

ARTFORUM

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New York

Virginia Overton

THE KITCHEN

512 West 19th Street

March 21–May 6

Given free reign of the Kitchen for her solo exhibition, Virginia Overton presents a suite of pithy post-Minimalist sculptural installations that deftly repurpose various salvaged building materials found on-site. Monumental yet tentative, Overton's understated constructions pulse with tension between careful design and random accident; they are site-specific without being limited to or by it.



Held in place by a bracket at each end, a black steel pipe diagonally bisects a wall in *Untitled (schedule 40)* (all works cited, 2012). While the subtitle refers to a thickness standard for pipes and not a tax form, the work reads as an erased or censored Dan Flavin, whose use of fluorescent tube fixtures Overton has referenced in past work. *Untitled (light)* consists of a bare lightbulb affixed to the underside of one end of a long, perfectly horizontal plank dangling about four feet off the floor, as if sliver of ceiling had just fallen. The plank hangs from a steel wire attached off-center, and the resulting imbalance is offset by some strategically placed wood, yielding a gritty but charming DIY Alexander Calder. In *Untitled (pedestals)*, eight pedestals of varying heights, tightly wedged in a row between gallery walls, levitate, objects usually used to elevate cheekily elevated themselves. Nearby, in *Untitled (2x4 floor)*, salvaged two-by-fours, some black, others splashed with red, are carefully laid out in rows to form an uneven and unevenly patterned wooden floor.

Undeniably elegant, Overton's arrangements have a literalness that deflects attention away from structure and form and onto her humble materials, emphasizing their prior use-value as well as the traces of time and history registered on their well-worn surfaces. This effect is somewhat amplified by her subtle but effective maneuver: a series of powerful floodlights in a perimeter space between the gallery walls and the surrounding architecture. Aimed at the ceiling, the lights

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reveal a dense unruly crisscross of pipes, ducts, cables, and lighting rigs normally hidden from view, thus recasting the gallery as another stage, a constructed space where performances, albeit with objects and images, are orchestrated.

Foregrounding the messy technological, architectural, material, and historical specificities of the performance venue, Overton's gesture challenges the ideology of the pristine white cube as neutral and timeless. *-Murtaza Vali*

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