

GERING & LÓPEZ GALLERY

The New York Times

NANCY DWYER: PAINTING AND SCULPTURE, 1982-2012

Fisher Landau Center for Art, 38-27 30th Street, Long Island City, Queens, Through April 7

To a short list of artworks emblematic of the 1980s, including Jeff Koons's "Rabbit" and Barbara Kruger's montage "I Shop Therefore I Am," consider adding Nancy Dwyer's "Desk of Envy" from 1988. With its mahogany cabinetry topped by glass over green leather it resembles a desk for a ruler of the corporate universe, except that it's constructed to spell "envy" in bold block letters legible from above. A cool critique of the corporate status-climbing of its time, it resonates anew in light of the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Most of the works in this retrospective embody single, socially charged words like "killer" and "body" fabricated by industrial methods, and date from more than a decade ago. The exhibition as a whole takes us back to the era of big hair and shoulders, which was when Ms. Dwyer enjoyed much visibility in the New York art world as a member of the Pictures Generation. Her paintings on boxy canvases fusing influences of Ed Ruscha, Kay Rosen and Jack Goldstein prove she is better in three dimensions than in two. But many of Ms. Dwyer's sculptures still hold up nicely as punchy condensations of the verbal, the visual and political commentary. "Food," spelled by galvanized garbage cans, and "Lie," made of letters clad in faux-marble laminate, speak to a society of waste and mendacity. An eight-foot-tall nylon balloon spelling "ego" is perfect: a inflated sculpture representing a pandemic pathology in today's culture.



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