

# rachel uffner

Art | Reviews

## Pam Lins

★★★★★

Rachel Uffner, through Feb 8 (see Lower East Side)

Art

A prominent curator recently told me that "owls are the new deer," a matter-of-fact observation much like "purple is the new black." By this gauge, Guggenheim Fellowship recipient Pam Lins is obviously connected to the cultural zeitgeist, as some of her minimalist-inflected sculptures qua paintings are inhabited by plaster owls.

Nocturnal birds of prey are not the first things you notice, however: Lins has constructed a dense forest of plywood pedestals, each with one multicolored, striped side and a painting perched on top. Meandering among these pillars is a strangely exhilarating experience. Their presence is both assertive and subtle as they divulge and conceal their paradoxical characteristics. From certain perspectives, they appear like perfect sculptures, while from others, they perform flawlessly as paintings.

An avid bird-watcher may eventually spot a white owl dwelling in a sunken corner of a plinth. Apparently, this creature is modeled after one sculpted into the wall of a medieval church in Dijon, France. Generations of visitors have touched the carving as a measure of good luck, raising the question of Lins's intention. Is she stressing or debunking the aura that philosopher Walter Benjamin attributed to the handcrafted art object?

Ironically, the Dijon owl was destroyed by vandals in 2001 and replaced by a reproduction which is kept under video surveillance. Lins's work echoes this subversion of originality while imbuing the copy with the thrill of discovery.

—Nwit Banai



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