

rachel uffner

ART=CITY

Recommended Shows, Pt 1: Strauss Bourque-LaFrance at Rachel Uffner
by Paddy Johnson on September 23, 2014



Detail of Ajay Kurian, *Comfort Zone #2 (Enlightenment)* (2014) at Rachel Uffner Gallery.
Photo: Benjamin Sutton.

Strauss Bourque-LaFrance, No Aloha
Rachel Uffner
170 Suffolk Street
Runs September 7 to October 19, 2014

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Now that we can print on virtually anything, it's no surprise that laminate veneers are increasingly popular amongst sculptors. I've seen my fair share of unsuccessful experiments in this vein in recent studio visits, but there are artists doing it right too. Rachel de Joode's flesh-covered monolith is just one example, and more recently, Strauss Bourque-LaFrance's striped and marbled mantelpieces at Rachel Uffner. In this show, we've got what looks like a great hall of plastic mesh and spray enamel drawings leading into a virtual garden of mimicked 80's contempo-casual decor.

The entire back gallery floor is covered in bold black-and-white striped carpet with four mantelpieces carefully arranged near the edges of the gallery. On the walls, Bourque-LaFrance hangs mesh paintings of people, landscapes, and abstract art—works he describes as “vacation paintings.”

The sculptures demand the most attention—they seem polished and weighty next to the hanging scrim on the walls. One piece is simply a faux-marble mantelpiece, another recalls the red stripes of Daniel Buren, while yet another showcases two martini glasses rendered flatly on its facade in an aesthetic recalling Patrick Nagel's portraits. The press release tells us fireplaces are now rarely used—and that these works reclaim their lost grandeur. Whether or not that's a necessary gesture in the New York real estate market may be a question, but whatever the case, the works achieve the artist's intention. They resemble bright props on a stage, waiting for an actor or viewer to spend a bit of time with them.

And as a viewer, I actually felt a bit of excitement about being able to do this. I wanted to see the mantelpieces up close, because I wondered whether the patterns would sing a little more loudly when I was in front of them. That didn't happen—in the end you just end up wishing the carpet you're on was a little cleaner—but it wasn't a let down either. There's a remote control on the marble mantel, bronzed as if to indicate the importance it once had, and some plastic sushi on a plexiglass table placed above the martini mantel. It looked like something you'd see on the set of *American Psycho*. These details go a long way in creating a sense of professional-style opulence that once defined the Reagan era and that middle-class luxury is as celebrated here as it was then.