

JON KESSLER

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Jon Kessler at Luhring, Augustine & Hodes Through Dec 19, 1987

Jon Kessler continues to mix media, cultures and degrees of motion and stasis in his latest sculpture ensembles and wall reliefs, and, so doing, to make a uniquely gentle brand of kinetic art. The tour de force of his current exhibition is [Taiwan](#), an elaborate amalgamation of export chinoiserie, packing materials and antique machines, including part of a Singer sewing machine. These are arranged in a series of delicate suspensions periodically animated, it seems, by a music box that is keeping company with a plastic ear. The wall relief [Under Venice](#) approximates an aquarium whose bits of coral are actually Murano vases and whose underwater distortions are the result of wafting sheets of Plexiglas. In "The Big Light," a series of head-sized light bulbs blink slowly on and off, like ideas coming and going.

Excepting [Under Venice](#), there is a general loss of the visual, almost painterly poetry that has characterized Mr. Kessler's previous work. This tendency is substantiated in the show's smaller pieces, which tend to be too literal, hard-edged or purely mechanical. Mr. Kessler has a great touch with the common object, but transcendence is still the name of the game.