

NIGHT GALLERY

Summer Guthery, “JPW3,” *Artforum*, November 2014.

ARTFORUM

Critics’ Picks: JPW3

By Summer Guthery

NIGHT GALLERY
2276 East 16th Street
October 10–November 15

“32 Leaves, I don’t, The Face of Smoke,” artist and writer JPW3’s solo debut, is premised on the presence and absence of sound. The exhibition is split into two areas: Outside the gallery, the artist has created a Japanese-style teahouse in which he has placed a sculpture with the egg-carton texture of anechoic foam. The “foam” has been made in popcorn kernels and then cast in aluminum, a material choice that reverses the chamber’s function from absorbing sound to reverberating it. Within the gallery, a loud sound track sends a racket of bangs and scrapes, a cartoonish whoosh through a space filled with five monolithic sculptures that approximate the form of an abstracted race car. To make these, the artist began with aluminum frames and then dipped each in colorful wax. On the walls are several large-scale works on canvas that have been painted with a thick wax and embedded with layers of receipts, tuning forks, rolling papers, and detritus from his studio.

The artist makes much of his work out of wax, which has formal and conceptual resonance: It’s known for its plasticity—the substance molds to temperature as definitely as sound defines itself against ambient noise—and as recording medium, the material out of which early vinyl records were pressed. In fact, JPW3’s vocabulary here is almost entirely rooted in sound and heat, getting at the connective friction between those two elements. Race-car driver Ayrton Senna, popcorn, and Zig-Zag rolling papers are recurring motifs. In the back of the gallery, a large electric cooker has been filled with wax and then popcorn and a tire rim. It’s heated during the day and then turned off to harden each night. JPW3 lays his work out like an arrangement of notes and rests, individual pieces reverberating off each other to reach a harmonic whole.

