

ARTnews

JANUARY 2011

Dave Cole

DODGE

Dave Cole's subjects are overtly political, and his intention is to provoke, which he ably demonstrated in this intelligent New York debut. What is all the more remarkable then is that his work is also consistently entertaining.

Cole invented and built his own furnace and then did something that he was told is impossible—he melted table salt and cast it into imprints of World War I tank treads. In a conceptually related (though formally dissimilar) work, called *Leaves of Grass* (2010) after Walt Whitman's collection of poems, he crafted an eight-foot-long slice of rough meadow from melted bullets and intricately cut shell casings.

For another work, Cole purchased a complete set of the official United Nations "Flags of the World"—192 in all—then carefully cut out the red, white, and blue components and sewed them back together as a stars-and-stripes flag almost 30 feet across. As for the pieces of flags of other colors, he just left them strewn across the floor. He persuaded a wire-wool manufacturer to custom spin wool out of statuary bronze, which he then knitted into a metal fabric using a couple of shotguns as needles. The full audacity of this act is revealed in the title, *Knitting with Loaded Shotguns (Safeties Off)*, 2008–10.

Cole keeps revisiting the more difficult issues of our time—patriotism, war, empire, and the despoliation of the planet—and jokes about them, all the while obliging us to find the seriousness within his wit and to begin to rethink our attitudes toward his subjects.

—Robert Ayers



Dave Cole, *Knitting with Loaded Shotguns (Safeties Off)*, 2008–10, spun statuary bronze with 12-gauge shotguns, 72" x 66" x 10". DODGE.