

Welcome to the debut of Art Practical!

2 / Nomads and Residents

Justin Beal, Lena Daly, Kate Owens

GROUP SHOW
OCT 15 - NOV 07
JANCAR JONES GALLERY

by Carol Anne McChrystal

If you were to make a Venn diagram of ready-mades, minimalist sculpture, color field painting and their opposites, the handful of works that occupy the tiny Jancar Jones Gallery this month would reside at its center. Though there are only four pieces in the exhibition, each describes and opens up the relationships between material strategy and meaning. Materiality is at the forefront as Justin Beal, Kate Owens, and Lena Daly sidestep aura and mysticism in favor of clear formal relationships between manufactured objects. It's no secret how any of these works were made. Though the creative processes are completely transparent, and each of the four pieces takes its material components at face value, the stories of their productions don't limit these works.

A certain economy between material and meaning emerges. There is very little on view, but what exists to examine is packed with potential. The logic permeating the works that make up this tiny, forceful exhibition is an ever-present symbiotic codependency. The interaction between the materials of each individual work, in combination with the careful juxtaposition within the installation, create a tenuous balance, in which each object is itself and its photographic negative at the same time. "What do you want?" they seem to ask. "Vibrant color? Sleek, liquid shine? Luxurious volume?" "Why settle?" these artists suggest. One can have it all, even an idea and its opposite.



Justin Beal, Lena Daly, Kate Owens; installation view, 2009; Jancar Jones Gallery, San Francisco.

Lena Daly's *Sculpture Ballet* (2009) is a balancing act in contrasting two flat panels. One, a photograph depicting rumpled, but luxurious silken purple fabric, hangs flat against the wall. The other, a Plexiglas panel painted as a Rotho-like, pastel color field, leans quietly beneath on the floor. Daly constructs a dynamic relationship that considers and conflates the following variables in each element simultaneously: image, object, flatness, and volume. In this forced relationship, a bulky weight can be flat and, conversely, a flat field can be voluminous.



Kate Owens. *Affair at Styles (purple & yellow)*, and *Affair at Styles (pink & blue)*, both 2008; cotton, soft drink. Courtesy of Jancar Jones, San Francisco.



Justin Beal. Untitled, 2009; aluminum, mirror, clear tubing, stretch-wrap, 28 x 18 in. Courtesy of Jancar Jones, San Francisco.

By the same token, a confident tension emerges between product and source in both of Kate Owens's *Affair at Styles (pink & blue)* and *(blue & yellow)* (both 2008). Owens spawns hippy-dippy tie-dye tees from toxic-grape soft drinks, the absolute in chemical flavor and artificial color. She asks one to reconsider established associations and alterity between these objects as natural or artificial, and blurs automatic or conditioned realities in the fabric of shirt-stuffed plastic bottles. Here, her shirts at once act as beautiful abstract color fields and as signifiers of the peace-and-love generation. But Owens clearly demonstrates that these are easily extracted and infused signifiers. After all, the shirts are not dyed with organic fruit-based pigments, but with high fructose corn syrup and Red Number 40. At first, Los Angeles-based artist Justin Beal may appear to be a dissonant inclusion, as clear or colorless items comprise his wall piece. It soon becomes apparent, however, that Beal negotiates a similarly stark abundance of material relationships. Beal's concern for surface yields an oddly invisible hardware store sculpture that is bulky, heavy, and totally, but not quite, here. Manufacturer's product specifications printed along clear tubing—in combination with seeing one's reflection examining the work—foregrounds the fact that at the end of the day, this is an elegantly tangled length of clear plastic tubing bound to a mirrored glass pane with clear cling wrap.

At Jancar Jones, Daly, Owens, and Beal share a matter-of-fact engagement with the texture of the built world. But what really unifies this curatorial endeavor is that each artist occupies a potent space where material exercise teeters on the brink of an infrastructural aesthetic.^[1] This is to say that while these projects don't quite step out of the realm of object-oriented art, they are curious about what lies at the heart of the structures that govern how we see, understand, and perceive.

[1] Kissane, Sean. "This is Not How Things Really Seem to You" from *Alan Phelan: Fragile Absolutes*. Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2009.

"Justin Beal, Lena Daly, Kate Owens" is on view at Jancar Jones through November 7.

JANCAR JONES GALLERY
965 MISSION SUITE 120 SF CA 94103