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## Camilo Ontiveros in Miracle Mile by Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer

### *I Want Your Washing Machine*

Steve Turner Contemporary  
 6026 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles,  
 CA 90036

July 18, 2009 - August 15, 2009



Old, beat up, and broken, many with deep scratches and nicks in their white or ochre enamel paint, thirteen washing machines and dryers in various states of disrepair cluster around the crisp, white walls of the gallery. Camilo Ontiveros amassed this collection of tired appliances in the weeks leading up to this, his first solo gallery exhibition, through brightly colored bi-lingual posters advertising fifteen dollar payments per used machine. Continuing his ongoing consideration of the underground economies and labor conditions related to Mexican immigration into the Southland, Ontiveros bought the salvaged machines from the often-undocumented immigrants who scavenge residential sidewalks for free discarded items and thrown out appliances that may be able to be fixed and/or sold for scrap. An accordion artistbook in three volumes, *Untitled*, 2009, in the back room includes images of the foraging trucks comically overloaded with found appliances and mattresses strapped and tied into a bursting bundle.

Having entered the gallery, and in turn converted it temporarily into a mock flea market, the busted machines acquire new value befitting their freshly anointed status as collectable art objects, an upgrade that wants to strain (even as it participates in) the art market's arbitrary assignments of value. Upon purchase or request, some of the decrepit machines will be repaired and some will be pimped out with slick, glittering paint jobs by an auto body shop.





In addition to the thirteen battered machines, four sharply repainted specimens dot the gallery's perimeter – one each in green, gold, pink, and dark purple. The transformation from banal reject into stunning, McCracken-esque minimal sculpture is irresistible. *Pink Lady Kenmore Dryer*, 2009, has a vintage jukebox-like chrome and plastic headboard above its gleaming girlish body. So Southern California, sunshine, cars, and surf. I want one. Ontiveros's project, specific to its regional context, is a political and aesthetic endorsement of the labor of reclamation. Through the refurbishment of ruined mechanical bodies, there is the implied possibility of a more intimate and immaterial recuperation of other marginalized bodies. Once again, finish-fetish fuels desire, wielding disproportionate power over the viewer, or at least over me.

- Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer

(Images: Camilo Ontiveros, *I Want Your Washing Machine* (installation views), 2009. Courtesy of the artist and Steve Turner Contemporary, LA)

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