

Claudia Comte

GLADSTONE GALLERY | WEST 21ST ST

530 West 21st Street

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For her US debut, Swiss artist Claudia Comte uses the language of the palindrome to toy with the viewer's sense of space: foreground and background are given equal primacy throughout the exhibition. It's an apt motif for her American arrival that is based so much on a Euro-Brazilian past.

"No Melon No Lemon" is the result of a month-long residency at the gallery, where the artist created a series of sculptures as well as monumental linear paneling/painting that wraps around the perimeter of the space. Historical references abound in her smooth, burlled wooden curvilinear forms and jagged totems that sit on shelves or plinths that extend from the walls. The biomorphic modernist abstraction of Jean Arp echoes throughout, as does Constantin Brâncuși's unfettered output. But in their custom-built environ—which alternates between burnt-black wood slabs, into which the artist has carved with a chainsaw, and sections of polished Op-like linear bands rhythmically painted bright yellow—the sculptures become part of a multireferent equation.

As such Neo-Constructivists as Lygia Pape discovered, the line could be a place of residence when cut into. In Comte's installation, not only does this become true as drawn lines are violently and imperfectly sawed, creating uneven and splintering valleys along the walls, the lines also jut out and become places of residence for Comte's refined yet unabashedly naturalistic sculptures. It is as if Comte has literalized the cannibalistic relationship of modern Brazilian art with the tradition of its European predecessor, by way of Arp and Pape, while simultaneously providing an antihierarchal, illusive space for them to infinitely communicate.

— Frank Expósito



View of "No Melon No Lemon, 2015.