

Justin Lowe

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"Helter Swelter," Oliver Kamm/5BE, through Jul 28 (see Chelsea)

Could this really be Justin Lowe's New York solo debut? It's been over two years since Lowe turned a room at P.S. 1 into a crash pad entered through an old Chevy van. He reappeared at the museum with a trippy teepee installation in "Greater New York 2005" and last summer took over the back room at Printed Matter, recruiting artists to contribute album covers based on Neil Young's 1974 cult classic *On the Beach*.

In "Helter Swelter," Lowe returns to the vehicular motif, installing an entire ice cream truck in the back of the gallery through which visitors emerge into a groovy space carpeted with T-shirts and sweaters rolled into flattened spirals. That's after they've negotiated the front room, now transformed into a Mexican bodega, complete with refrigerator (stocked with Corona and Tecate), a packaged baked-goods display, an eye-popping orange-and-blue linoleum floor, fluorescent lighting and newspaper racks.

The installation combines Lowe's nostalgic, neopsychedelic aesthetic with another art world trend: the hyperrealism of sculptors like Gregor Schneider (who installed an alley adjacent to Gladstone Gallery) or Elmgreen & Dragset (who transformed the Bohen Foundation into a subway station). In Lowe's case, however, the results are tricky: While his execution is nearly flawless, the point of this exercise in verisimilitude is unclear. Lowe's bodega is convincing enough that only art-world insiders (who, admittedly, are the ones populating this patch of 27th Street) will be in on the joke, understanding the space as an artwork and not a place to pick up *El Diario* or play Pick 5.

—Martha Schwendener

