Tony Feher
D’Amelio Terras, through Jul 10 (see Chelsea).

Tony Feher makes art out of bags, bottles and jars, plastic crates and packing tape—all the odd, unnoticed doodads that hold and bind the stuff we buy. He assembles, makes stacks and rows, puts round things on top of square things: small transformations that nonetheless seem decisive and dead-on. If you haven’t seen his work before, picture an all-American equivalent of Japanese flower arranging; imagine the same studied simplicity, the resonant spareness and delicacy of touch. Only this home-grown craft begins not in a garden or greenhouse, but in a dumpster behind the supermarket.

It can take time to adjust to Feher’s muted rhythms. In his current show at D’Amelio Terras, each piece offers its own specific jolt, but these little pleasures struggle to emerge from the clutter of the room. Focus is rewarded, though. A double-file line of foam trays pops with cheerfully syncopated shifts in color; a gathering of brown bottles capped with red and blue marbles resembles a strange new constellation.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about Feher’s work is how much it looks like art. Here are nine chip bags, punched with holes and turned inside out to reveal their silvery Mylar interiors—is this really a sculpture? Of course it is. A history of repurposing the commonplace—from the Duchampian readymade and the Minimalist object to the scatter-artist installation—feeds into Feher’s work. But he wears this history lightly. Using familiar conceptual strategies for aesthetic ends, Feher is actually an old-fashioned sort of artist: an eccentric formalist with a flawless eye.

—Steven Stern