

# The New York Times

## Art in Review

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2009

### Michael Mahalchick

'For What It's Worth'

Canada

55 Chrystie Street, near Canal  
Street, Lower East Side

Through Feb. 22

Assemblage is everywhere, but few artists are truly able to coax a Rauschenberg or a Schwitters from a pile of castoffs. Michael Mahalchick is a happy exception. He is better known for his performances and his fabric sculptures, but his redemptive humor and love of craft translate well to the clusters of found objects in his third solo at Canada.

Discarded paintings provide a foundation for several works. In "Don't Look at Me" Mr. Mahalchick layers a fanny pack, a surgical glove and strips of tinsel over an art-class study of a nude. In "One Way Out" an unfinished portrait of an Asian couple peeks out from behind a curtain of cut and torn suede and a length of beaded fringe.

The most ambitious creation is "You Want This?," a riotous jumble of lottery tickets, Post-it-size Warhol reproductions, stuffed bears, audio equipment, plastic-foam peanuts and unidentifiable flotsam. It looks, to quote the press release, as though Mr. Mahalchick has upended "his psychic everything drawer."

Smaller, poetic works on canvas show that Mr. Mahalchick is also capable of restraint. "Opalescence" combines packaging from a tooth-whitening gel with evenly spaced white pearl beads. And in "Ain't It Rich?" twigs and glass cabochons are glued to gray burlap.

The works also benefit from a strong sense of place. Many of their components were scavenged from the streets of the gallery's Chinatown neighborhood — not all that far, coincidentally, from Rauschenberg's early studios on Pearl Street and at Coenties Slip.

KAREN ROSENBERG