

The following essay was written by **Gareth Kaye** for *Chicago Spleen*, as a review. It has been adopted as the artist's and gallerists statement.

If we consider monumentality as a preoccupation with time that refuses to acknowledge itself as being subject to its machinations, the work in Ari Norris's *Just Dust* seems to be operating on opposite terms. Instead of pleading to eternity, Norris appeals to something that actively invokes an expectation for disappearance only to stubbornly stay still. At hand is an office space cataclysm alongside four delicate wall works playing apophenic games of art-historical eye spy. The show feels like if you turn around it will be gone, and I would argue this is another gesture designed to circumvent monumental thinking. Whereas a monument requires of itself a certain feigned indifference to its viewership – eternity can have no real audience – Norris's sculptures demonstrate tremendous fealty to any given eye.

If you aren't a blue-chip artist exhibiting in warehouse spaces, or have a team of assistants to aid in elaborate fabrication processes, the pursuit of large-scale sculpture often isn't feasible. This simple fact makes *And This is the Moment*, Norris's precarious filing cabinet tsunami, feel like a refreshing reacquaintance with the possibilities that games of scale can offer a practice. The entire show toys with trompe l'oeil, a tried and true Chicago crowd pleaser, but Norris's sculpture nakedly reveals the kind of gimmickry inherent to the technique.

In the interest of Midwestern humility, Norris doesn't try to make any of his materials – wood and paint for the filing cabinets, paint and resin for the wall works that mimic styrofoam – seem like something more than they are. Rather, like the radioactive green relish that blankets a hot dog, Norris prompts his wares to look less like themselves in order to express their capacities in unexpected ways. Comparisons to Chris Bradley or Tony Tasset, whose underrated *Snow Sculpture for Chicago*, sits just down the street from 1709 W. Chicago, feel inevitable, but Norris doesn't seem so much interested in verisimilitude as he does with sputtering on representation's brake pad, keeping the work just short of tipping over the edge of being too much. A picaresque of utilitarian characters breaks out on the filing cabinets' tumbling surfaces, a roll of painters tape scales the incline like a skilled alpinist, others watch the unfolding catastrophe from the summit. Pencils shoot through what ought to be steel, erasers hold on for dear life, and stray skids of blue tape and scuff marks become painterly embellishments on the sides.

As for the titular series *Just Dust*, four painted resin works mimic dusty, pareidolia inducing chunks of styrofoam. Each instance appearing as if dust had settled on it *just so* to create the impression of four wintry paintings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder: *Hunters in the Snow*, *The Census at Bethlehem*, *Winter Landscape with Skaters and a Bird Trap*, as well as *Adoration of the Kings in the Snow*. Each painting gently rests on the surface and it feels as if any stray breeze – or sudden gust of air should the sculpture collapse – would wipe all traces of the image from the surface. Norris has made the move to depopulate the landscapes, complicating the painting's reproduction and proposing that maybe what is bound to last is rarely human. Styrofoam will last longer than your favorite painting, and the illusion of a looming cataclysm will induce more anxiety than sudden clatter of metal spilling over. All is still, but wanting to go further, like the awkward silence at a funeral, just the thought of a laugh will cause the whole thing to come down. Ashes to ashes to dust dust as they say.

The following essay was written by **Esau McGhee**, as a press release:
It has been adopted as the artist's and gallerists statement.

Historically, sculpture has required if not requested a more Formal Approach. Layers of language on material that summate to *what is the work doing and why is it doing it?* Stilted and cold with marginal if not infinitesimal levels humor has been the norm. Anonymous comparisons for names have not nor will they be spoken because here there is no need. We all have been taught better via our institutions of higher learning, respectively. As a viewer doubt is allowed even encouraged however, only through discourse. One could even venture to say that contemporary sculpture requires a discourse. As the maker contradiction is fine, perfection is not necessary but allowed. These are not rules or suggestion just a Formal Approach.

Ari has made what I would refer to as a successful body of work. How is this you may ask?! Location, location, location! Ari keeps a foot in Chicago while moving the other foot briskly about in other spaces thus avoiding our local crab barrel politics. I view this work as a successful experiment that allows room for discussion, humor, and growth. There's more than a possible duality here. Yet, I certainly hope there's no labels but for some a label is necessary. And in all fairness labels aren't a bad thing. But a label could cause these works to possibly forfeit their diplomacy or better yet their neutrality. They (the works) are free, open and jokey. They're not mired in the Boys Club Culture that can dominate sculpture with an all but admirable willful ignorance. The work will leave you feeling roused from suspended animation and ushered into a world of light and minimal color where there's enthusiasm sans it's reference to academia. To put it plainly, despite their attempt...the works remain digestible and serious. The only question is: can you see yourself in them?