

# ARTFORUM

## Joe Fyfe

NATHALIE KARG

291 Grand Street, 4th Floor

September 14–October 23

Joe Fyfe is uninterested in the line between art and life, and this isn't immediately apparent in his work. But his thinking about what he calls the dichotomy of "art and *stuff*"—his art being made from discarded products and advertising materials—elucidates that seeming indifference. The paintings and sculptures in Fyfe's exhibition here—many of which incorporate found materials, such as kites and weathered fabrics used for advertising in Korea, which are then repurposed in Cambodia for tarpaulins and umbrellas—are hardly apolitical things. Fyfe himself says he deploys these materials to speak to the contradictions of global capitalism. But the appropriation and unpacking of stuff as such suggests a more reflexive question about what art can really say, or ask, while beholden to these markets. By incorporating his own consumerism in Southeast Asia, the artist preempts his work's absorption into a market that subsequently churns it out as commodity, or more *stuff*, leaving art's political capacity effectively neutralized, to paraphrase critic [Peter Bürger](#).

Fyfe's found objects convey more than just lessons about Orientalism, or the ironies of increased mobility of goods alongside the ever-tightening mobility of people. Two 2015 works, both titled *Untitled floor sculpture*, variously made up of, among other things, auto parts, a plastic tool container, fake bricks, and lead, showcase both the labor of manufacturing and the politics of culture-making. More to the point, these sculptures underscore how the culture industry and the consumer alike see—or erase—the realities and politics of cheap global labor. "Kiss the Sky" can be read as a show taking aim at the reduction of an avant-garde mindset to *stuffdom*, revealing the mechanics of its own production, and completing itself once we've stepped into the gallery space.



Joe Fyfe, *Untitled floor sculpture*, 2015, found plastic container, vinyl pennants, 7 x 14 1/2 x 8".

— [Tyler Curtis](#)