

Durbin, Andrew, *Critic's Pick: Sadie Benning at Callicoon Fine Arts*, Artforum, October 2, 2014, online.

ARTFORUM

New York

Sadie Benning

CALLICOON FINE ARTS | 49 DELANCEY STREET

49 Delancey Street

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While Edward Snowden's disclosures of the scope of global surveillance have been met with every imaginable response, the least common seems to have been humor. In Sadie Benning's "Patterns," images of that peeping police state—metadata, found photographs, weaponry—are woven, often playfully, into wall-based works, suggesting less the ominous tone of the panoptical regime tracing our lives than the comedy of (military-industrialized) errors those lives have produced. Benning first cues the comedic point with a sedate green shag carpet the artist installed in the gallery, a sly evocation of cheesy, pre-PRISM suburban living rooms.

Benning tweaks a culture defined by compulsory gender normativity, impulsive gun mania, and the consumption of toxic materials (cigarettes and oil), reducing its signs to warped tokens of an everyday that increasingly makes very little sense. In *Bathroom People* (all works 2014), the near universal (and outmoded) symbols for male and female restrooms are paired and patterned across a medite board, with each tiny avatar torqued slightly to alter their familiar shape until they sort of dance, sort of lose their gender. In *Mask*, a found photograph of a driveway wall comprising anarchic tessellations of bricks sits below a Zorro mask spying on the scene. While sometimes abstract, Benning's patterns occasionally take nervous shape—as mysterious signals or, more ominously, as guns, as in *Gun Blanket*. It's a subtle comedy keyed to the network-y atmosphere of our dark times. And without a gallows present, perhaps we could call it systems-management humor.



Sadie Benning, *Mask*, 2014, aqua resin, casein, and photograph on medite, 17 x 13 1/4".

— Andrew Durbin