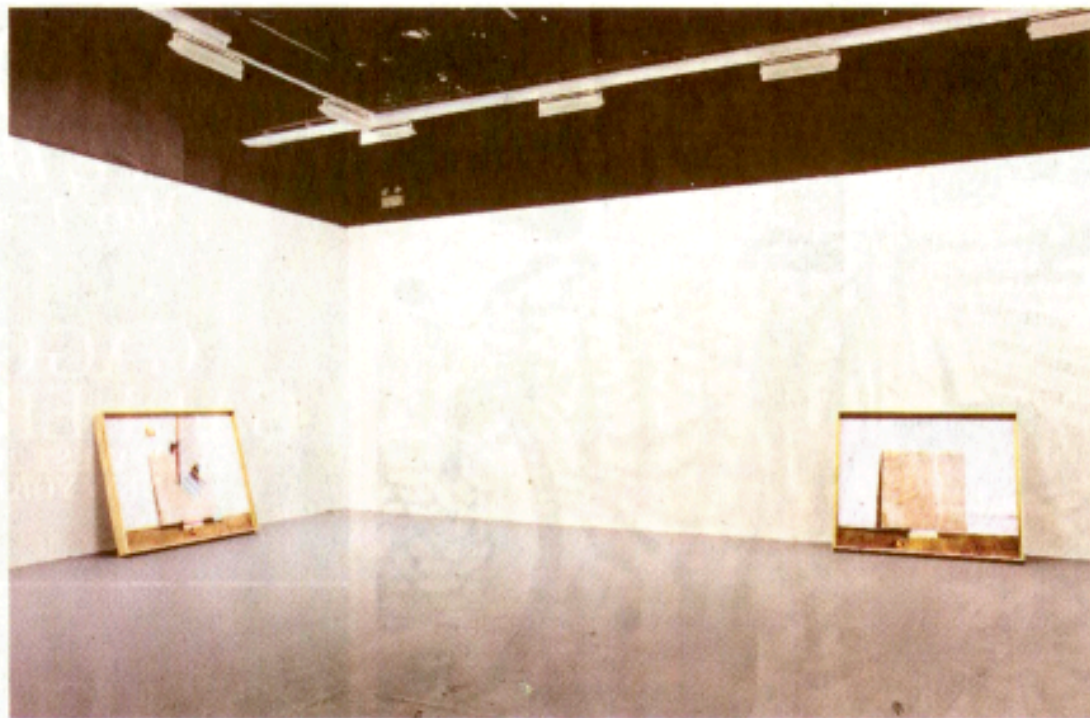


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Art in Review



ADAM REICH

Two of the pieces in the "Midday" series by Leslie Hewitt, color photographs of stacked and wall-mounted objects, that are part of her show of work from the last two years at the Kitchen.

Leslie Hewitt

'On Beauty, Objects, and Dissonance'

The Kitchen
512 West 19th Street
Chelsea
Through May 10

Leslie Hewitt aspires to make photographs that are both personal and social, flat and sculptural, archival and insistently contemporary. That's quite a tightrope walk, and in her solo at the Kitchen, which includes work from the last two years, she's still finding her balance.

The most engaging and accessible works belong to a series called "Midday": color photographs of stacked and wall-mounted objects, including books, striped fabric, vintage snapshots, an orange and a piece of plywood. The prints themselves rest on the floor, in sculp-

tural wooden frames, extending the picture-within-a-picture conceit into three-dimensional space.

As is often the case in Ms. Hewitt's art, some of the photographed props date from the mid-to-late 1960s. (She also has work in "After 1968," at the Bronx Museum of Art.) One is the book "Manchild in the Promised Land," Claude Brown's autobiographical novel about growing up in Harlem. In a diverting two-screen film installation made in collaboration with Bradford Young, Ms. Hewitt translates Brown's unsparing accounts of violence and desperation into a series of silent, fragmentary and blurred cityscapes.

Ms. Hewitt and many of the curators who are drawn to her art like to invoke big ideas, from 17th-century Dutch still lifes to the "double consciousness" of W. E. B. DuBois. Not all of them come across without the help of checklists and wall texts. And sometimes you feel as if Ms. Hewitt were asking too much of photography, even conceptual photography: can her still lifes really accommodate both the cynicism of the so-called pictures generation and the nostalgia for the civil rights era of her own younger generation?

But her art has an auspicious degree of subtlety and sophistication, even where it's full of contradictions.

KAREN ROSENBERG