

# ARTFORUM

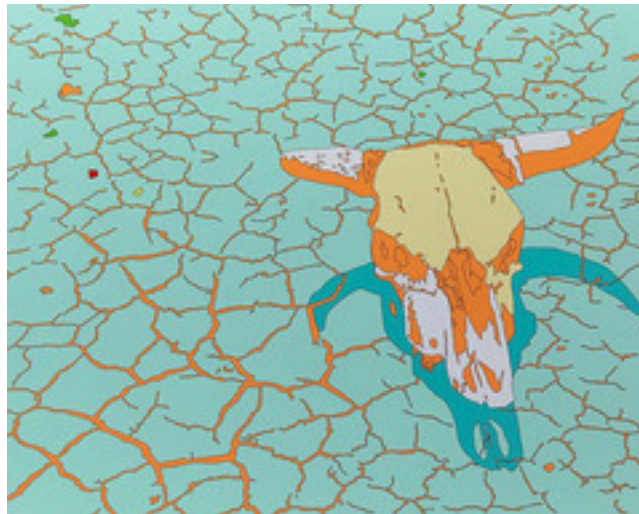
Washington, DC

Lisa Ruyter

CONNERSMITH.

1358 Florida Avenue, NE

September 8–October 20, 2012



Lisa Ruyter, Arthur Rothstein "Dry and parched earth in the badlands of South Dakota," 2009, acrylic on canvas, 47 x 59".

The images of impoverished Americans that [Walker Evans](#) made iconic in his collaboration with [James Agee](#) convey the dry, brittle tones of sun-bleached, barren land and faces drained exhaustion and hardship in the 1930s and '40s. [Lisa Ruyter](#) reinterprets these iconic works by using her signature palette of bright, Day-Glo acrylic paint. While the shift in color updates the historical images to suggest the cheap plastic products endemic to today's economic plight, the mood and message remain the same. Ruyter's "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men" is a moving and timely exhibition, appropriately installed in Washington, DC, before the US elections this November.

Ruyter developed her arresting palette while painting chic cocktail parties, high-powered symposia, entertainment events, and fashion shows in the late 1990s. In those contexts, her choice of electric yellow, lime, lavender, and Tiffany-box blue signified the excitement and flash of the era. Here, however, the same colors have a sharp sting and artificial aftertaste. Ruyter's expressive blocks of solid color appear like parts of cheap plastic toys or chemically processed, un nourishing food when they are applied to an image of bleached cow skull on cracked earth, which the photographer [Arthur Rothstein](#) captured in his *Dry and parched earth in the badlands of South Dakota*, 1936. In Ruyter's large-scale acrylic painting from 2009, a salmon- and butter-colored skull on turquoise earth remains as distressing an image of death and hopelessness as the original black-and-white photograph.

— [Ana Finel Honigman](#)