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Reviews

“(Un)Natural Selection”

★★★★★

Pierogj, through Mon 13

Williamsburg’s Pierogj—long a hotbed of DIY and obsessively quirky art—has been looking a bit more polished and predictable of late. But this group show, its best summer offering in years, proves the gallery hasn’t strayed far from its strengths. The selection is diverse; the work is sensitive to process and materials; and the conceptual strategies on display are arbitrary, absurd and often funny. What’s more, the curatorial theme—a sidelong, dystopian glance at evolution (and evolution gone awry)—feels spot-on.



A still from William Lamson’s *Vital Capacity*
Courtesy Pierogj

Just try to take your eyes from William Lamson’s video, *Vital Capacity*. The artist’s face is covered by a clear plastic mask studded with huge pins; one by one, big black balloons drop onto it from above. Lamson huffs and puffs, trying desperately to blow them away, before they (inevitably) pop on his prickly face. It’s hopeless—and riveting. Michael Schall’s masterful graphite drawing *Smoke Factory Malfunction* depicts ominous plumes of black smoke billowing from a series of industrial parks, each of which is marooned on top of a tall mesa.

David Scher is the most elegant conceptualist of the lot, though his deceptively offhanded assemblage of noodly drawings and found-and-altered objects would seem to deny it. There’s a sketch of a fisherman who’s hooked a catch too humongous to reel in, a stack of cans on a shelf relabeled *artist’s tuna* and other cheeky mischief. Scher’s sending up his own artistic product even as he promotes it. Dare you open the can?

— Sarah Schmerler