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## NEW YORK

### Dike Blair

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BLAIR CONTINUES TO MINE the cerebral ground of ethereal and corporeal space, attempting to discover the portals between them. While such cathartic ideas carry the promise of charged discovery, meditation practitioners have long realized that the dynamic of finding the open doors they seek is often a quietly contemplative, even lonely experience. As such, the artist typically challenges himself to excavate notions of transcendence and transformation from the matter and processes of daily life, and his past work has guided him through the mechanics of not only artmaking but also graphic and construction design.

The lessons learned from those investigations appear in the two sculptures on view. Each piece comprises shallow, painted wooden shipping crates, and despite the art-about-art reference, the promise of an unopened package sparks curiosity in just about everyone, setting the artist's game afoot. Yet Blair makes plain the cupboard is bare, as the side of one crate in both pieces rests on the floor to reveal its emptiness. The panels' interiors, however, present shadowy, unfinished compositions, like gangplanks luring viewers into magicians' vanishing cabinets. On the other side of the cabinets, in *Dance, Dance, Dance*, 2011, the artist offers compositions mined from the benday-dot print process in which bullets of color produce a recognizable image. For Blair, though, the real interest is in the negative space, and the dots are writ too large to offer a straightforward narrative. On two of the three crates, one dot simulates a peephole, drawing the viewer close. On the third, a photorealistically rendered eye threatens to wink. On the two crates composing *Hard Shadows*, 2012, Blair pumps the stoic autonomy of Constructivism to less playful effect—perhaps a suggestion to the parochial-minded to loosen up.

Despite his penchant for visual abstraction, the artist obviously takes great pleasure in his talent for the aforementioned photorealism. The selections of gouache on paper depict actual doors to spa wet rooms. Anyone who enjoys a good steam knows that behind such doors lies a space for transcendent contemplation, but for one piece Blair channels his inner geek, rendering the interior of a glazed ceramic bowl as a spaceship on a dark ground of speckled stars.

The hermetic nature of the sculptures and paintings makes clear this artist is content to keep his practice personal, if not entirely private. Still, the slickness of Blair's work is enticing, using the gaze to lull viewers into a state of transfexion. Stand and look long enough, and liftoff will occur. —Deborah Wilk

**Dike Blair**  
Installation  
view of the  
exhibition  
"Sculpture,"  
2013.

The three  
elements in the  
foreground:  
*Dance, Dance,  
Dance*, 2011.  
Paint on wood  
and framed  
mixed media  
on paper,  
collectively  
6 x 4½ x 18 ft.

The two  
elements in the  
background:  
*Hard Shadows*,  
2012. Paint  
on wood  
and framed  
mixed media  
on paper,  
collectively  
6 x 5½ x 7 ft.

