

ART & DESIGN

# ‘Stay in Love’

Art in Review

By KAREN ROSENBERG    JAN. 16, 2014

*Lisa Cooley*

*107 Norfolk Street, near Delancey Street, Lower East Side*

*Laurel Gitlen*

*122 Norfolk Street, at Rivington Street, Lower East Side*

*Through Feb. 2*

The expertly packaged two-part group show “Stay in Love,” about obsessive working practices — “monomania and manual repetition” — is a sign of the Lower East Side’s maturation; the exhibition sometimes looks as if it belonged in Chelsea, or even in the contemporary galleries at the Museum of Modern Art, not necessarily a compliment. In the end, its split personality saves it from becoming too anodyne.

The Lisa Cooley gallery’s part of the show is a mostly black-and-white affair with an impressive number of older contemporary works by the likes of On Kawara, Bernd and Hilla Becher and Yayoi Kusama. If the list sounds

predictable, the curator, Chris Sharp, has a few surprises up his sleeve. One is an in-depth look at Mierle Laderman Ukeles's signature performance project "Touch Sanitation" (1970-1980), in which she exchanged handshakes with thousands of New York City Sanitation workers. Another is a crisp little painting of a water glass by the octogenarian German artist Peter Dreher, who has studied the same subject for four decades.

At Laurel Gitlen, the works are more playful and colorful; an exuberant Josh Smith name-painting, an inspired B. Wurtz totem made from little more than wire, shoelaces and a red plastic bag. Here, obsession becomes synonymous with preciousness, in works like Kyle Thurman's delicate floral motif, rendered in flower pigment, and Andy Boot's tiny squirts of watercolor, and the romance promised by the show's title is finally delivered.

A version of this review appears in print on January 17, 2014, on Page C36 of the New York edition with the headline: 'Stay in Love'.

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