

JON KESSLER

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Jon Kessler at Luhring Augustine May 14 - June 18, 1994

Walking through Jon Kessler's new show is like encountering those fun objects you used to see in the science museum, in the children's section where you could actually relate and sometimes touch those pieces (as opposed to the boring landscape paintings in an art museum). Those things moved and made noises. They were there so you could actually relate to them. With Kessler's work, even children can actually identify certain objects such as the hot dog bins and napkin holders in [Monorail](#) or rotating oversize Keds sneakers in [Cape Carnival](#). There's a certain accessibility and appeal to these sculptures that's disarming at first. They effectively and poignantly drive the artist's intentions home. They are intelligently and concisely put together - not heavily laden with too much information, just enough to get you wondering. As always, Kessler is successfully in exploiting kitsch - of nature (in [Autumn Box](#)) and of Asian culture (in [Ikebana](#) and [Noriko](#)) - in order to provide an ironic social commentary.

Perhaps the highlight of this show is [The Last Birdrunner](#) (the fifth variation oil a theme that takes its impetus from Ridley Scott's Blade Runner. Accompanied by a haunting organ melody, a lone parrot (complete with armor) sits perched on a ledge that glides up and down, while lights blink in and out of colored focus. It's a comical piece, and yet a tragic one. With the figure of the parrot Kessler has intelligently put to good use his trademark brand of kineticism - he hasn't heavyhandedly made it the main, driving focus as he is apt to in his other works, but employs the up and down movement of the parrot out on a ledge as a metaphor for the nonsense and absurdity of everyday life. With this slow motion, the parrot is further isolated in his solitude, where he will remain. Perhaps he is the absurd hero (or anti-hero) of our time. Although there is still the tendency in Kessler's work to be about both melodrama and spectacle, with [The Last Birdrunner](#) Kessler has gone beyond the smart and cryptic investigations of technology and kitsch to tile poetic and absurd potential of its metaphors. Ultimately, the dual plight of mass production and technological advancement--freedom and alienation--in our universe ever remains.