

4 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Jack Pierson's assembled works; Marsha Pels's conceptual jewels; Gordon Hookey's takes on racism; and Emily Mason's exuberant abstract paintings.

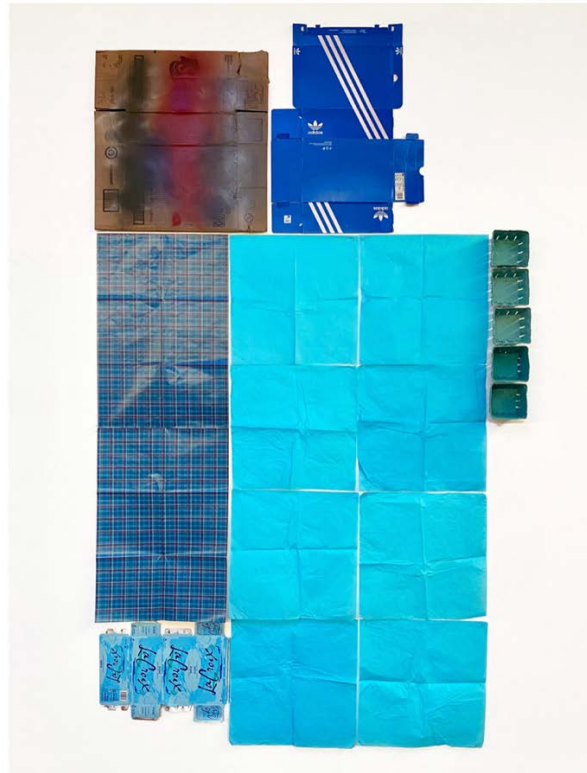


Jack Pierson's "Pink" (2020) in the show "Five New Pieces" at Kerry Schuss Gallery. Jack Pierson and Kerry Schuss Gallery

Jack Pierson

Through Feb. 13. Kerry Schuss Gallery, 73 Leonard Street, Manhattan; (212) 291-9918; kerryschussgallery.com.

The deep content of Jack Pierson's art is the vulnerability of life devoured by time. His primary materials are scavenged objects that he fashions into temporary arrangements, not finished artworks. His well-known word sculptures, for example, are basically detachable assemblages made of the bulky mismatched letters from old various signs nailed individually to the wall. What they spell out can be raw or tender: "You Don't Own Me," "Stay" and "His Quiet Waters." His installation works center on one or two pieces of old furniture — a small dressing table, for instance — and can suggest a corner of someone's modest past. And his lush photographs, whether of beautiful young men or tossed-off moments from his own life, have an overt freshness that we know will wilt.



“Blue” (2020), an assembly of blue papers, small berry cartons, a flattened Adidas box and a piece of spray-painted cardboard. Jack Pierson and Kerry Schuss Gallery

Thanks to lockdown, the works in “[Five New Pieces](#),” Pierson’s show at Kerry Schuss Gallery, are made from materials around his studio: assorted sheets of plastic, paper, foil and fabric that he pinned to the wall in squared-off arrangements that resemble paintings but with none of their solidity. “Blue” is an assembly of blue papers, a row of small berry cartons, a flattened Adidas box and a piece of spray-painted cardboard. “Pink” builds on the deep red of an Indian paisley bedspread, with flattened boxes for fruit and beer, Brillo and Coke. And “Empire,” mostly aluminum foil and clear plastic, is a clear homage to Andy Warhol and his famous film of the same name. “Xerox” punctuates dark garbage bags with ribbon, egg-carton foam and an old jazz club poster, while the relatively careworn “Ode” employs foam rubber, Styrofoam and two pieces of cardboard with orbs of spray-painted black and red. This piece conjures most directly the work of Robert Rauschenberg, to whom Pierson owes an obvious debt but also manages to circumvent with the clarity of his compositions, his color and that fragile, distinctly Piersonian elegance.

ROBERTA SMITH