

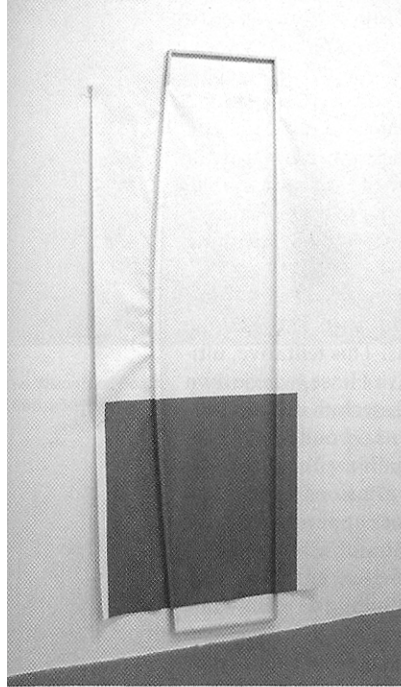
Noam Rappaport

WHITE COLUMNS

In the paintings of Noam Rappaport, the canvas assumes a character of its own, becoming an ingredient with weight equal to that of any other. In his first solo exhibition at White Columns, the artist gave stretcher bars—usually hidden completely—a similar identity, and did the same for a list of other structural bits and pieces, from nails and screws to wiring. The New York-based artist seems to aim for a kind of material transparency, through a practice that also constantly directs our attention to the modest and the everyday.

Rappaport's constructions, then, have a rawness that reveals a sensitivity to the potential of the just-found and the jerry-rigged. But more important, his works derive from the realm of intuition and experimentation, in which colors and lines, shapes and textures are juxtaposed and combined with a seeming casualness that can veil a fine-tuned subtlety. Rappaport's sensibility might be aligned with those of Richard Tuttle, Mitzi Pederson, B. Wurtz (with whom he exhibited last year), and even Georg Herold. But there's a personal touch to his anti-crafted gambits that prevents them from ever seeming too derivative.

The show opens with *Untitled (Gray #2)*, 2010, a wall-mounted construction featuring a tall, rectangular frame with one curved side, to which a sheet of canvas has been attached in such a way that the underlying wooden shape remains clearly visible. The canvas does not fully cover the frame but stops short of its top and bottom, and the



Noam Rappaport, *Untitled (Gray #2)*, 2010, color pencil, wax, and oil on canvas, wood, 92 3/4 x 38 1/4 x 1/2".

lower third of the material is painted dark gray, the colored area partly outlined in sky blue pencil. Imagine an entry from *Tablet: 1948–1973*, Ellsworth Kelly's volume of sketches and collages, writ large; *Untitled (Gray #2)* (should we call it a painting? A relief? A sculpture?) expresses a similarly effortless and irreducible grace. Just across the room, *Light Blue Door Form*, 2010, repeats the performance with a slight variation.

In the three paintings *Washing Machine*, *Gibbous*, and *Borga*, all 2010, the action is a little more contained, though all the works revolve around a gently expanded notion of the medium. Here, amorphous white and dark shapes are brushed onto imperfectly stretched white canvas panels to cover arrangements of wood fragments, the final impression evoking Vincent Fecteau's way with casually assembled forms. *The Sleeper*, 2009–10, and *Three or So*, 2009, also make use of a tweaked base—in both cases, a diagonal bisects the painting into darker and lighter regions—adding a variety of gestural dabs and swooshes of color. If these two works seem at points to tip over into genuine awkwardness, Rappaport's enterprise as a whole remains valid for its acknowledgment that such categories are porous, and that there is still a value in occupying them.

Finally, *Collection #5*, 2010, relies on a conventional panel format but turns its surface into a repository for a hundred-odd tiny workshop offcuts and pieces of studio litter. Most are scraps of wood and foil, rubber and cork; every now and then, a metal bolt or plastic bag-tie puts in an appearance. The work's combination of order (its composition is a neat grid) and chaos (there is a certain style to the artist's selections, but a feeling of randomness, too) mirrors Rappaport's methodology as a whole. Toying with familiar materials to quietly undermine our expectations of what constitutes a "legitimate" subject or treatment, he arrives at some lively and likable suggestions.

—Michael Wilson