

lora reynolds gallery



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Arts Review

By Wayne Alan Brenner

'Conrad Bakker: Relax and Take Your Fucking Time'
Through Nov. 6

Heed the name of this show while you're in the gallery and checking out the creations of Conrad Bakker. Don't just breeze through on the way to your next latte or a meet-up with that hottie from OkCupid. Walk slowly, breathe evenly, look closely. Relax, yes, and take your fucking time.

That's what the artist did, after all. More so than in installations that might seem, on the surface, very like this one; more so than in similar arrangements of common objects out of context and juxtaposed for a conceptual effect that may or may not be, depending on the choices made, successful.

This stuff of Bakker's, it's pretty cool on the surface, especially in such a spare and elegant venue as the Lora Reynolds Gallery. Look at that: There's a big ol' trailer sign, propped up on a concrete block; a woodshop workbench with an emptied yogurt container crammed into one of its gaps; a lawnchair and a paperback, a tomato plant growing in a plastic bucket, an orange traffic cone. Okay, yeah, here's a legitimate if somewhat art-scene typical reframing of the quotidian, and ...

Oh, shit.

Every single one of these objects is carved out of wood.

Every single one of these objects – the sign, the bench, the chair, the plant, the slightly crumpled yogurt cup, all of it – is carved perfectly out of wood and painted in a way that could define, if it went slumming, the term *trompe l'oeil*. And now you remember: Oh, right, Conrad Bakker, this is the fellow whose last show featured those dozens of painted-and-carved wooden videotapes that you were impressed by but maybe left the exhibit thinking, "Yeah, heh, and what's he gonna do for an encore?"

Surprise, art lover. While, granted, we can only conjecture if the artist was relaxed or not while creating this gallery of simulacra, you can rest assured that he took his fucking time. And you, visiting this show, get to reap the reward.

Bonus: Propped on the walls surrounding these stealthy sculptures are tiny oil paintings of trailers – like Airstreams or other such tag-alongs – that Bakker based on images found among the treasures of the Internet. You see the small, precise beauty of these painted renderings and it makes sense that the trailer sign, the tomato plant, the yogurt cup seem so deceptively real in their greater dimensions. But, listen: Ask the gallery attendant why these paintings are priced so strangely, and you'll have a charming denouement to this display of fiction objectified.

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