

ARTS**Nate Ellefson: Soft Chop**

Soft Chop takes an aesthetic stab at renegade culture

REVIEWED BY CAITLIN GREENWOOD, FRI., FEB. 14, 2014

**Nate Ellefson: 'Soft Chop'**

Co-Lab Project Space,

Through Feb. 15

In Nate Ellefson's "Soft Chop," the artist nurtures an environment of stark imagery that adheres to the metaphoric underground and renegade guerrilla tactics. Composed of sculptures, installation work, and paintings – all of which adhere to a sense of unembellished, active aggression – the exhibition does not allude to any direct political inclination, but does explore the variances in methodology and visual representation of enviroterrorism.

"Soft Chop" was spurred by looking at how guerrilla and anarchist groups represent themselves visually through posters, digital symbols, and logos. Ellefson represents these crude attempts at agro-imagery through large sculptural works, rough-hewn but intentionally hostile, then translates the

sculptures into smaller paintings, which offer nuance and depth that the sculptures, with their brute force, tend to shirk. Ellefson's installations anchor his ideology of extremism into palpable tools of intimidation; in this case, these would-be bombs are softened to be simply intimidating-looking tubs of sauerkraut and lacto-fermenting tubes of carrots. Ellefson wanted to indicate the resources available to extremist groups and act out visually what these acts of terrorism might materialize as.

"Soft Chop" is laden with ambition, not only to communicate an emotional construct of rage and displacement, but also to re-create an actual venue in which these efforts of terrorism take place. Ellefson successfully builds a visual dystopia. "Soft Chop" is thoughtful; it speaks to a dark humor that is subtly communicated to an audience tired of a culture that has fostered intense fear of terrorism, attack, and sabotage. We'd much rather see a tub of sauerkraut ready to blow than an actual bomb, but "Soft Chop" requires audiences to consider: Wherein lies the difference?

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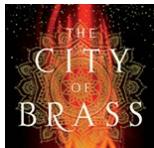
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