

Artruss slabs just before a grimy bridge underpass. It's a quotidian atmosphere—industrial and quick-service (like the McDonald's down the street). Ricocheting inside, Ari Norris' solo exhibition "Fully Filtered" is that cig at the end of the day on the construction site nearby.

Norris' tongue-trip painting-adjacent works begin on the right then beckon ad infinitum to the left. "Gesture Arrestor #4" is the first corrugated drop cloth masked in geometric trellis. Shoe-print scuffs and peeling-paint scabs become signals to a beguiling process interior to Norris; it's the artist's tertiary palette turned painting substrate. The industrial gestalt of it all is homophonic: palette (painting), pallet (transport structure) and palate (just the residue of a taste). It's withholding in perpetuity, constantly making withdrawals. Smokes and tinges. It's not perfect repetition; the armored grids are different sizes, there's diverse splatters, some canvases are sliced, smacked and sealed. Speckles upon speckles upon droops upon drools upon drops. "Gesture Arrestor #5 (patched)" grimaces after a quick mop of a microfiber cloth.

The grounded monstrosity in the center is a stagnant utterance excavated from the gutter (gutter not as an epithet, but something like the seam and guts of a building). "Spectacle of Spectacles" grids the same pattern as the painting structures. It's another homophone work, this time derived from minimalist Charlotte Posenenske. Described in the exhibition statement as being spectacles (glasses) intertextually culled, the audience becomes "doll house size" when inside (apparently). There's a difference, though, between monumental sculpture shrinking the viewer or making them aware of their own body—and "Spectacle of Spectacles" does the latter. At the opening, a quick skulk and surveil were all people seemed to do in the center of the sculpture. That viewing nook didn't shrink, but it repulsed and became absent. It's the vanishing point of the show, not the focal point.

In the spirit of referentially purveying, think of Robert Smithson's "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" (1967). Documenting the area's "monuments," Smithson paradoxically allegorized fountains and bridges (even sexualized). He wouldn't surmise "a crass anthropomorphic conclusion," so he demurely said to himself, "It was there." Smithson prognosticated in that manner: a little sneaky but sardonically ironic. Smithson admired "zero panorama" and "ruins in reverse," becoming debris as architectural blueprint so they "rise into ruin before they are built." This falls in line with Posenenske—always an art-world misanthrope, the work aligned in that manner. Martin Herbert's thoughts on her "Square Tube Series" were that they didn't allow audience interaction. Or, for her view, the consumers. This is Herbert musing on her closing of a New York show: "Picture Charlotte Posenenske looking down, half-amused. Picture her looking away."

An HVAC engineer in arrested development, Norris' inert monuments are grub and then guts; a preservation gesture kept in prep forever. It's hard not to remark on the cliché gripe of Chicagoans witnessing empty machines along the never-ending Kennedy highway rebuild; those trucks are ready to pave, but always just preparing. It's those manners of refusal versus refuse, of when stagnation equals progress or, just, equals stagnation.

The in-process-in-stasis feeling for Norris is a romantic one, though. The white noise of air ducts languorously breathes. Its entropic trick is a trip. Not a stumble; a flick-to-splat long speculation. When the cig chars to the filter, this solo exhibition says: admire the ash.

*Ari Norris "Fully Filtered" at Artruss, 4553 West Diversey.*