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Art Gallery Shows to See in January: Brad Kronz by Travis Diehl



Brad Kronz, "Dubhenge" (2025), wood, stain, wood filler, screws, carpet, fabric, board. Brad Kronz, via Artists Space, New York; Photo by Carter Seddon

In new sculptures assembled from junky wood, carpet and consumer goods, Brad Kronz brings a minimalist sensibility to chintzy home décor. "Dubhenge" is simply a column of five wooden panels screwed directly to the wall. The top four are stained and joined in a way that resembles wood-grained contact paper, while a dark blotch covers the fifth; it doesn't quite fit, and crams under the others at an angle. It's emotional how these cheap materials imitate richer ones.

Other sculptures resembling cropped furniture seem powerfully pathetic. Two crude stool sculptures, consisting of wooden legs but no seats, appear to be a mix of reused lumber and fresh craftsmanship. The tops are lined with scintillatingly seedy strips of taupe upholstery, the barest scraps of comfort. Other, bin-like sculptures ("Thank the Poet" and "The Grateful Deed") evoke clothes hampers or small roofless rooms: heavily grained wood forms their thin walls, embossed fabric wallpaper lines the inside, and a square of carpet fills in the bottom.

Kronz plays with the misty boundary of nostalgia and hope. The materials seem old, even retro — a large sculpture made from carpeted plywood flooring ("I Reject the Good Opinion of Others") appears to be ripped from a dingy midcentury man cave — but are assembled with intention. In fact, he seems to poke fun at the nostalgia industrial complex plugged into American culture by the likes of "That '70s Show" and "Stranger Things." The dark ersatz wood could be last century's R.V. cabinetry, but the useless Wi-Fi equipment stacked on the floor (next to a carved wood bald eagle with a cane's worth of neck) is only last decade's electronics, and the event horizon of obsolescence keeps creeping.

Maybe this nostalgia doesn't function, either: It doesn't comfort. Instead, the effect is disjointed and alienating — uncanny, in the German sense of "unheimlich," or "un-homelike." Kronz's sculptures deliver a restless, realistic past.

They are also frequently beautiful. A wall work titled "Egna Spartan" consists of a rhomboid square slab of straight-grained wood; in the middle, a rectangle has been cut out and replaced with wood with a wavier grain. The craftsmanship is janky. Regardless, the piece is self-possessed and elegant. You can imagine this work hanging in a collector's home — a space presumably more well appointed than that conjured by plastic wood and wall-to-wall carpet. Kronz's show coheres around the idea that matters of taste are always also matters of class.