

rachel uffner

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

New York

Pam Lins

RACHEL UFFNER GALLERY
170 Suffolk Street
April 19–May 31

To reach the main gallery of Pam Lins's "Model Model Model," the viewer must first pass through a gauntlet of hand-built ceramic phones, calling to mind less the art-historical corridor of Pop art than the hall of a community center. Along with their pedestals, priority mail boxes sloshed with paint, the works are as homely and economical as the notion of a model itself: dummy, replica, didactic—in short, not quite sculpture. Beyond the telephones, five tables built from Enzo Mari's 1974 open-source designs host some thirty earthenware constructions, which Lins has rendered from photographs of Nikolai Ladovskii's architecture workshop at VKhUTEMAS, the state art and technical school founded in Moscow in 1920. These three sets of models, or rather, models of models of telephones, utopian constructions, and tables, demonstrate the elasticity of the term: models as prototypes and paragons, simplifications and propositions, explanations and projections, the start of the production line and the objects that produce lines of relation. By virtue of its slippery semantics, the model shrugs off its not quite-ness to become the crux of sculpture's social and critical potential.

The exhibition's real reveal, however, is (literally) retrospective: the backsides of the austere student models have been glazed with colorful geometric motifs that animate their volume (The experiments continue upstairs, with a spirited group show organized by the artist around her color theory reading group.) The limitation is photography, a medium that shares with models both their indeterminate scale and their unstable liaisons with the material and historical world. Yet the kaleidoscopic object lesson goes deeper, to what historical documents must necessarily fail to show. Lins's work as a teacher as well an artist seems pertinent, and poignant, here: Perhaps the only way to wholly see the model of an avant-garde education—or of radical industrialism, or even simply communication—is to model the model ourselves.



View of "Model Model Model," 2015.

— *Joanna Fiduccia*

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