

“Proofs” Installation by Nate Millstein

This installation occupies a psychological space, inviting viewers to slow down and reconsider the value of objects that are typically overlooked, ignored, or discarded. In a world where mass-produced items are considered accumulated waste, I explore how these things—often reduced to garbage in the collective consciousness—are intricately tied to us. They are products of our design and labor, created to serve our needs, yet they are routinely abandoned once they have served their purpose. In this tension I see a reflection: we imprint our desires, needs, and anxieties onto these things, and in turn, we embody their complexities.

At first glance, my work belongs to the language of minimalism—employing simple, angular forms and muted colors. In contrast, the sculptures are not a product of standardized production; rather they are imbued with seams, cracks and irregularities. The works join gestural attributes from functional objects, but when combined, the sculptures cease to function as a whole. The oxford shirt weakens the already brittle plaster pipe. Wood glue is stronger than polyester, but shatters under pressure. In a society dominated by industrialization and uniformity, there is room for error.

By attempting to “mass-produce” objects through my own hands, I engage in a paradoxical act. The more I attempt to mimic the precision of the object of desire, the more I inadvertently transfer my own inabilities onto them. These sculptures are not exact replicas; they are also not trompe l'oeils. These non-functional works attempt to reveal the friction between the desire for efficiency and the reality of human limitation. This confronts the tension between labor and automation, perfection and error, the mechanical and the personal.

Through the act of production these works demand my attention, my labor, and my care. I am now working for them. Once they are complete, they can finally take on the luxury of rest, perhaps for the first time. What do we do when we can't work? Is rest possible? What does an air conditioner do with nobody to turn it on?