

The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

‘Jim Lee and the Cream Tones’

FEB. 26, 2015

Art in Review

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER

There have been many attempts over the years to merge painting and sculpture. Robert Rauschenberg’s combines — a neologism inspired by Alexander Calder’s mobiles — combined the two practices, while Donald Judd’s 1965 essay “Specific Objects” identified a similar hybrid strain in 1960s art. Jim Lee takes on the project with a certain humor and humility, acknowledging his predecessors but offering a subtle contemporary spin on the artistic impulse to remake or deconstruct mediums.

The show’s title, “Jim Lee and the Cream Tones,” sounds like a ’50s or ’60s pop ensemble, and Mr. Lee does use neutrally hued materials, punctuated with occasional bursts of color. Most of the works here are subtitled “Cream Tone,” and the show’s invitation, created by Mr. Lee, features a photograph of Gerhard Richter’s daughter pointing a gun in his studio, next to which Mr. Lee has digitally inserted one of his cream-colored creations.

Two-dimensional works — so, basically, paintings — are arranged in an eclectic grid on one wall. Mr. Lee makes subtle interventions in their patchwork geometries with staples, chalk and rubber, but some of the works veer into collage and sculpture, bubbling out from the wall like an old car fender or an organic protuberance. Other works verge more teasingly into sculpture. “Untitled (Cream Tone Construction)” (2014) is made of rubber, steel, wire and bungee cords and looks like buttocks jutting from the wall. It’s a curious object, but like most of Mr. Lee’s work, it’s so deadpan you’re not sure whether it’s a challenge or an anachronism, or just an antidote to our large-print, bold-statement art moment.

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Through March 15

A version of this review appears in print on February 27, 2015, on page C23 of the New York edition with the headline: Jim Lee. [Order Reprints](#) | [Today's Paper](#) | [Subscribe](#)