

Bode, Katie "Jean-Pascal Flavien & Mika Tajima at Kayne Griffin Corcoran," *Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles*. Fall 2016. Print.

## Kayne Griffin Corcoran

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### Review: Jean-Pascal Flavien & Mika Tajima at Kayne Griffin Corcoran



Jean-Pascal Flavien, *statement house (temporary title) protocol Los Angeles* (2016). Various material, 8.5 x 16.5 x 16.5 feet. Image courtesy of the artist and Kayne Griffin Corcoran, Los Angeles. Photo: Robert Wedemeyer.

It seems fitting that Los Angeles born Mika Tajima's first show in her hometown includes one of her candy-colored Jacuzzi paintings. What could be more quintessentially L.A. than a sunset-ombré hot tub, its slick sexy object-ness epitomizing the glamor of Hollywood. Her co-exhibitor Jean-Pascal Flavien likewise embraces the city's marquee industry with *statement house (temporary title) Los Angeles* (2016), a diminutive baby pink house—sited in the gallery's lush courtyard—to be occupied intermittently by two screenwriters over the run of the show. Both artists are preoccupied with people: how we work, how we live, how we communicate, and the way in which the objects and environments that surround us define and manipulate our interactions.

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Office furniture has been a source of inspiration for Tajima for some time. In 2011 she made sculptures repurposing an original 1970s Herman Miller Action Office system, the first office "cubicle." She also has an ongoing series, *Furniture Art* (a reference to Erik Satie's *Furniture Music [Musique d'ameublement]*, 1917), a series of infinitely repetitive compositions meant to blend into the background like aural decor. As much as she enjoys the formal possibilities of the everyday office's visual vocabulary, Tajima's interest also lies in the role of the workplace itself as a site of production and performance. A number of textile works are included in the show from Tajima's *Negative Entropy* series (2015-16): a set of Jacquard-woven "acoustic portraits" of workers recorded in their factories and offices which are then abstracted into patterns for the looms. The end result is as painterly as a Rothko while still distinctly digital in a lo-fi, '80s sort of way (Jacquard looms are early precursors to modern computers). Here too Tajima fortifies her sensual objects with a consideration of the intricacies of production and labor.

In opposition to the many-pronged manifestations of Tajima's output, Jean-Pascal Flavien's contribution to the exhibition is singular to the point of being monolithic. A single form—the shape taken from the footprint of the built house in the courtyard—is repeated in cutout aluminum sheets hung throughout the main gallery. The intention of the house is to exist as a framework for language, an empty box to be filled with the potential possibility for engagement. As with previous iterations of his house projects, Flavien invites collaborators to inhabit the space, creating texts to compliment and complete the work. For this particular version two screenwriters have occupied the bungalow, composing Tweets that script its daily activities throughout the run of the show.

A perusal of their respective Twitter feeds finds them both funnier and less myopic than I expected from such an intellectually staged feedback loop. This proved to be the saving grace for a project that could have easily read as real-estate-as-performance. Market forces and speculations are briefly addressed in a few early Tweets, but given the current heated conversation on the role of galleries and artists in gentrification, it seems remiss that such issues are mostly ignored. In his formal, repetitive simplicity Flavien attempts to make physical the endlessly possible scenarios of a space. But this openness, inactivated, can start to look more like emptiness.

The lynchpin for social practice artwork always lies in collaboration, or how well the participants engage with one another. There is an ever-present danger of the work being swallowed by its own intentions, either closing in on itself or opening into gross spectacle. It is clear that both artists are good collaborators, Tajima with the fabricators, translators, and operators that make her objects possible, Flavien with his activating inhabitants. It's also interesting to find so many objects in a show so preoccupied with interaction. What the objects themselves communicate is harder to quantify. Tajima's almost archivist eye towards industrial design translates easily into covetable luxury objects. But her works also carry within themselves a consideration of their humanity, however artfully abstracted. Flavien's plans for utopian environments of possibility can seem more like souvenirs on display next to the tourist attraction, shorthand symbols for an idealized experience that might never have happened at all.

- Katie Bode