

## Darren Bader: The American Express Holiday Show

30 Orchard St ▪ Nov 20, 2021 - Jan 2, 2022



Darren Bader plunders, extracts, destroys, calibrates, and reconciles. He is an object maestro, rousing potential in a series of diffuse objet trouvés. Unification comes by way of proximity; no glue, physical or otherwise, affirms the objects' relativity, merely the logical orientation of things-in-space.

Bader is dealing with ideas, figuring out each object's beingness, and finding values in combinations. What is encoded in a gizmo? Each acquired object presents a certain puissance. It is then up to the artist, viewer, and collector to decipher its relationality—a holy trinity of sorts. Dogma is bucked, though Bader certainly suggests the possibility of real beauty in these assemblages. His reflexive sensibility for matter and language begets the production of what might be called "sincere combustions." He presents a series of arrivals, albeit unstable ones. As soon as you believe you've come to terms with something, the precarity of intention thwarts any confidence in understanding. The viewer is moved to

oscillate between “idk” and “aha!” and then back again: a perpetual disambiguation. The volatility of intention versus perception is thus put at stake. There is no resolution, instead a cultivation of raw ideas. Bader is extracting latent vitality from his materials in order to investigate authorship, art and nonart, beauty, Love, the market, and legitimacy.

A cinephilic predilection for images clearly undergirds “The American Express Holiday Show.” Show biz refuse proliferates in the space. An ecstatic Hugh Jackman is doubled, his likeness effaced by a confluence of signatures. Dixie Carter is a crown jewel above Elmgreen & Dragset's *Incidental Self (No. 21)*. Tyler Durden's Amex card rests in the pocket of an elephant sapien. All of the objects comprising the exhibition were culled from a ravenous period of hunter-gathering online. He mined the internet then made these items available for his own use and misuse.

A curious slippage between object and thing is foregrounded here. Inert objects allegedly transform to things, but can they be resuscitated? Thingness is contestable. Use value is rendered incogent. Absurdity and banality arm wrestle without a clear winner. Amalgams of images, deliberations, object-things emerge as though they were always correlative. “Now what?” happens by way of Bader's non-rhetorical approach; the viewer is left to her own devices, consigned to punctums. Each piece sits in space in the way of a Blinky Palermo: waiting patiently for mental activation.

To experience the work is to witness Darren Bader hanging out in his own world. He surreptitiously follows ideas without disrupting their courses. The works on display grant us access to his compositional acumen, but we are deprived of details. Bader is pathologically bound to satisfied combinations and the possibility of transcendence. What is compelling here is not a proposal that these assemblages *are* meaningful, but that there is a chance they *could* be.

—Reilly Davidson

## Artist's Text

I had plenty to say about this show—a doc of roughly 3,000 words. But as the show's come together these past couple weeks, I see that little of what I thought crucial—and in part critical—is in fact needed. Nevertheless, some pull quotes:

*My partner's pregnancy called for additional social precaution. I was going to have a dependant. The waning light was worrisomely waxing toward winter...*

*I then drove my teeming trove back across the East River.*

*Lots of humans = lots of makers = lots of ways to create new stuff = plenty of ways to further trash the planet.*

On to that which remanes germaine... Last fall I imprudently ran up my company Amex to buy materials for a body of sculpture I wanted to make. It was a 3-month buying and bidding binge—a rigorous, eye-numbing, online search-research-spend-ship-repeat cycle. Once I'd binge-paused (blanching at my debt tally), I got myself a small studio (my first in 10 years).

8 months later, this show. A sculpture series primarily meant to tread ground I hadn't considered since 2011, an approach to found-object sculpture requiring no words (let's pretend you're not reading this). No homage to the assisted

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readymade, no attempted monuments to the used and discarded, rather a means to fortuitously compose in texture-color-image-context—to see what compositions I'd find legitimate. A key tenet was/remains: no adhesives or fastening hardware used, except when hanging objects commonly intended for walls.

Crucial notes on the show's pricing structure:

- Each sculptural component purchased using my company AMEX card ending in 5006: **\$1400**
- Each sculptural component purchased without using my company AMEX card ending in 5006: **\$0**
- Any additional production costs: **\$0**

To be clear, the sculptures you see are mostly mixes: items bought with Amex-5006; objects previously collected for studio use; objects found on the bountiful streets of Carroll Gardens and elsewhere. Also of note, many Amex-5006 items were not used.

To briefly lapse into my habitual writing style... Art: protean (r)elations, spiritual instantaneousnesses, pattern recognitions, many-faced proxy, the wind beneath some wings, the gift that may yet keep on giving. Here I present a holiday show. Gifts for those you feel like gifting to. Works for wall-and-floor (and a few for floor-only).

Happy Holidays,

Darren B[ader]