

"The Manhattan Art Review"

Brad Kronz - Artists Space - ****

Like I said, taste is a subject that keeps emerging with these shows. It seems in particular to be a crux that Millennial art revolves around: the ever-shifting levels of self-awareness cycling through knowing and doing what's cool, to having the confidence to do exactly what isn't cool (tasteless, but in a cool way), to sticking with what you do even though it might not be cool anymore, hoping that sticking to something that's a little dated is cool, or getting older and deciding you've aged out of coolness, but you've still got to do something, and what you do has always been about being cool... Not that I'm accusing Kronz of occupying any of these positions in particular, there's just a lot of moving parts to navigate. His semi-constructed semi-appropriated sculptures foreground this dynamic because, while they're conversant in the lineage of post-minimal/conceptual/critical etc. art, they opt for a straight-faced muteness that makes them function as pure style, a reflexive condition where the content of the artwork is contained in its own *mise en scène*. This is straight out of the Millennial Donnelly/Bacher fan playbook which, to be clear, I don't have a problem with, as I'm a Millennial operating on largely the same set of influences. What matters is if the work works, and as I first looked over the stool legs, intentionally vacant wood panel and fabric constructions, an old speaker, a bald eagle cane next to an old router, and a funny/impenetrable edit of some movie about childhood nostalgia, I wasn't so sure. It wasn't until the end when I saw the contrastingly dense cluster of stuff near the ceiling in a corner, some large white globes behind a plexi frame sort of blocking some drawings next to a ladder, that the interplay of withholdingness and precision came together into a dynamic whole and won me over with the conviction that he knew exactly what he was doing with every part of the show. The works themselves could come off too oblique on their own, if that was the point, but treated as a whole composed within the architecture it's paced with a sure, confident hand in total control of the dynamics at play. If taste can often be trotted out as an affected signifier, Kronz proves its value here as the glue that goes between those signifiers and proves the sensibility that orchestrates the art, giving substance to a collection of things that, on paper, should be vacant.