



Alice Könitz, *Pantry*, 2016, bamboo, copper, wood, plastic crate, plastic cups, aluminum can, string, nuts, pickles, dimensions variable.

The black foamcore neck of *Periscope*, 2016, extended out of the skylight of an otherwise empty room, its mirrors visible thanks to a circular cutaway at the base of the tube, which rested atop a spindly pedestal with thin metal legs and two royal-purple shelves. The pedestal indicated the work was a tool and a sculpture, and neatly summarized the ambivalent status of all of the objects in Alice Könitz's "Commonwealth," named for the gallery in which it was situated. Könitz used this loaded term as a springboard to assemble a collection of "social sculptures" that echoed the artist-run gallery's mission statement: "to learn . . . how generosity and hospitality can sustain our coexistence." Peeking into *Periscope*'s viewfinder, one was able to survey the anonymous rooflines of the Koreatown buildings surrounding the second-floor gallery, and to enjoy a glimpse of the neighborhood from a rare vantage point. And yet the work additionally demonstrated technology's mutability, how it may be co-opted just as easily for social uplift and communal connection as for military empowerment. After all, the periscope allows its viewer to indulge a voyeuristic desire to scrutinize without bearing scrutiny. While playful, the sculpture evoked a tool for martial surveillance, likening the gallery to a sinister submarine.

This installation of six objects in four rooms offered the visitor various possibilities for engagement. He or she might kick back with friends in *Untitled*, 2016, a trio of ready-made hammocks stretched between four walls. Crossing one another at various levels such that their occupants' limbs would overlap, the hammocks demarcated a tricorned interior in which a similarly triangular cup holder was suspended from the ceiling by strings. Könitz clearly delights in creating these formal harmonies. Her objects were united by a vibrant primary and secondary palette of orange, yellow, purple, and Caribbean and navy blue. The hues of *Untitled* and *Periscope* recurred in *Kiosk*, 2016, the show's most complex construction, a freestanding plywood sculpture whose three angular faces were painted with thin washes of color. *Kiosk* suggests an inscrutable Eames furniture prototype, a stilted conglomeration of triangles, circles, and rectangles. During the exhibition's opening, the kiosk's interior was activated by a "Space Operator," who invited viewers to interact with the show's other offerings.

However, the participatory spirit of *Kiosk* was deflated by the adjacent works, *Urform I* and *Urform II*, both 2010, a duo of bamboo wall works that evoked grates, drains, or grills. Equally lame was *Pantry*, 2016, a precarious framework of bamboo poles connected with copper pipe fittings. A sliced can of coconut water hung pitifully from one of its struts. It lent a sparse bit of iconography that might be interpreted both as a reference to this beverage's recent surge in popularity among millennials and to the flavors associated with immigrant communities, many of whom have been displaced as these same millennials gentrify their neighborhoods.

Könitz's sculptures recalled the hard-edge geometric abstractions of the historical avant-gardes, and echoed those movements' wide-eyed collectivist desires. Yet as furniture for actual living (sleeping, eating, socializing), the artist's objects were, at best, marginally effective. Their provisional construction ultimately revealed a dispiriting lack of conviction, less than what is needed to sustain a proper utopian commonwealth. Maybe too much emphasis was placed on the service side of this commonwealth, and not enough on the infrastructure that might support it. Works like *Pantry* demonstrated a severe paucity that brought to mind the shortages that were to plague this ill-fated communist union. Stocked only with nuts and canned pickles, the artist's *Pantry* looked rather bare and sad. Instead of the abundance promised by collective labor, here all we had were room-temperature bar snacks.