

# The New York Times

## Art in Review

### John Bock

*Anton Kern Gallery  
532 West 20th Street, Chelsea  
Through tomorrow*

The German artist John Bock's fourth solo show in New York is a haphazard sculptural treasure hunt installed on the gallery's roof. Visitors ascend a rickety, spiral staircase and exit through a passageway in the ceiling. (Tight squeezes and through-the-rabbit-hole shifts are his stock in trade, as seen in the show's other work, an absurdist riff on "Psycho" by way of the Collyer Brothers, projected in the back room.)

The installation's improvisational, my-kid-could-strew-that appearance is deceptive. The sprawling assemblage of charismatic thingamabobs, jury-rigged from buckets, mittens, toothpaste, furniture, eggshells and bricks (to name just a few items) actually has the carefully orchestrated chaos of a Rube Goldberg machine. A Constructivist motif ties objects together. The dominant palette is red, black and white; a metal filing cabi-

net tipped on its side echoes Tatlin's "Monument to the Third International," as does, in this context, the spiral staircase. But the outdoor setting itself provides some of the best material. Exhaust fans blast on and off. Construction equipment makes a racket in a neighboring lot. A crooked building-in-progress by Frank Gehry gleams overhead like a reification of Mr. Bock's nonsensical scheme.

But for all its bright activity, the installation feels somehow abandoned without the animating presence of the artist. On opening night Mr. Bock guided tours of the rooftop; now an incoherent Beuysian diagram serves as his surrogate.

Site and artist are reunited in a rough cut of a film that Mr. Bock shot while constructing the show. Projected on a handkerchief at the base of the stairs, it's easy to miss. Visitors will get a second chance in December, when the gallery opens a temporary site to exhibit the finished film alongside the staircase, broken down into sculptures, a dramatic entrance scavenged back into art.

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