

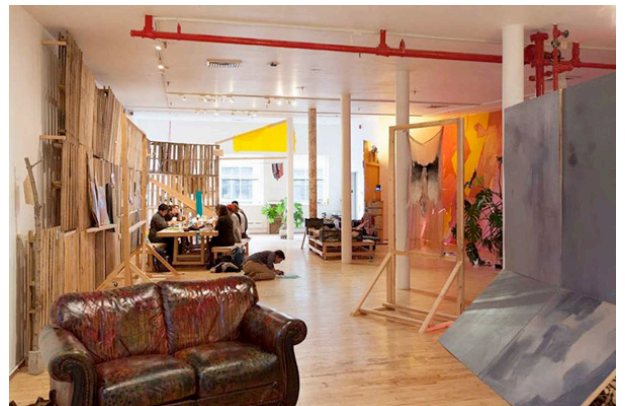
## LISI RASKIN *Recuperative Tactics*

by Juliet Helmke

ART IN GENERAL | APRIL 19 – MAY 31, 2014

Kim Charles Kay's exhibition *you know it when you feel it*, nested within Lisi Raskin's installation *Recuperative Tactics*, is well named; its title being an apt descriptor of Raskin's piece, which takes up the entirety of Art in General's sixth floor. Reading about Raskin's new commission before visiting doesn't cast a clear picture, and in fact, you may not "know it"—or know what is happening in it—when you first see it, either. The normal order of things is confused: this is an installation that houses an exhibition, rather than the other way around. And Raskin's piece is even more than that. It's a free space that is open to the public and invites them to stay for a while, perhaps to read on one of the couches or work at the enormous wooden table. It's a platform for storytelling, a studio for artists to create, and a place where you can get a haircut on Thursdays from noon until 6:00 pm, for free. Raskin is known for creating paintings, drawings, objects, videos, and immersive environments that are aesthetically and conceptually stoked by the architectural remnants of the Cold War. Motivated by the time she spent traveling through Afghanistan, *Recuperative Tactics* is her version of society, an inclusive one that doesn't adhere to familiar rules. It may be difficult to imagine, but as Kay alludes, you need to experience it yourself in order to understand.

The installation feels like a kid's playroom, and were it not for the raw timber with threat of splinters and occasional images of nudity, it might be. Assemblages are tucked away around corners. One wall is taken up by large reclaimed wooden fragments, painted roughly in shades of pink and orange, and set on an angle to disrupt the vertical wall behind. Through their joints, a light shines. Pieces of this structure unneeded in its construction are left in piles around the room, free to be used in the weekly program "Crafter Hours." Visitors find pieces from Kay's exhibition all over: a perfectly frosted cake lies on the floor, a red lamp dangles from the ceiling, a silky curtain printed with the image of a waterfall move



## CHURNER *and* CHURNER

gently with passing visitors.

“So I’ll warm the space,” Kay writes to Raskin in a note responding to the invitation to collaborate, “but not for the ones who need a white room or the object hung at 60” high to see it.” I’ll do it for you and those who choose life/style; for the bodies that may wish to linger and stay.”

Absent are the wall labels; there are no directions to either touch or not touch the work, rather the art is all around and almost impossible not to interact with. The couch where visitors can sit a while is an artwork, and while they do so, they can watch art being made in Misha Kahn’s temporary studio (also a part of Kay’s exhibition). Interestingly, Raskin is concurrently exhibiting at Churner and Churner in Chelsea, in one of the typical white rooms. The works in that show, titled *MUTUAL IMMANENCE*, recall the immense pink wall at Art in General, but are much smaller; some are so tiny they could be held in a closed fist. A clash of angles and colors joined at coarse edges, the surfaces also incompletely obscure the layers behind, and invite much closer, detailed inspection. Even so, this is not a place where one lingers. In the face of these intimate works one feels the distinct lack of, and even longs for, the comfort and inclusiveness—the ability to just hang around with the artworks—offered by *Recuperative Tactics*.

However, it is hard to measure the success of the Art in General installation. Has the space been open to be used by anyone and everyone? How many people signed up for a haircut or used this as a place of refuge? One doesn’t need to know the answers to see that Raskin’s version of subversion is magnificent. It is not a rebellion against our society or community, but a revision. It is an incongruent collection of elements made from what already surrounds us, jumbled-up, and stripped of many of the conventions expected within a gallery space. It doesn’t try to subvert our current construction, or react to our current societal failings and craft something that is opposite. Instead, it nods to those current conventions and then proceeds to do things a little differently. This is how Raskin can disrupt the white cube in one exhibition while showing in a traditional setting at the same time. This is why it’s fine for the audience to be a little confused at first, or even for a while after. This is not what we are used to. It’s also not the opposite of what we are used to. It’s somewhere in between, changing the structure while existing within it.