, and sofas in the homes and salons of the collectors, as well as aboard a lavish yacht. Next, Siegel shows the furniture being sold at auction houses, photographed for the auction catalogues, being restored in workshops. Finally, there are shots of the furniture being hauled onto cargo-shipping containers and moved through ports, and, lastly, in situ at Le Corbusier's sprawling, dilapidated complex in Chandigarh.

There is a striking difference between the way the furniture is treated in the West, where we see it restored and tastefully positioned in cloistered homes, and in Chandigarh, where it is a banal component of workers' everyday office environments. In India, the chairs and tables are heaped in storage areas, or languish on rooftops, or are piled with papers and files. In one beautifully composed shot, workers stare at their computer screens while sitting on brand-new generic neon-green-and-black chairs. It feels as if these laborers could be anywhere in India, until we see one of Le Corbusier's modernist seats positioned off to the side.

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In a second video, *Circuit*, 2013, Siegel portrays the “Cyclorama-Evolution of Life,” a natural-history display in Chandigarh’s Government Museum and Art Gallery, with one long 360-degree take. Here, Siegel pays close attention to Chandigarh’s past by highlighting a sense of the historical. A third work points to the art market in which *Provenance* itself moves. Before entering the gallery’s screening room, visitors encountered *Proof (Christie’s 19 October, 2013)*, a page from a catalogue for a then-upcoming auction. It announces that Siegel’s video was available at a Christie’s sale in London just after the close of her show, and thus underscores the fact that *Provenance*, like the antique furniture it documents, is itself an object circulating in a marketplace.

While addressing the market’s role in deciding which objects will be preserved and which won’t, *Provenance* also makes an effort to anthropomorphize its subject (particularly during the moments when a chair “models” for its photographer). In one of the video’s most striking scenes, a restorer labors over a black sofa. He shreds the upholstery, almost violently, leaving behind a spare wood frame (it is hard not to feel a pang of empathy for the forlorn-looking object), and moments after that, we see a stacked pile of similar black sofas in storage on a roof at Chandigarh. At both sites, the furniture seems vulnerable. Siegel’s ability to invest these shots of inanimate objects with such compelling drama, pathos, and emotion is ultimately a testament to her keen grasp of craft. But this isn’t quite a study of the social life of things; most of all, *Provenance* leaves the viewer wondering how people, too, are subject to opaque markets and habits that determine what is of value, and what isn’t.

<https://www.artforum.com/print/reviews/201310/amie-siegel-44080>