

Flash Art



Cameron Rowland, *Bait, Inc.*, 2014. Installation view, ESSEX STREET, New York.

Cameron Rowland

ESSEX STREET, New York

There's not much in the way of gloss or high production value in Cameron Rowland's current show at Essex Street, "Bait, Inc": acrylic boxes, security measures installed at points of transaction in liquor stores and 24-hour delis; segments of copper pipes piled high in a cardboard box in disrepair, resting wearily in a plastic crate; center clips of pipe and wire systems commonly installed behind walls, here mounted for display, their ends abruptly and inexplicably missing; contraptions of obscure utility or function, steel visible beneath their coat of chipped white paint.

The objects are not exercises in new Minimalism, but rather bleak readymades culled from *mise en scènes* of economic distress: *Pass-Thru* (2014) exemplifies these cubes that small shops commonly use, one rotating plexiglass cube housed inside another, to "pass through" liquor or small grocery items at storefronts in lower-income neighborhoods. The transparent barriers in banks are often bulletproof, but most corner stores will use standard plexiglass to save on costs. Inherent inequalities in bureaucratic processes are illustrated with "Bait, Inc," an empty corporation that Rowland established as part of the

Community Development Entity under the New Markets Tax Credit program; and a rental agreement the artist drafted for loaning artwork using a Rent-A-Center rental application, making plain the discrepancies in rights for rental and credit that are leveraged against the lower-income consumer. In *Loot* (2014), the copper pipes used here are not worth very much as scrap metal on the open market, but provide access to a wealth of resources to everyone inside the closed system of distribution for clean water, gas, wiring for electrical currents — a currency of immediate value.

These artifacts of false security measures complicate boundaries of property and ownership — remnants, perhaps, of the shifting burden of the financial crisis of recent years, reminding us that the recession has not ended for many participating in the consumer economy, and the extended state of vulnerability where many of its participants wait it out. This is the ground-level economy, one of rusted infrastructure, where copper is the new gold standard.

— Jennifer Piejko
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