
Art in Review

■ Playing with architectural motifs ■ New spin on Duchamp ■ A Wright house made of pizza boxes.

Steven Brower

'Downsize'

Lombard Fried Gallery

470 Broome Street

SoHo

Through July 27

In his first solo exhibition in New York City, Steven Brower seems to have a little too much on his mind, most of it alluding to contemporary Americana and the way it gets built. His exhibition includes small, brushy oil paintings of picnic tables and tractors and a complex "Locker/Armoire" containing Surrealistically altered carpenter's tools, pencils and a pair of handmade shoes. His strongest talent is for an ironic miniaturization that sometimes gets carried away with cuteness, as when he builds a replica of Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House out of Domino's Pizza boxes. (The company's owner is an avid Wright collector.)

Also on view are a pile of teensy garbage bags similar to those carpenters put out after a day's work; a tiny length of ditch, complete with a shovel, that is little too reminiscent of Michael Ashkin's work, and a stack of three spackling-compound buckets that has been cleverly turned into a construction site through the introduction of a tiny staircase and spackled walls.

The best work in the show, a large model of a generic ranch-style house, seems to comment on the skewed priorities brought about by excessive materialism: decked out with American-dream accessories — a gold weather vane, a grill, a pool, a doghouse, basketball court, a satellite dish and a swimming pool — the house itself is just a shell. Mr. Brower needs to focus more and avoid jokey titles, but his first show outlines a large and complex subject and displays an impressive ease with materials of all kinds.

ROBERTA SMITH
