

# ARTFORUM

## Ricardo Brey

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA | RUE DU BOURG TIBOURG  
18 rue du Bourg-Tibourg  
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Ricardo Brey's current mixed-media exhibition consists of photographs, text, and various pieces of badly aged man-made detritus, such as old-fashioned metal buttons, broken crockery, threadbare work gloves, and rotting wool coats. The Cuban artist assembles these forlorn pieces of ordinary life around photographs of trees printed on weathered fabric. Almost all of Brey's utilitarian objects are now useless. But the trees, which fell victim to deforestation in Cuba, retain their nobility and grace—they've aged beautifully. Brey's complex series of works presents the simple message that we're ruining nature without creating anything of comparable value and longevity.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is *Birdland*, 2001, a vitrine containing some of the aforementioned materials, in addition to shattered ostrich eggs, license plates, pencils, and lost keys: a horn of plenty presented as a spill of irredeemable trash. Many of the items nonetheless hint at interesting histories: The buttons here, though mostly cracked, are intriguingly carved, and the coats, once upon a time, might have been chic. The intricate, thick, and knotted trees depicted in a pair Brey's collages—*Mono-no-aware* and *Voyage*, both 2016—transmute nature's unpredictability into beautiful forms and curves. Soggy bits of cardboard and rusted metals surround these works. It's fair to say that the junk—potential tetanus hazards and proof of humanity's misguidedness—looks considerably older than the ancient trees themselves.



Ricardo Brey, *Birdland*, 2001, showcase, saxophone, ostrich eggs, coats, rubber tube, buttons, parts, license plates, metal objects, tie, pencils, desk, dishes, 63 x 55 x 55".

— Ana Finel Honigman

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