

ARTFORUM

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L



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EC

ne whose moral I know," wrote Kurt
Mother Night (1961). "We are what
 e careful about what we pretend to be."
 rks at Freedman Fitzpatrick, Berliner
 retending to be bears, boys soldiers, and
 setting for these props and characters,
 tents with the markings of ammo boxes
 ach titled after the bullet brand name
American Eagle and *Brown Bear*, both 2017.



signage that proudly read MADE IN USA
 ily. Inside *American Eagle* sat a couple
 air desks with scratchy green cushions,
 gazines on the floor beside them. In the
 ems were clustered in a teepee formation
 six electric candles glowed at their base.
 baseball mitt and a teddy bear resting
 th cut flowers littering the ground.
 n a century after its founding, that the
 tary organization to prepare the sons of
 s. Yet, as Stahl references in the show's
 nt, when the forty-fifth US president
 ation, his blustering, aggressive speech
 d the memory of this anodyne camping
 e with this fact, the Scouts are organized
 Its members start as Bobcats, graduate
 finish as Eagles, their rank eponymous
 n patriotic symbols. Seeing the mascot—
 vereignty—brandished on the side of one
 d the tent as a campsite both for pretend-
 y'll become. On a nearby wall, suspended
 io of actual bullet packs, covered with
 nks, and battle-torn urban wastelands.
 a suite of five photographs making up
 h men attired in Third Reich uniforms
 sed film crew members at the shoot of a
 in the 1930s. It's an uncanny mix: In a
 y-TV star thumped into a presidency,
 ht doesn't seem so deep in the past.

These objects and images set a stage for the artist's most potent works on view: flatbed scans of hands and various 3-D objects blown up into large prints mounted on aluminum. In one of these cryptic images of disturbingly high resolution—*Powder*, 2017—fingers scratched at a sickly gray-green dust coating a glass bed. In *End of Tales*, 2017, thick blond braids coil around a shadowed skull ringed with wilting pink flowers and sawtooth leaves. A couple of errant flies and a single moth caught in the picture crawl across the surface of a sheet of glass pressing down on the grim still life. The texture and smear on these surfaces carry a precise beauty and unsettling physicality. Despite the flatness of these works, you feel every topographical nuance: the pores and creases of each fleshy digit, the crush of each flower petal. All the rhetoric eventually finds a body. This, after all, is precisely what Vonnegut warned us about: The war games become war, and angry citizens become what they pretended to be.

—Andrew Berardini

Rey Akdogan

HANNAH HOFFMAN

New York-based artist Rey Akdogan recently described her practice as motivated by a fundamental interest in "motion, our everyday lives, and how we move through space." Although these concerns were not immediately evident in her latest solo show at Hannah Hoffman, the more time one spent immersed in the exhibition, the more conscious one became of the dynamic relationships between one's own moving body, the installed objects, and the surrounding architecture of the rooms. The experience was an intensely phenomenological one, as mundane objects that would have normally remained hidden in plain sight became palpably present.

Akdogan's sculptures make subtle references to practical uses and public spaces far beyond gallery walls, often implementing standard support devices that one might purchase from trade catalogues or hardware stores. In the main room, for example, were four striking wall-mounted pieces from the artist's "Crash Rail" series, 2015–. Each work consisted of two or three black powder-coated aluminum bars—five to eight inches in height and two to eight feet in length—that were hung parallel to the ground. These objects were, literally, crash rails: long, sturdy barriers installed along corridors to protect walls from damage. The rails' original function was emphasized by their below-eye-level placement and the works' titles, which list, in simple fashion, the model numbers of rail and paint color used (for example, *CRA 200F [RAL 9005, RAL 9005, RAL 9005] solid #18*, 2016). While the



Rey Akdogan, *Faction #20*, 2017, acrylic paint, wooden French cleat, 15 × 24 × ¾".

crash rails cheekily associated the white-cube space of the gallery with the antiseptic ambience of hospitals and other institutional environments, their industrial quality and repetition of elemental geometric units brought to mind Donald Judd's serial Minimal works. However, whereas Judd placed his objects in orderly systematic progressions—"one thing after another," as he put it—Akdogan had arranged her crash rails asymmetrically, enlivening the otherwise sterile environment with a spirit of formal play.

Works from Akdogan's 2017 "Faction" series hung in a smaller, adjacent room. The apparatus employed here was the French cleat, a thin wooden plane with one edge cut at a forty-five-degree angle. Commonplace in homes as well as exhibition spaces, French cleats are used in pairs to invisibly secure items such as cabinets or artworks to a wall. The cleats were coupled (with the exception of one stacked three-some that sat on the floor, propped up against a wall) and situated in unexpected junctures near the tops, sides, and bottoms of the room's walls. The flat faces of the cleats were largely painted white, matching the walls behind them, while their angled edges were variously painted vivid reds, yellows, and blues. This bold color palette ensured that, rather than disappear into a supporting role, the French cleats in the "Faction" series took center stage. By calling attention to these props, the artist destabilized the notion of the gallery wall as a zone seemingly free from the constraints of physics.

Perhaps the most incisive comments on the constructed illusion of the stability and stasis of the exhibition space (on which art institutions and markets depend) were the most subtle: *Slit drape* [*rosco-solid black*] and *HHG* [*north wall_001Brillant-FPE*], both 2017. *Slit drape* consisted of two dark vinyl ribbons that fell from ceiling to floor in the gallery's main room. Drafts of air occasionally stirred the lightweight strands, alerting one to shifting air currents caused by moving bodies and opening and closing doors. For *HHG*, Akdogan turned a standard protective measure on its head in order to realize the work itself: An entire gallery wall was painted in a specially chosen high-gloss paint that gradually yellows when not exposed to ultraviolet rays. This meant that the UV-protective film on the gallery's skylights, intended to prevent the discoloration of artworks, ironically ensured that the exact opposite would happen to *HHG*. The incremental yellowing of the wall, along with its reflective surface, which captured the fluctuating goings-on in the space, provided visible markers for the passage of time—demystifying yet another fiction of the gallery as unchanging and impervious to external forces.

—Kavior Moon

"At this stage"

CHÂTEAU SHATTO

In a 1982 essay on the work of Dan Graham, Jeff Wall offered a resoundingly downbeat assessment of the shifting relationship between artists and the city. For recent artists, he argued, the metropolis was no longer a source of inspiration or aesthetic advancement—instead, "the key revelation of the city was in the shock of an absolute loss of hope." Tellingly, these words were written at the start of the Reagan era, when the old urban order was collapsing, and blighted, postindustrial cities were being remade into commercial centers, shiny simulacra of urban experience. This same transformation is visible throughout "At this stage," a group exhibition organized by Olivia Barrett at Château Shatto, which featured a range of mostly contemporary works juxtaposed with a few choice examples from the 1970s and '80s. Chris Kraus and Sylvère Lotringer's half-hour video *How to Shoot a Crime*, 1987, established the then-derelict quarters of Lower Manhattan as ground



zero for the show's curatorial thesis. Equal parts video vérité, found crime scene-documentation collage, and staged police procedural, the film recalls a time when artists and dissident philosophers rubbed shoulders with sex workers and drug addicts in still-affordable loft spaces, while corpses piled up outside. Most of the footage was shot in 1982 and only edited in 1987, and the video is marked by the insights gained in that intervening five-year span, as Kraus watched the city metamorphose around her.

Equally suggestive was Elaine Sturtevant's 1972 remake of Andy Warhol's eight-hour-plus film *Empire* (1964). A scrupulous replication of the original long take of the Empire State Building, Sturtevant's 35-mm print was here transferred to digital video and shown on a diminutive monitor, which suffused the erstwhile icon of Gotham's ascendance to a global capital with the dull glow of supermarket surveillance. The city is like a shelf lined with commodities, some well past their due date, others freshly stocked, but all equally susceptible to either theft and destruction or dispossession and redevelopment. Jordan Wolfson's video *Con Leche*, 2009, offered a pointedly literal summation of gentrification through its animated sequences of marching battalions of milk-filled Diet Coke bottles layered atop views of the mean streets of Detroit. The sight of the ubiquitous middlebrow beverage, here reduced to a noncaffeinated and sugarless state, spoils any thrill offered by bohemian slumming.

Parker Ito's contribution, *Western Exterminator/Kernel Kleenup/Little Man/Pestterminator*, 2013–15, puts another spin on the already complex social coding of the Western Exterminator Company logo, a top-hatted figure cautioning a mouse with a mallet hidden behind his back. This pseudo-aristocratic icon was here cloned into a series of multicolored sculptures that were arranged in a row in a corner of the gallery, somewhat like a 3-D rendering of a multiple-exposure photograph. His bottom-feeding counterpart is omitted, rendered redundant, probably because what chases vermin becomes vermin once the task is completed. "The exterminator, *c'est moi*," Ito seems to say. Artists have an existential grasp of this dismal equation, even as they seem unable to escape it. *WANT SOME?* is the question posed by a destitute car via a cartoon bubble in a black-and-white vinyl photograph by Martine Syms that was affixed to Château's storefront window. To those outside, it seemed to boisterously promote hard-core confrontation with true urban grit—but this was a bait-and-switch scheme. A glance at the checklist inside gave the work's title as *Some what?*, 2016, with the

Martine Syms
Some what?
self-adhesive
6' 3" x 14"
From "At this