

Adam McEwen

JACK HANLEY GALLERY, 395 Valencia Street April 08–April 29



Installation view of *Skylab*, 2006.

Among the diverse range of objects in Adam McEwen's elusively political tone poem of a show—photos of brightly colored New York City phone cards, a tromp l'oeil wall-mounted air conditioner, a piece of toast nailed to a board, a Van Halen poster in which the band poses as victorious soldiers hoisting a US flag—there's a transistor radio-sized piece of equipment resting atop a short stack of blank gallery stationery. In plain letters, this manufactured object is labeled, on its face and in the checklist, a "UFO Detector." The alien identification device is part of a shiny work called *Skylab*, 2006, which also includes a tall sheet of mylar silkscreened at the top with an image of a bomb in midair. Turns out that the term "UFO" was used to describe unidentified enemy aircraft during World War II. The piece encapsulates McEwen's uncanny ability to make ordinary elements somehow otherworldly. Similarly, in the diptych *Bomber Harris*, 2006, dust-gray wads of chewed gum are used to make flat splattered dots on clean black and white panels. Throughout the exhibition, which exudes a cryptic charm, the artist focuses our attention toward the ground. McEwen's pieces are spread throughout two neighboring spaces, and two works, both titled *Floor Plan Piece*, 2004–2006, plot the show's layout in adhesive vinyl on the floor of each space. These diagrams are reduced, twisted, and repeated, resembling a high concept version of the Eames' influential 1977 short film, *Powers of Ten*, transforming McEwen's oeuvre into something that seems to have dropped in from above.

—Glen Helfand