



Benoît Maire's "Grab or Die" (2015). Credit Courtesy of the Artist and Room East

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week - The New York Times

# Lito S. Freeman and Benoît Maire

By KEN JOHNSON

A conceptually engaging and mystifying [exhibition](#) of works by Lito S. Freeman and [Benoît Maire](#) at Room East consists of a film and sculptures by Mr. Maire, who lives in Paris, and paintings by Mr. Freeman, whose existential reality is uncertain.

"Letre" is an absorbing 17-minute movie presenting a conversation about the nature of objects — a trendy topic in some philosophical circles — between two French thinkers: François Laruelle, founder of a one-person movement called Non-Philosophy, and Anne-Françoise Schmid, who writes about science and epistemology. Sitting at a marble-top table on which various objects are distributed, they discuss the mysterious complexity of empirical experience.

Mr. Maire's sculptures seem to obliquely illustrate philosophical thoughts. In "Grab or Die," a cast of a hand is positioned inside a wooden box so that it appears to be ready to catch a seashell resting atop the box on a piece of glass. The separation of the hand from the shell suggests Kant's notorious distinction between perception and ["the thing in itself."](#) whose essence forever eludes the grasp of human cognition.

Mr. Freeman's paintings are Minimalist abstractions made on and of small pieces of irregularly shaped wood. Something else is going on, though. Supposedly, the artist was born in Brazil in 1987 and died under unknown circumstances in 2014, but if you ask gallery staff members about him, you get the impression that he may never have existed. He might be a thought experiment of Mr. Maire's about how we process those special sorts of objects we call works of art.

Room East

41 Orchard Street Lower East Side

Through July 10



"Painting #4 Series A" (2014), by the artist called Lito S. Freeman. Credit Courtesy of the Artist and Room East