

## MAKING HAY IN THE HAMPTONS: TONI ROSS CREATES AN UNLIKELY DESERT IN AN EVOCATIVE GARDEN CENTER

BY [Barbara A. MacAdam](#)

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At the Marders Garden Center and Nursery in Bridgehampton, NY, through September 5



Installation view of Toni Ross's 2016 *Permanent Transience*, at Marders Garden Center and Nursery, Bridgehampton, New York.  
COURTESY PARRISH ART MUSEUM

**M**oving from object to environment, Toni Ross has amplified her repertoire with a huge array of rocks and bales of hay in her new show “[Permanent Transience](#),” at the Marders Garden Center and Nursery in Bridgehampton, New York. Stacked here like blocks of ice or stones, they conjure all manner of contradictory associations: walls, igloos, Donald Judd boxes, and more unlikely, Anselm Kiefer’s massive acrylic, oil, shellac, and sand painting of a serpentine structure *The Fertile Crescent* (2009).

Behind these hay sculptures, a long, winding straw wall with apertures here and there leads to an open area—a gathering place, or agora—that shapes the installation, giving it a minimalist sense of a town square. Three large cube structures punctuating the installation abut three boulders, each form seemingly lending the other support. Read from various angles, the effect can appear warm and affectionate—the stones leaning against the haystacks—or sensual, like thighs pressed together.



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Toni Ross's expansive installation, part of the Parrish Art Museum's Road Show exhibition series, is set improbably in an elegant nursery located just behind the town's shopping center, subtly suggesting a conversation between art and commerce. The serpentine wall, as if guiding a procession, stands in an expanse of sand like a mock desert but surrounded by rich-colored plantings, like a grove of crepe myrtle trees with their tall limbs and vivid magenta flowers. All in all, it's a complexly evocative installation.

Most interesting is Ross's successful transition from micro to macro—from the small terracotta sculptures she's known for that look as if they've been shrunk into maquettes of far larger structures or have been recently unearthed from ancient royal tombs.

One thing this show points out, for better and worse, is the importance of context. Positioned in a few spots within the sandy expanse are large, modernist planters that almost break the spell of the installation with their Hamptons-esque decorator effect, but only for a moment.

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