

Art in America

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

You Missed It: Ethan Shoshan

by *jon leon* 09/03/09

A group show of mixed media work organized by Ethan Shoshan "I'm always thinking of you even when I'm kissing another boy" opened and closed yesterday at Envoy Gallery. This show was part of their "One Day at a Time" series, so you won't see it if you didn't set aside time for it yesterday.



What you missed was a display of New York-based artist Ethan Shoshan's trove of treasures, here listed in no particular order: A provocative photograph he found outside a friend's apartment (red telephone, green heels, huge golden ass); some seashells; a piece of drywall with a message that reads, "Hey, Why won't you pay attention to me?"; a framed pair of FTL boxer briefs covered in chocolate; a pair of wings that read "For transporting Ethan Shoshan when his dreams deem it necessary"; a headless stuffed bear; a rusted railroad spike; four dead bunches of roses; a hot pink "violation" notice for buying an all-terrain SUV that will never take off-road; and other objects, mostly gifts to Shoshan from other artists. Some of them are hung salon-style; others lie on the floor, with little rhyme or reason. (INSTALLATION PHOTO. COURTESY OF ENVOY GALLERY)

Perhaps ironically, of the over 100 found objects in this exhibit it's a work by Mexico City-based Geraldine Juarez, a piece of yellow tape that protests gentrification by reading "Gentrify," that's most striking. The tape was produced to replicate the ubiquitous yellow "Do Not Cross" ribbons and in so doing delay, however ineptly, forces of gentrification. This tape was placed around construction sites throughout Brooklyn in 2008. A small piece of it is re-exhibited here, creating a suggestive analog of the colonization of public and private space.

Shoshan arranges found and received objects as if imparting an auto-biographical narrative and authenticates it by re-exchanging them in this context, ostensibly using the art object as confirmation that he exists because other people see his stuff. Though Shoshan's ephemera aims to reclaim intimacy the process claims for itself, he inevitably obliterates the gift's givers, leaving only fantastic detritus on the gallery walls. In an email from one "Miss Confidence," printed and taped to the wall: "Remember the distance or colour does not matter but love matters alot in life."

Apparently some of the stuff here was actually a work by Paul Thek and Jenny Holzer, but nothing is labeled. The world of Shoshan's stuff organizes itself into a web of stopping and starting articulations at which the artist is always the center.

Envoy Gallery is located at 131 Chrystie Street.