



Martin Beck, “Presentation”

Until Sun Nov 18

[47 Canal](#)

47 Canal St, New York

Exhibitions

Installation

Time Out says

Mon Nov 12 2012

Martin Beck’s Conceptual installations, which integrate archival material with display fixtures and sculptural objects, delve into how aesthetic and ideological developments in graphic design and architecture reflect changes in society at large. Some of his recent work, for example, has examined the 1970 International Design Conference in Aspen, Colorado, an annual gathering sponsored by such corporations as IBM and Alcoa. That year, the event’s suave, liberal organizers clashed with fractious, left-leaning attendees—including the activist art collective Ant Farm and philosopher Jean Baudrillard—who called for a less industry-focused and more socially and environmentally aware approach to the applied arts.

The artist’s current show looks at the same historical period, though in a more allusive and open-ended way. In the gallery’s front room are three works: a photograph of the moon, taken by the artist; a wall graphic, featuring driving directions from Haight-Ashbury to the site of the legendary ’60s commune Drop City; and a fabric wall treatment made up of pieces of white canvas sewn together in a pattern of interlocking polygonal shapes that conflates art and interior design. In the back room is a suite of prints depicting, among other things, a sign outside Drop City forbidding photographs, as well as an image from the first moon landing.

By the end of the 1970s, the counterculture’s language of emancipation and self-actualization had been co-opted by advertisers, to transform a restive country into a nation of consumers. Here, Beck reprises a moment just prior, to meditate on the issues of freedom and control, and resistance and collaboration, and the interconnections among art, design, society and capital.

—Anne Doran