

MODERN PAINTERS

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Reviews



NAYLAND BLAKE

LOCATION ONE

One would be justified in expecting the worst from a speech given under the cover of a cardboard box—especially if it constitutes a performance intended to honor an artist. (Un)luckily the performance was not as fraught as it initially appeared to be, consisting instead of a humorous recitation of stories about dead pets by Carmelita Tropicana, whose motifs of secrecy and cute animals, paired with mundane materials like beat-up cardboard, were par for the course for Nayland Blake, who organized the event in conjunction with his mini-retrospective at Location One. Blake's well-regarded and influential career spans 25 years, and he has sorely lacked for a museum-scale reconsideration of his work. His sculptures mix tchotchkes (witch figurines, fuzzy bunnies, plastic flowers) and delicate kitsch elements like Mardi Gras beads and rhinestones with dingy, carnal elements such as fetish gear and the kind of scratched mirrors you might find in filthy public restrooms or the back of a dive bar. In one seemingly innocuous piece, for example, a stuffed Easter rabbit sits near a desultory pile of kibble-size fur rounds, similar to its pink nose and yellow pelt, that have pilled off around it in a pile that seems about to form a new animal. It is a striking portrait of a subject in a state of psychic and physical splitting. Blake's production, like that of another pioneer of gay camp from the 1960s and '70s, the painter-writer Joe Brainard, turns objects of everyday trash or tackiness into emblems of social and sexual disturbance. —EVA DÍAZ