

The New York Times

'Displayed' at the Anton Kern Gallery

Art in Review
by Ken Johnson



Moyra Davey's "Newsstand No. 2" in "Displayed," a show that highlights display apparatus as pieces of art itself. Credit Courtesy of the artist; Anton Kern Gallery, New York and Murray Guy, New York

When you exhibit a work of art, there are two things going on. There's the object and there's the presentational apparatus, which might be a frame, a pedestal, a shelf or a vitrine. Also involved are the gallery architecture, the structure of the exhibiting institution and, in the broadest terms, the art world social system. Usually, viewers are supposed to focus on the object and take for granted the apparatus.

In these postmodern times, however, many artists — from Joseph Beuys to Jeff Koons and Carol Bove — have made the displaying part an object in its own right. Organized by the artist and curator Matthew Higgs, this excellent show at Anton Kern Gallery presents works by 18 artists exemplifying a trend he calls "displayism."

A ramshackle stage set with the artist's signature — Josh Smith — scrawled in paint on its canvas backdrop implies that the object is the absent artist himself. An installation by Nancy Shaver resembling part of a flea market consists of materials from an antiques store she operates in Hudson, N.Y., called Henry. It includes old things like balustrade knobs and a chain made of bottle caps, with price tags attached, that viewers can purchase mostly for under \$20.

Funky sculptural works by B. Wurtz — cobbled from odd pieces of wood, wire and metal cans — display things like white tube socks and plastic bags. A lovely, Walker Evans-like series of photographs of New York sidewalk newsstands from 1994, by Moyra Davey, turns a familiar type of public display into a kind of vernacular art form.