

COUNTERFACTURE

Luhring Augustine

531 West 24th Street, Chelsea

Through tomorrow

Of all the all-male group shows scattered around Chelsea at the moment, this one is the most worthwhile. It brings together four young artists who piece together their work in different ways, often practicing a kind of visual ventriloquism of displaced or hidden techniques.

William Daniels, for example, makes what appear to be torn-cardboard collage copies of self-portraits by artists like Dürer, Goya and Delacroix — except that they turn out to be meticulous trompe l'oeil paintings of the collages (which Mr. Daniels discarded). The results vacillate between leprous decay and rock-hard solidity. Rupert Norfolk has made a short dry-masonry stone wall in which the stones, oddly, are bilaterally symmetrical, one end having been subtly rechiseled to match the other. At the other extreme he contributes a scattering of four short I-beams, whose refined lacquered gray surfaces seem at odds with their forms, especially when you realize they are tinted in a way that makes it impossible to tell real shadows from fake.

David Musgrave achieves a weird meld of primitive and technological in his drawings, which surround crude little figures and amulets, seemingly made of paper or string, with the alien field of television static. Alex Pollard makes appealing stick animals out of antique rulers, curved, cast in bronze and painted, again, to trompe l'oeil effect. It seems to be a lot of trouble for too little effect, but it is consistent with the circuitous methods deployed through this subtle, mind-twisting show.

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ROBERTA SMITH