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Jack Hanley Gallery, Los Angeles, USA

In 1954 Ann Elizabeth Hodges of Sylacauga, Alabama, was taking a nap on her living-room couch when a grapefruit-sized rock crashed through the roof and hit her. The rock, which had descended into Earth's atmosphere from outer space, produced a fireball so bright it was visible in the skies over three states. Miraculously, Hodges survived its impact. Her roof and console radio had absorbed most of the blow, leaving her with large, black contusions on her arm and hip, and lasting, if minor, fame: she is the only person in recorded history to have been hit by a meteorite.

Barnett Newman once claimed that, 'the subject matter of creation is chaos'. Will Rogan's recent exhibition, entitled 'Turning Moments into Memories, Moment after Moment after Moment', gave Newman's credo a cosmic twist. Taking Hodges' tale as his centre of gravity, Rogan arranged a loose constellation of artefacts in the gallery space, including photographs, framed magazine accounts of the event and sculptural objects; these fragments evoked the story tangentially as often as they cited it explicitly. Known for his photographs and video works of 'found situations' in the urban landscape, Rogan was drawn to Hodges' story because of its incongruous conjunction of the everyday and the fantastic; domestic details – the afternoon nap, the smashed radio – co-exist alongside the unlikely meeting of a suburban woman and calamitous fireball from outer space. The mundane seems to colonize the fantastic

in telling the tale: isn't it funny that someone might describe an extraterrestrial projectile as 'grapefruit-sized'?

The centrepiece of the show was *Galaxy* (2005), a pinball machine with its glazed playboard blacked out so that, once the silver balls were in motion, they bounced around out of sight and came rocketing towards the flippers without warning. The game's celestial graphics built on Rogan's theme of galactic randomness: 'No other pinball has a stronger gravitational pull!' it exclaimed. It was an elegant metaphor for Hodges' story but also pointed to the way that such games aim to represent our control over contingency, symbolically to regulate accident, chance and inevitable death. Without being able to see the game's board, our play is precarious if not nightmarishly pointless, and every squeeze of the flippers is a shot in the dark. A series of seven mixed-media works, 'Life & All of its Promise' (2005), took this bleak approach even further. A billowing cloud of erasure split from appropriated photographs of Ann Hodges' damaged ceiling, consuming her living-room in a fit of celestial pique.

Rogan's world-view is not always so dark. Several photographs in the exhibition offered a giddy proliferation of found motifs from Sylacauga, ciphers of synchronicity, connection and serendipity rather than futility. In them aesthetic form seemed to appear from the result of the most aimless of human activities. (Here Rogan's practice echoes Ellsworth Kelly's photography in the 1960s.) Bouncing a rubber ball against a white wall produces a chaotic representation of a solar



Will Rogan
Bruse
2005
Magazine pages, metal
36×51×51cm

system (*Sylacauga #1*, 2005); a red Voyager SUV (not coincidentally the name of a NASA spacecraft) nestles perfectly in a queer architectural alcove (*Pocket*, 2005); a yellow book with the title *Abstract Art* is marked with coffee stains that reproduce the plotted orbits and erratic vectors of an astronomy diagram.

Bruse (2005) was the exhibition's most indelible image, not least because it addressed the vulnerability of the particular human body at the centre of the story. Rogan opened a magazine on a small white table to a full-page photograph of Hodges prone on a hospital bed, eyes closed, a piteous Alabaman Olympia. A doctor leans over her thick body and pulls away a sheet; he exposes her nasty wound, passing evidence of her place in history and the notional centre around which the show revolves. From the doctor's curled hand emerges a thin stand that bears another copy of the same picture, cut and folded into the prismatic shape of the rock itself: a gift for a woman who died 30 years ago. Rogan's empathy is unexpectedly beautiful: here his formal games of recursion and coincidence collapse in on themselves in the elliptical shape of one woman's bruise. Catastrophe is reined in to form: the impact of the meteor becomes the tiny click of the camera's shutter.

Rogan's photography is frequently discussed in terms of the poetry of everyday life, but, as often, he seems to discover in the everyday the traces of abstract or scientific systems. If Newman was right about the nature of chaos, then Rogan's achievement is his ability to imagine order into this accidental world.

Julian Myers

Christian Philipp Müller
Vergessene Zukunft?
(Forgotten Future)
(detail)
1992–2005
Mixed media
Dimensions variable



Will Rogan