

# ARTFORUM

## New York

### CRITIC'S PICK

Tom Burr

BORTOLAMI

520 West 20th Street

March 7–April 26



Tom Burr, *An Orange Echo*, 2012, plywood, mirrored Plexiglas, used theater seats, 72 x 42.5 x 36"

Suspended between the hard, corporate geometries of Robert Morris and Donald Judd and the pilled, worn textures of personal objects, Tom Burr's "deep wood drive" extends the artist's three-decade-long archaeology of Minimalist form. The show centers on his ongoing series of "Cloud Paintings," 2011–, six-by-six-foot plywood panels cloaked in wool blankets, variously laid flat, scrunched, and distended. At once stretched across and wrapped around their supports and secured with upholstery tacks, arrayed in a drooping grid, the blankets carry obvious connotations of comfort and safety that abut impersonal iteration. In five of the "Clouds," the plywood is stained black and the blankets, in shades of charcoal and navy, are industrially factured: tactile and tufted, yes, but also stiff and anonymous, their weave recapitulating the grid's rigid coordinates. The sixth, however—*Untitled Pink Piece*, 2011—features bare plywood and a plush, pink blanket seemingly pilfered from a child's bedroom. Like so much of Burr's art, the work opens into a series of unresolvable tensions, the violence of tacking contravening the wool's promise of warmth and protection.

The remaining seven works riff on forms that Burr has previously explored: Abandoned articles of clothing, an overturned chair, and vintage magazines all make appearances, each evoking human presence through its absence. Themes of blockage and obstruction are prominent, as in the floor-bound sculpture *Rectangled Restraint*, 2012, which consists of six closed window shutters, their surfaces garbled and obsidian in hue, piled atop a plywood base. Refusing transparent signification, Burr layers his art with unsettled characters and narratives, as if to literalize Minimalism's concern with the spectator's positionality (and, hence, the body) in relation to the art object. In *An Orange Echo*, 2012, the artist encases two sets of three used movie theater seats in a plywood shell lined with mirrored Plexiglas. Here, as in the show at large, Burr's critique is trenchant: Minimalist aesthetics empty into a spectacle of discipline, its structures offering not a window onto the world but an endless repetition of their own image.

— Courtney Fiske