

BARNEY KULOK NICOLE KLAGSBRUN GALLERY

Kulok's work is simple, but deceptively so. At their most basic these images are stunning. I'm thinking of the showstopper, a black and white print *Untitled (Stain)* in which Kulok captures the subtle indenture in a leather headrest from a recently removed head. The elegance of the image, as well as the inherent drama, is palpable. The synapses connecting the various works betray their richness. *Skillman Avenue, Queens NY*, a lightbox transparency of a decaying billboard reads, "You Want It. You Can't Have It. You'll Never See It." In a discussion with Kulok, the photographer was adamant that the context and juxtaposition of the photographs in relation to one another was tantamount, though it was equally important that the works stand up individually in and of themselves. There is an intense interplay and juxtaposition between the color and black and white works here, between the surface of images as well as their underlying spirituality. The effect works on an unconscious level rather than didactically. What is one to make of a stark, rich black and white work of a barn in the middle of a desert titled *Green Barn?* Or the tree on a lonely neighborhood block harshly lit as if it were a movie set?

Kulok shifts between C-prints and light box transparencies, making connections difficult to vocalize, musical in nature and often angry in tone. An abstract photo of a stone wall is titled *Protest* and on close inspection the word is faintly stenciled on the wall inside the photo. This temper comes to a head with *Landscape of Landscapes*, a masterwork of a landscape photograph of a car parked near a seashore with landscape photographs draped over and covering the car itself. The referential, rabbit-hole nature is jarring. As a disciple of multi-disciplinary "installation" photographer Vik Muniz, Kulok layers works with multiple thematic thrusts, utilizing the simple and mundane. In *Untitled (Decomposition)* the peeling paint of a poster board featuring an illustrated man pointing a gun (Warhol's Elvis?) is cut off at the neck, is both threatening and silly and thoroughly engaging. Employing many subtle shifts in tone, perhaps Kulok is too smart for his own good. But the richness of his work lies in its pure, simple elegance, regardless of purported underlying depth. One could stare at the beauty of *Queen Amazons, Avenue D* and never grow tired. Without any intellectual connection, or context, it communicates a spirituality and wonder well worth the price of admission.

