

CRITICS' PICKS

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ARTFORUM

“On the Devolution of Culture”

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83 Page Street

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With a wink to both Man Ray's *La Fortune*, 1938, and Sherrie Levine's subsequent '90s homage, the seventy-six ordinary-looking objects arranged neatly on a snooker table in this exhibition resemble a very odd junk sale. However, “On the Devolution of Culture” is inspired by nineteenth-century British army officer Lieutenant General Augustus Henry Pitt-Rivers's collection archived in the Pitt-Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford. A charming institution of archaeology and ethnography, the museum's objects are catalogued and exhibited by type rather than by history or chronology. Mirroring that organizing principle, this show displays a Roman perfume bottle next to curious, blown-glass versions by Francis Upritchard, *Perfume Bottles #1* and *Perfume Bottles #2*, both 2005, while two cast-bronze Sherrie Levine animal skulls, *Bobcat Skull* and *Javelina Skull*, both 2010, are laid near an actual Anglo-Saxon human one a little farther along the table.



View of “On the Devolution of Culture,” 2014.

As a whole, the display could be considered a large still life gathered to present a microcosm of the diversity in contemporary sculptural practice. The objects range from Keith Coventry's plastic cast of an inhaler repurposed as a crack pipe, *Inhaler*, 1998, or David Adamo's painted bronze candies, *Untitled (M&Ms)*, 2010, to conceptual pieces such as Pavel Buchler's *Cannon*, 2014, composed of a real snooker ball sitting on a postcard of a war-damaged building. The piece wittily conflates a billiards shot with the firing of artillery—a nod to the juxtapositions inherent to collage. As much as the assortment here is an homage to the curatorial task of organizing objects in terms of their form or content, this exhibition is also a sly reminder of the acquisitive needs of humanity—how else could museum collections come about?

— Sherman Sam