

KIEL JOHNSON AT MARK MOORE GALLERY

It's hard to imagine how an artist could possibly be more simultaneously devoted to the crafting that comes from the hand, and variously put off, puzzled, inspired and overall utterly preoccupied by machines, than Kiel Johnson. Making drawings born of a unity of hand, eye and imagination, which no CAD program or filter could replicate, Johnson lays out plans for a world that parallels ours not unlike the way anima-



tors and cartoonists bring worlds (and their inhabitants and objects) to life onscreen. Johnson transcribes the machinery and objects of his world into his own enlivened and heavily line-based vision — he in essence sees through drawing — and then both allows his drawings to speak for themselves, and elsewhere creates objects from them, not so much using the drawings as blueprints but as the basis for creation. These are working drawings in the truest sense. Central to this latest outing are all

Art Around Town

by Christopher Miles

the gizmos that clutter his life, as well as a contraption that you'll never find in anyone's home, but that contributes to the cluttering of all our homes — the roll-feed offset printing press commonly known as a web press. For the exhibition, Johnson created a single-

sheet drawing, inventorying everything he owns. It doesn't take more than a scan to see that the artist is a gearhead — lots of tools here, little in the way of comforts. With all of the items reduced to the same basic size — a hammer is the same size as a table — the net result is almost like wallpaper (and it would make great wallpaper) or a computer desktop loaded up with icons. The original drawing is displayed as one of a kind, but it has also been printed in a limited edition displayed in a stack at the outputting end of a printing press of Johnson's own creation. The press is in fact an impostor — a cobbled-together sculpture that only pretends to have pumped out these copies, which complicates the scenario — a sculpture inspired by drawings pretending to have printed machine-made duplicates of drawings of tools and machines. Such tangled trails and relationships turn up throughout this show, which includes modes of public address (microphones, boom boxes) hewn of cardboard; drawings of printing presses spewing out paper into clumps that seem to stand alone as sculptures; and photographs actually shot with a giant camera built out of cardboard in the style of Johnson's drawings and based upon an actual twin-lens reflex camera. To take the chain one step further, the show includes a video, shot by Webcam, of Johnson at work in his studio, building the camera. The hints of digital influence that come up here and there in this show leave one awaiting the next batch of output from the gears turning in Johnson's head.

Mark Moore Gallery

2525 Michigan Ave.
(Bergamot Station), AT,
Santa Monica; Tues.-Sat.,
11 a.m.-6 p.m., through
November 14. (310) 453-3031,
markmooregallery.com