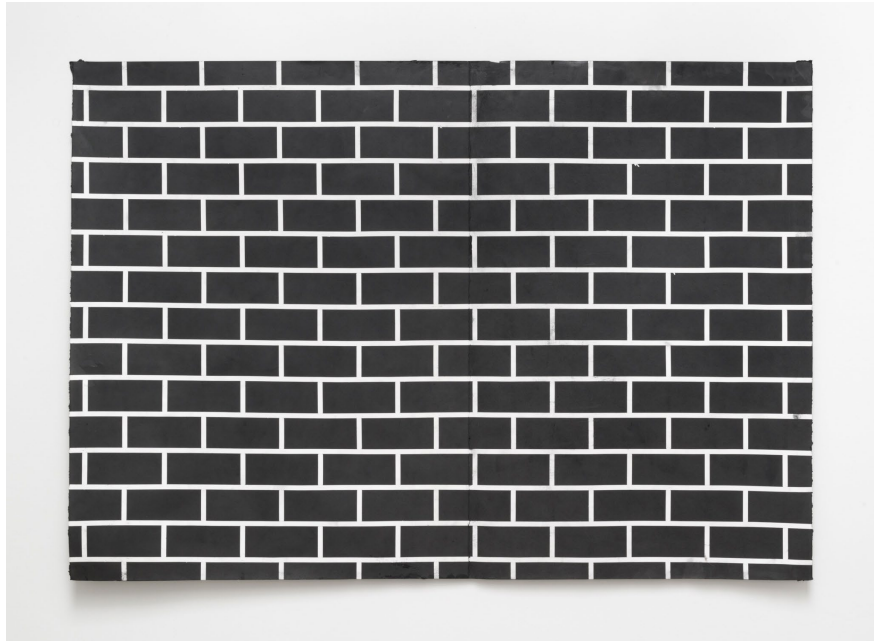


ARTnews

Look, Look Again: Bortolami Group Show Considers the Art of Close, Careful Viewing



Tony Lewis, *Take out the garbage without being told*, 2016, pencil, graphite powder, and tape on paper, 50 x 72 inches.

In its sparse installation and apparent symmetry, "Michel François, Liz Larner, Tony Lewis, Virginia Overton" is a more complex exhibition than it initially seems. The straightforward objects reveal surprising subtleties, with disjointed and formal allusions lurking beneath their materiality. Things and patterns resonate like quick, sharp sentences.

First, visible through the gallery windows, are two Tony Lewis drawings, which mimic the brick outside. But, on close observation the works' opaque black rectangles flatten into graphic voids. Only graphite dust dirties the white space between the tessellated rectangles, the speckled negative space standing in for grout.

Then, in the main gallery, two bronze splatter works by Michel François hang across from each other. Their differences are slight: one has a sense of rightward motion, like a mud puddle that has been splashed through by a car tire; the other is more static, its layers of poured bronze shiny in some areas, dark and matte in others. Both of them, titled *Instant Gratification* (2016), are hardened ghosts of the interlaced paint in an Ab-Ex painting. Pollock's critically praised splatters were pure translations of feeling to action, with the painted image evidence of his motion. François, without a canvas, cleverly achieves a similar oceanic effect in bronze, a substance known neither for its immediacy nor for its relation to performative process.

The works of Liz Larner and Virginia Overton open up ongoing questions about the viewer's relation to surface and space. Larner's glazes and Overton's found objects bring a lively sense of wit to Minimalist

concerns that often tend to wax austere. In Larner's *ii (calefaction)*, 2014–15, rock shards are caked in an ovular ceramic mass, while *iv (passage)*, 2014–15, another ceramic oval, comes forward topographically, its ridges and gaps sinking and emerging from thick yellow glaze. Overton's sculptures serve more as peculiar stand-ins for visitors. One is a towering cardboard tube with a chair placed upside down at its head, and one consists of two wooden planks of different heights connected by a brass plate. Their stiff, three-dimensional verticality is amplified by the flatness of Lewis's *Untitled 8* (2016), a large almost-square work placed on the ground, made by rubbing paper with graphite powder over the floor of the gallery's front room.



Installation view of "Michel François, Liz Larner, Tony Lewis, Virginia Overton," 2016, showing, from left, Liz Larner's *iv (passage)*, 2014-2015, and Virginia Overton's *Untitled*, 2016.

Showing in the back room is Morgan Fisher's *Screening Room* (1968/2016). Though listed as a separate exhibition, the film provides a satisfying complement to the group show. On the 30-minute mark of every hour, visitors may share Fisher's views as he walked through Chelsea with a camera, on his way to the gallery. The suspense builds. Will he enter the gallery, look at the works in the previous spaces, and eventually join us in the screening room? He does enter and even zooms in on the very screen that we are watching, but we, of course, never see him. After exiting the screening area, the yellow glaze, bronze splatters, and shiny graphite can be seen again, with new eyes. The film produces another dimension, a reminder to challenge chronology and consider the phenomenological facts of artistic process.