

ARTFORUM

Dawn Kasper Critics' Picks

by Travis Diehl
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Dawn Kasper, & sun & or *THE SHAPE OF TIME*, 2014, performance view.

Someone flipped the lights off, then on: It was artist Dawn Kasper, slipping without fanfare into her performance. By now half an hour deep in a boozy opening, the crowd didn't skip a beat as she walked over to a tangle of tape and record players, mixers, a laptop, and percussion instruments and fashioned a growing mound of static. She calls this installation "Fire," one of five elemental "stations" (including a lawnmower ["Earth"] and stacked tubs of Wiffle balls ["Aether"]), plus a related video and several compulsively decorative wall works, together comprising her latest exhibition "& sun & or *THE SHAPE OF TIME*." Kasper's intense, earnest punk poetics animates these objects in repeat performances throughout the show.

The artist moved to a wooden table ("Air"), first making tiny adjustments to her blue swim cap—then, with wilder motions, adjusting and readjusting the table itself—its one flapping leaf dragging awkwardly. She stripped down to nothing and pulled on a Tyvek suit, complete with hood then the cap on top. She strode back to "Fire" to bowl a pair of claves at the wall repeatedly. Over in "Water," an actor began rooting through a yellow dresser, producing photos, papers, and clothing—generally old and possessed of a generic mustiness, a prop nostalgia—with wild surprise or sorrow. The crowd, meanwhile, had been watching Kasper tweaking knobs. Attention slowly phased and dissipated across the room or followed Kasper, now rewinding a video of herself mowing her parents' lawn rigged to the mower, now stalking through the room blowing tunelessly on a wooden flute.

On the wall is *STOP . . .*, 2014, a grid of fifty discomfiting gerunds self-consciously scrawled in charcoal on mounted paper—from "besmirching" to "ass-gouging." The artist's presence charges the scene with an anxious energy that is perhaps the show's most palpable object—anxious, too, because reflective: her desire to perform, to be an artist, to show us some art rushes to meet our desire to see some, whatever baffling gestures it takes.