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Shows That Matter: Claudia Comte at Gladstone Gallery

BY MOSTAFA HEDDAYA | FEBRUARY 20, 2015



An installation view of Claudia Comte's "No Melon No Lemon" at Gladstone Gallery. (Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels/Photo by David Regen)

WHAT: [“Claudia Comte: No Melon No Lemon”](#)

WHEN: Through March 21

WHERE: Gladstone Gallery, 530 West 21st Street, New York City

A tickled minimalism spills forth from Swiss-born Comte’s first solo outing in the United States. Organic forms carved from natural wood, the artist’s geometric sculptures — “Sculpture Objects” — are set against, upon, and within a built environment of soaring plywood walls and plinths. The site-specific backdrop of

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yellow- and black-striped gradients and wall-works imbues the sculptures with a buzzing, Saturday morning Hanna-Barbera energy.

Titled “No Melon No Lemon,” a double palindrome, the exhibition cultivates a jolting conversation between its various components. Sculptural forms run the gamut from geometric to anthropomorphic to totemic, presented alone and in corresponding pairs. These doublings are the exhibition’s strongest, with the economy of minimal forms energized by the juxtaposition, as in two arched tubes intersected at their respective midpoints.

The installation in which the sculptures reside was built by the Berlin-based artist during a month-long residency prior the exhibition’s opening — it functions as a habitat, viewing environment, and oblique participant in Comte’s congress of geometries. Constructed of large plywood panels, the structure retains the hints of imperfection that define the surface of the sculptures themselves — the lines on the burnt-black wall sections, though evenly spaced, seem hand-drawn, just as the polished wood surfaces reflect cracks and burlled knots. This thematic intimacy belies the scale of the space, which towers some twenty feet toward the gallery’s rafters.

A clinical perfection reigns, however, in wall-mounted canvases matching the yellow gradient, tall rectangles arranged horizontally and vertically in two sets of eight, and a pair of circular canvases. The correspondence with the sculptural forms is particularly strong in the latter, whose twinned circles echo further sphericisms in wood down below: two donuts impaled on a rigid cone. Such cartoonish play may seem a world away from the austerity of minimalist sculpture, but for Comte, those roads converge in yellow and wood.