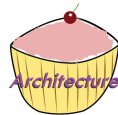




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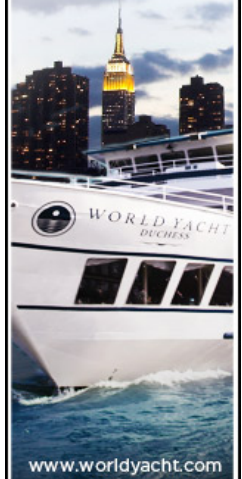
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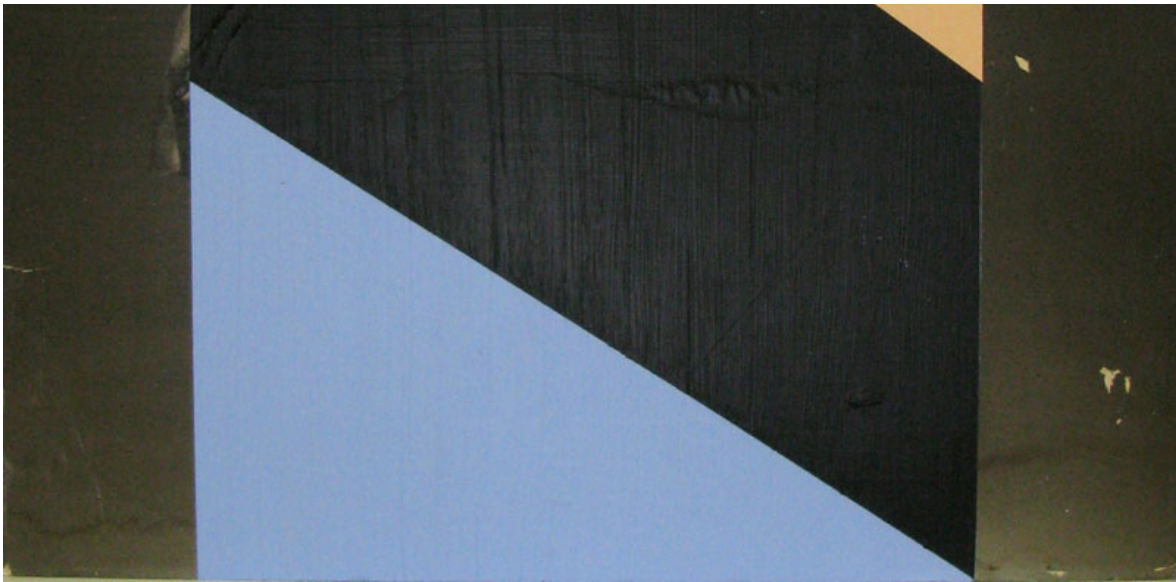


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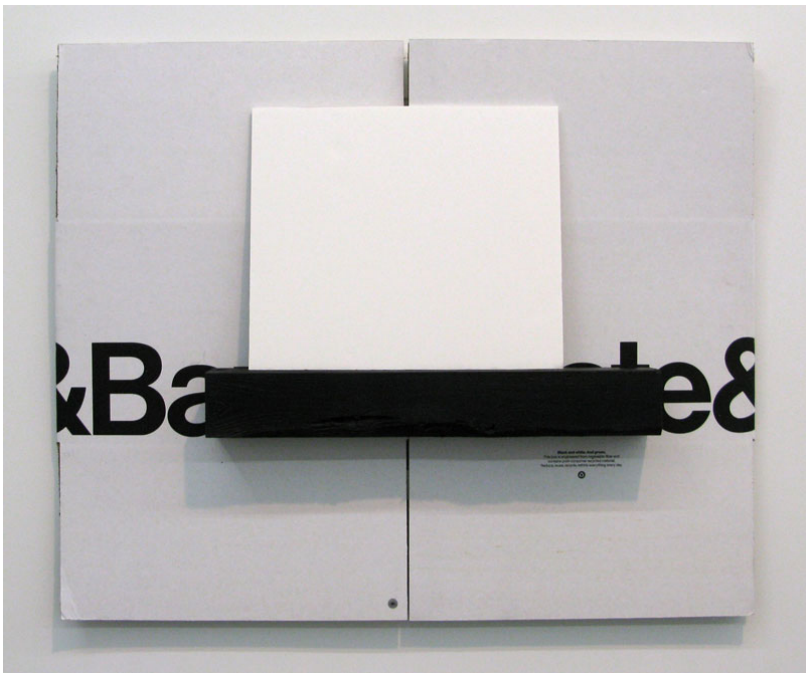
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Justin Beachler, *Untitled*, 2012, acrylic on found image, 48 x 48".

Justin Beachler, an Homage to Minimalism, a Hunter-Gatherer Aesthetic



Justin Beachler, *Untitled*, 2013, acrylic painted wood and foam board on cardboard box, 32.5 x 38 x 3.5".

Dolphin Gallery
1600 Liberty Street
Kansas City
816-842-5877
Justin Beachler. Srimary Ptructures
March 29-May 11, 2013

By BLAIR SCHULMAN

While not awash in overly finessed aesthetics, Justin Beachler's first solo show at Dolphin Gallery does instigate some good questions about artistic processes, consumer ethos and iconography. *Srimary Ptructures* is an exhibition with a wealth of potential, but oscillates statically in places. Not everything seen here jibes on a single wavelength. What seems a good idea in theory, the "Less is More" philosophy presented to us doesn't hold up as strongly as I think it could be.

Nearly 20 pieces in total here, he makes work from trash bags, wood, *Artforum* magazines as well as other found objects. These pieces, both hanging and sculptural, are paying homage to Minimalism as well as jumping into a discussion of anarcho-primitivism. I use this fancy term in support of the argument Beachler is making claims with his work that eschew a more formalist style in favor of a hunter-gatherer aesthetic. He is utilizing easily accessed

materials in a way that imparts smart arguments, but is not readily seen once it reaches an audience. Conversely, his Smut Compositions series that I recently discussed for *Juxtapoz* magazine online

(September 2012), is a much stronger body of work that shows us how intelligent and fleshed out Beachler's ideas can be realized. *Srimary Pstructures*, however, does lay the foundation for some serious commentary and would have benefitted from a different editing of work or even a smaller space.

Stripped down to what amounts to the starting point, Beachler questions and even mocks the art world's most basic ephemera. *Untitled (Sculpture #7)*, 2012, towels on Artforum Magazines on wood)) is telling inasmuch as an artist might save, seek and prepare themselves for their magnum opus. One of the roughest-appearing pieces in the show, this is also the most realized as it comes to light as both conceptual and accurate. With the towels acting as its antenna spire, the magazines are a tower of information that is in fact energized by the artists' work. There is nothing to otherwise discuss in those magazines if the artist doesn't produce, ostensibly getting said towels covered mucked up. *Untitled*, 2012 (studio rag on ARTnews Magazine), makes a similar point.

Where I think Beachler's analysis goes astray is with *Untitled (Sculpture #13)*, 2013, found shelf on gessoed cardboard on plywood)) and *This is Modern Art (Sculpture #9)*, 2013 acrylic painted wood on art criticism book)). The former shies away from any real confrontations, and the latter would really benefit from a stronger explanation. I am not sure what the wooden stake is meant to imply, other than possibly a murder of the critical theory that is both beneficial and anathema to an artist. Or, serious critical discussion is the lover you can't stand until one is inside the other.

Untitled, (2012), acrylic on found image and *Untitled (Pink Square)*, 2012, acrylic on found image have the same insider's look, but at least a general audience is more or less in on it. Beachler is obscuring celebrity imaging with nondescript color blocks and I totally get it. It's wonderful. If the packaging is distorted, particularly in the case of *Pink Square*, are we still buying into Barbra Streisand (the obscured image) because she isn't seen in its entirety? This piece takes us to the most reductive idea of her, not as merely a singer, but "Barbra" the icon; recognizable in the abstract. It almost appears, as do several of the hanging pieces in this exhibition, as a rebus concealing much of the image, similar to the old television game show, *Concentration*.

There are pretty strong ideas floating around this show and I like his philosophy of "obliterating or negating information on found images." Beachler strikes strong notes here and there, but the rhythm is not making itself heard in stereo. I would rather he pursue new invention rather than following the current fulcrum coming from artists like Joe Bradley and his "intentionally shoddy" works or Dan Colen's low-culture ephemera. Beachler's thinking is on the cusp of a great conversation that will slide us away from what is on trend and into the next chapter.



Justin Beachler, *Sublime Abjection (Trash Aesthetic #2)*, 2013, trash bag, gesso, and acrylic on canvas, 38.5 x 38".





Justin Beachler, *Sublime Abjection (Trash Aesthetic #3)*, 2013, trash bag and acrylic on canvas, 68 x 64".



Justin Beachler,
Untitled (Pink Square), 2012,
acrylic on found
image, 36 x 36".