

ARTslant



[Jonah Susskind: SEEMless](#)

Jonah Susskind

City Limits

300 Jefferson St., Oakland, CA 94612

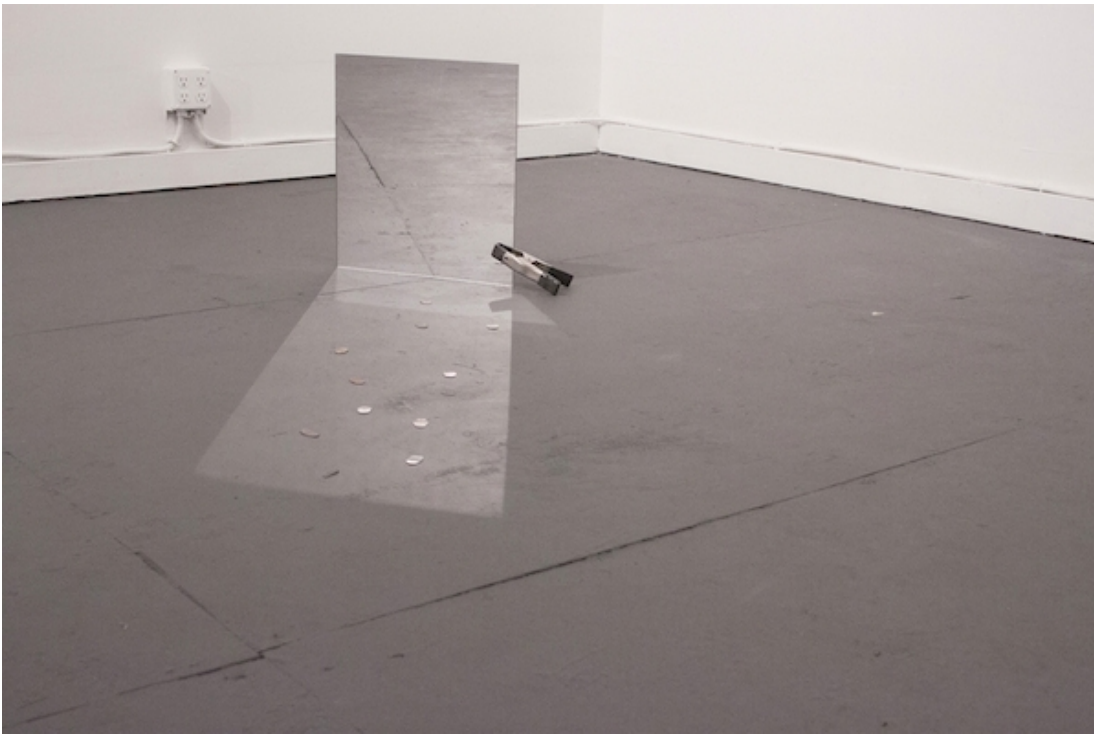
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A Startling and Shifty Beauty

by Danielle Grant

Beginning with its titular linguistic play, Jonah Susskind's *SEEMless* inquires into the realm of the handmade and the transformative possibilities of the tangible. Rendering unassuming everyday objects from unassuming everyday materials, Susskind conflates the basic makeup of the urban world and presents an almost chilling, alchemic mastery of materialistic potential. Susskind's work is a fitting point of entry to examine questions surrounding modes of production in daily life.

Despite the unassuming physical nature of the works (*Vase I* and *Vase II* are ferns in a PVC pipe stand), optics are very much at play here and though it can be hard to connect a piece of stretched mesh on a wall to a lonely, fake, clay carabiner hanging opposite, this show beats a slow but steady pulse of unified thoughtfulness that betrays the casual look of the individual works. The lovely *Doppelganger* (all works 2013), one part of a sort of diptych with the companion piece *Glow Worm*, is a piece of mesh with the wall painted behind it. This artwork might not boast the effective trompe l'oeil illusions of its neighbors, but it creates a startling and shifty beauty that morphs and glints as you turn your head this way and that—and all of this subtle glamor is constructed from the most everyday of maker's materials: fabric, string, wood and wall paint.



Conversely, Susskind creates an uncomfortable tension in the room by placing a high demand on the viewer to imagine certain objects as artful. For instance, the show's eponymous piece is a literal conflation—most likely requiring an actual seam for conjunction—of two camouflage print trucker hats installed humbly on the floor, with little fanfare. The hat with the brim turned up reads SEEM. Companionably occupying floor space is a work called *Fountain II*, which is bare, simple and lovely in its contrast to *SEEMless*. *Fountain II* is made of a square of mirror balanced by a clamp that reflects stretched coins in a bathed light.

There is an ongoing dichotomy in this exhibition of common materials made to look artful and artful materials rendered common and it plays well in the comparison of these two pieces. One is the loathsome trucker hat gone under the embroidery knife and given the grotesque Siamese twin treatment versus the redemptive beauty of *Fountain II*, in which the viewer shares in the shakedown of the smoke-and-mirror effect and can embrace the reference to an iconic monument designed for shared use and human universals as whimsical as wish making.



After its past incarnations in an Outer Mission living room and a Berkeley lawn, City Limits inaugurates its permanent digs in Oakland with Susskind's show in a sturdy, mid-size space in the outer reaches of Oakland's Jack London Square. Coming closer to where artists in the Bay actually live and work, artists Evan Reiser and his new gallery partner Alyssa Block (both recent SFAI grads) have made a bold and admirable move for two practicing artists to open a gallery in the Bay Area's current climate—in 2013, at least three well-known and respected galleries shuttered. Like Susskind in his work, as well as in his Oakland exhibition project S.H.E.D Projects, City Limits pulls closer together art and life, or as Alan Kaprow wrote "art as life." The spectrum of emotion I experienced in viewing *SEEMless* at the new City Limits was as varied and complex as the materials and combination of materials Susskind literally and figuratively hinges together.

—[Danielle Grant](#)