



Jon Kessler, *Natural History*, 2015, mixed media,
19" x 29" x 29".

JON KESSLER

SALON 94 FREEMANS
FEBRUARY 15 - MARCH 28

The show "Jon Kessler's Gifts" was like a curiosity shop filled with strange kinetic items dedicated to the artist's loved ones. The walls were painted a soothing gray, and spotlights shone down on modest yet rambunctious sculptures arranged on plinths. Small metal plaques served as old-timey identifiers for these personalized artifacts, which included *The Lady—Juliette Kessler's 16th Birthday Gift* (2010), *Sarah Hoover and Tom Sachs Wedding Gift* (2013), and *Siri Hustvedt's 60th Birthday Gift* (2015).

Fun trinkets and toys merged with serious hardware, weights, and manipulated metal. Many of the pieces were precisely calibrated scales, with undulating metal wires serving as armatures for objects balancing on either end. In *Barbara Sukowa's 60th Birthday Gift* (2010), the numbers 6 and 0, fashioned out of brass, are counter-weighted on the opposite side by coins with holes through the middle, and a cast-aluminum thumb is the pivot point.

Some of the sculptures contained electromechanical parts that set them in constant motion. One standout was Kessler's present to his wife, *Asti Hustvedt's 50th Birthday Gift* (2010), in which a clamshell positioned atop an Asian jewelry box opens slowly and creakily to reveal the number 50 inside its salty maw. Full of wry humor, affection, and smart engineering, this show was a gift to behold.

TRENT MORSE