



Tony Feher at the Lumber Room: A clever, inventive and lyrical installation (art review)



An installation view of New York artist Tony Feher's show at the Lumber Room in Portland. (Image by Jeremy Bitterman/Courtesy of the Lumber Room).

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on June 03, 2014 at 10:11 AM, updated June 03, 2014 at 10:12 AM

[New York artist Tony Feher](#), who has created an untitled, site-determined [installation at the Lumber Room](#), isn't precious about his materials, which include pink and blue painters tape, clear plastic bags and a two-liter soda bottle filled with liquid. But he is attentive to these materials' properties, whether they possess a

vibrant hue or a reflective surface, and how they can be used to generate discrete works and, more broadly, transform a space.

At the Lumber Room, the effect of Feher's interventions snowball. Individually, they are clever, resourceful, and frequently lyrical. But taken together, they broadcast Feher's deep understanding of what art's really made of: shape, color, and the play of light and shadow.

For the artist's most dramatic alteration to the space, Feher, aided by a small team of assistants, covered the gallery's bank of east-facing windows in an intricate mosaic of torn bits of blue painters tape. The patterns feature whorls of concentric circles that culminate in densely layered starburst shapes; as the shifting light pours in, the stars appear to pulse.

But Feher's negotiation of the windows — and the ample natural light that typically floods the space — effectively cancels out one of the Lumber Room's most defining attributes. The warm, amber hue of the gallery is recast in an icy blue tone. To help point out this shift in ambience, the artist has strung a long strand of pink plastic beads across the gallery. In front of the taped windows, the color of the beads is neutralized, seeming clear. However, farther from the windows, the beads are plainly pink.

While the less environmental components of the installation are not quite as dazzling, they illuminate the artist's approach, a kind of conceptual formalism. Along two of the gallery's main walls, a series of identical plastic bags are each tacked to the wall by a piece of blue painters tape. These readymades stand in for a group of serialized sculptures: As the bags billow and sag in slightly different ways, we are cued to observe the formal variation wrung from such minimal means.

In the Lumber Room's rear gallery, Feher again uses the blue tape to outsize effect, creating a kind of wall drawing from dozens of bits of tape, arranged in an ovoid pattern like an oversized thumbprint. As each piece of tape is only partially anchored on the wall, the flaps of unsecured tape throw inch-long shadows. The dense stippling of blue tape buzzes and blurs and, as it mingles with the tiny shadows, the eye struggles to reconcile the visual information. The wall drawing's optical complexity outstrips both its mundane materials and modest making, revealing Feher's alchemical facility for producing precise effects, even when working with everyday objects.

--John Motley, Special to The Oregonian