

Still Life for the New Millennium

The older items, acquired over years, are arranged at the back. The tallest one -a dusty wine bottle, with dead sprigs and one black feather sticking from it- was left there by a former girlfriend. To the right of that sits a round, glazed pot, filled to the brim with dry dirt and the ghost of a bromeliad plant, left by another ex. On the opposite side of the wine bottle is a large, odd, ugly candle in the shape of a horse's head. This I bought, myself, for some reason. Below the candle, lies a gnarled, weathered piece of wood that I must've picked up during a camping trip, when trips were still allowed. Those are the old objects -dull, nostalgic, and unnecessary. The newer items are full of purpose and assembled towards the front of the table. There's a boxy, clear, plastic bottle with a pump at the top. Inside of it, is what looks like a perfectly preserved slice of an ocean wave, frozen in time. Hundreds of bubbles hang suspended in the blue-green liquid, and the surface roils and slants steeply from left to right. Farther down the table, near the front edge, is the small hump of a light gray painter's mask. Stretchy white strings spill from its sides and loop around the back. Faint black text from a manufacturer's warning crawls across the front. To the right of the mask lies a clear, quart-sized ziplock bag, bulging from its contents -a chaotic mass of disposable white gloves. There's a pleasing compositional cohesion to all these objects, but there is also a kind of accidental narrative -a tension. The horse candle, maybe just because it has a face, seems like it's eyeing the pump bottle. The horse's blank, glassy stare has taken on an air of mute expectation -or even muffled fear. It's as if it's stuck waiting for the wave in the bottle to crash and settle. It almost looks like it could melt itself in mental effort -like it would rather burn, unform, and fuse with the table, than take another second of awful anticipation. I guess I could easily tap the bottom of the bottle to the table and fix the problem but, lately, I'm strangely unable to take action, myself.