

ART & DESIGN

Review: Aaron Flint Jamison's Craft of Technology

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER AUG. 20, 2015

AARON FLINT JAMISON

Miguel Abreu Gallery

36 Orchard Street, Lower East Side

Through Sept. 20

In the 1970s, punk rock served as a correction to the excesses of stadium rock and disco. Art of the same era had its own disrupters in the form of institutional critique. Aaron Flint Jamison, a multimedia artist living in Portland, Ore., draws from both these traditions as well as the Dadaists' subversive approach to art and technology.

For his current show, Mr. Jamison has emptied the gallery on Orchard Street of office furniture, imitating a tradition started decades ago by Yves Klein and Michael Asher. (Mr. Jamison did the same thing for his 2013 show at Artists Space.) The gallery is locked, but motion sensors installed above the front door grant entry. Inside, suspended from the ceiling, is a single sculpture made of cedar and purple heartwood. In the basement, a purple heartwood desk embedded with a PC sits near a bulky contraption consisting of giant tubes, digital temperature controls and an "exposure unit," two 1,000-watt ultraviolet lights inside a black case. Every evening the gallery's employees insert a piece of

black paper into the unit and let it bake under the lamps, creating a distinctive, well, cooked piece of paper.

What is the point of this exercise? It is both a test of the gallery's willingness to accommodate Mr. Jamison's demands and of our understanding of objects, technology and institutions. Mr. Jamison "hacks" art with wonky machines and craft, the finely finished wood objects here aligning themselves uncomfortably with furniture, to which Minimalist sculpture was sometimes unfavorably compared. On the gallery's website there is a blank space in lieu of an exhibition announcement, but hovering a cursor over the space links to a document, with Mr. Jamison's somewhat cagey instructions, that can be downloaded.

But again, what is the point? Institutional critique, for all its high-minded moral rhetoric, never upended the system — and neither did punk. Yet all of these — art, craft, technology — channeled in Mr. Jamison's work offer alternative models for living. By disrupting the flow of everyday systems, they perhaps give you permission to do the same.

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