

ARTFORUM

Ryan Wallace

COOPER COLE

1134 Dupont Street

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View of “Ryan Wallace: Dragnalus,” 2016. From left: *Dragnalus I*, 2015; *Pitch*, 2016.

The instant you step inside the gallery door, you’re implicated in Ryan Wallace’s exhibition “Dragnalus.” Spread out underfoot across the space is *Pitch*, 2016, a patchwork of square Plexiglas tiles, each roughly imprinted with evidence of Wallace’s working methods—footprints in paint, offcut strips of packing tape and mesh, a flattened work glove or pair of jeans, and traces of spray paint and carpet glue, among other things. Interspersed throughout this blue-collar mosaic are squares covered in gold and silver foil or mirrors. Walking on *Pitch*, it’s impossible not to think of how heavily this, and the work of many young like-minded sculptural painters, treads on the legacy of Carl Andre. Earlier iterations of similar pieces by Wallace have included stacks of plaster cubes, another allusion to Andre’s Minimalist shadow. But here it’s less of a flaw than a self-reflexive reminder of how questions of process, material, value, and the negotiated play between object and subject have perpetual traction.

Wallace’s paintings operate in a similar fashion. In his “Dragnalus” series, 2014–15, vertical cuts and strips of canvas, mesh, vinyl, rubber, aluminum foil, wax, and paint—the same bric-a-brac from Wallace’s workspace that covers the tiles in *Pitch*—form a suite of densely textured veils. A departure from his earlier monochromatic paintings, these works hum with layered blacks, off-whites, deep reds, and a well-placed eyelet or two. The linchpin, though, is *Untitled*, 2016, a pair of white canvas sneakers hanging on the gallery wall, the soles of which are caked in studio detritus. Echoes of the labor-intensive heroics of the midcentury avant-garde—“Combines”-era Robert Rauschenberg comes to mind—resound again, even if, for better or worse, they remain just a step away.

— Bryne McLaughlin