

Arts

SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 2005

ART

DAN STEINHILBER IS ONE of Washington's most successful and talented young artists. Only 32, he's already shown work at the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum, which has now acquired one of his largest pieces. Next year he'll be getting a solo show at a museum in Houston, as well as an artist's residency at the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh, a pioneering center for installation art. It's hard to resist the whimsy of Steinhilber's work, in which he assembles dozens or even hundreds of banal objects — pop bottles, wire hangers — into appealing sculptures and installations. But some of us have been determined to resist it and ask Steinhilber to throw a bit more conceptual heft into his art. In his latest show at Numark Gallery, there are hints he may be moving in that direction. The best piece is nothing more than a restaurant warming lamp that hangs from the ceiling to just above head height. A plain white plinth, of the kind you'd plunk a small bronze on, rises four feet from the floor to meet it. And Steinhilber's work of art seems to hover in the empty space between them, as a disembodied red glow and a waft of heat. A plinth sets the stage for art; a light points at the spot where it's supposed to sit. The art itself becomes whatever fills the place that plinth and light pick out. An artist whose work has always been about attractive heaps of matter now seems headed for the immaterial.

— Blake Gopnik

At Numark Gallery, 625-27 E St. NW, through May 28. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Saturday 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Free. Call 202-628-3810 or visit www.numarkgallery.com.



COURTESY OF DAN STEINHILBER AND NUMARK GALLERY

Dan Steinhilber's heat lamp and pedestal, and what's in between, at Numark Gallery.

NUMARK GALLERY

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