



GALLERY-GOING

Patch Work

By STEPHEN MAINE

Ross Knight's work is not rep-tal: The Object in the 21st Century, "the clamorous, shambling show of polymorphous, disarmingly casual-looking assemblage now filling the New Museum's new Bowery digs — but it could be. The five works in Mr. Knight's fifth solo outing at Team share a fractured, fragmented, and provisionally patched-together quality with much of what is on view in that institutional roundup. They look damaged, physically and psychically, yet their awkwardness is elegantly resolved. In such

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a balancing act of enigma and fact, what is absent, missing, or inexplicable is as conspicuous as what is beheld.

Mr. Knight has devised a kind of narrative formalism. For some years, his comically cobbled-together sculptures have hinted at utility, as if fabricated for some recondite and insufficiently realized purpose other than, or in addition to, aesthetic contemplation.

At Team, the only piece that does not contain the contrast of rigid and malleable components present in Mr. Knight's earlier work is "Listening Center," which resembles a smallish, waist-high side table sprouting a bouquet of copper wire tipped with purple and green earplugs. Perhaps not coincidentally, it is the weakest piece in the show, a one-liner reminiscent of kitschy boutique hotel lobbies and bad upscale lounge décor. Much more engaging is "This Ability," in which repainted scraps of steel, conjoined so as to prompt agricultural and light-industrial associations, are nested in an open, bright yellow

ROSS KNIGHT

Team Gallery

plastic bag. A trailer hitch protruding from one end is slathered in jelly-like lubricant, good to go.

Karen Wilkin has noted the "ceremonial" in Mr. Knight's work, and that word describes the oddly commanding, forlornly grand "Arrangement in Black and Blue." The work brings to mind a sailing vessel, a meat locker, and an ironing board. It is risky and ornate, involving a dangling bur-lap bag, a weathered plank, barbells, and a cheesy chrome garland. What this elaborate hybrid lacks in immediate impact it makes up for in those seemingly incompatible connotations.

Reference-happy art is often a bore, but Mr. Knight is irreverent toward the tradition from which he emerges. The best work in the show resembles an anorexic Anthony Caro sculpture. A dully gleaming brick of steel anchors a skinny, stooped rod a few feet long. With one end resting on the floor, a length of shiny metal, maybe a section of handrail, clings at a right angle to the tip of the rod, dangling by a few inches of colorless latex and a CPR shield. The piece is called "Mouth to Mouth," and the sense of human vulnerability it evokes by such modest means is astonishing, visceral, and hilarious.

"Void-Fill" is a gem of abjection. It has two components: a 6-foot-tall, brown cardboard carton with unusual perforations, and a clear plastic airbag, shoved through one of those holes, fully inflated, and cinched at its waist like a figure 8. Scrappy and austere, the piece gives Gedi Sibony, that maestro of the meager, a run for his money. And when the viewer digests that the box is a cremation container, the airbag starts to look like a pair of lungs, or an hourglass.

Until January 5 (83 Grand St. between Wooster and Greene streets, 212-279-9219).



Ross Knight, 'Arrangement in Black and Blue' (2007).

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