

ARTFORUM

Jason Kraus, *Untitled Object 1*, 2014, KoskiDecor, toy helicopter, binoculars, books, 18 x 28 x 9 1/4".



Jason Kraus

ALGUS GREENSPON

Titled "Finished Objects," Jason Kraus's recent exhibition certainly had a degree of polish, in that the show also incorporated mass-produced artifacts that are "finished" insofar as they have already been manufactured, bought, sold, and sometimes used—but these sculptural groupings are hardly an end point. Rather, they represent just the most recent stage in a system of acquisition, combination, and presentation that extends back to previous bodies of work and seems unlikely to stop with this one. The show's five pieces, all from 2014, were assemblages of consumer goods encased in shelving units tailored to fit their precise dimensions; the objects themselves have their origins in two of the artist's earlier projects: his 2013 exhibition "Concrete Form" at Redling Fine Art in Los Angeles, and a never-exhibited student experiment.

In "Concrete Form," five pairs of pedestals were exhibited along with instructions regarding what they should be used to display. Each set of directions specified one "categorical item"—a newspaper, say, or a spray-paint can—and an object of the installer's choosing. These things formed one element of "Finished Objects"; the other was a collection of books solicited by Kraus from graduate-school friends, who made their selections based on the volumes' perceived connection with the artist's practice. Binding these disparate groups together via the physical structure of display furniture, Kraus asks us to consider potential formal and conceptual links between the works' gathered parts.

So, what connections might be said to exist between the toy helicopter, pair of binoculars, and copies of the books *Odd Bits: How to Cook the Rest of the Animal* and *Please Kill Me* in *Untitled Object 1*, for example? There's certainly an edge of violence to the set, with its allusions to hunting and the military, as well as a technological cast. The hooves-and-eyes recipe book might be intended to suggest an all-inclusive approach to artmaking, and Legs McNeil's oral history of punk an accompanying rebellious unconcern with established rules of creativity. As in its neighboring works, however, these associations are softened by the tastefully muted coloring of the "KoskiDecor Finnish birch plywood" boxes into which the bits and bobs in question fit so neatly.

A further question is whether one should try to make distinctions of any kind between one of these works and another. Is *Untitled Object 2*, with its folding wooden chair, spray-paint can, and copies of *Larousse Gastronomique* and *The Greatest Game Ever Played*, more or less successful than *Untitled Object 3*, which juxtaposes a mug emblazoned with the word CALIFORNIA with copies of *Catch-22*, the cookbook from Chicago restaurant Alinea, and the *Los Angeles Times*? Where do any of these arrangements lie on the axis from meaningful to arbitrary? Or, far more likely, does the point of Kraus's project lie not in the specifics of the selections at all, but in what the artist's process might have to say about the nature of choice and the assignment of function and value? Here is an artist, after all, for whom objects function more often as teasing clues or traces than ends in themselves—his 2012 installation *Dinner Repeated*, for example, showcased (again via some solidly built cabinetry) the (washed) dishes used in a series of communal meals. "Finished Objects" is a similarly unassuming project, and a point on the same graph.

—Michael Wilson