

## New York Art Galleries: What to See Right Now

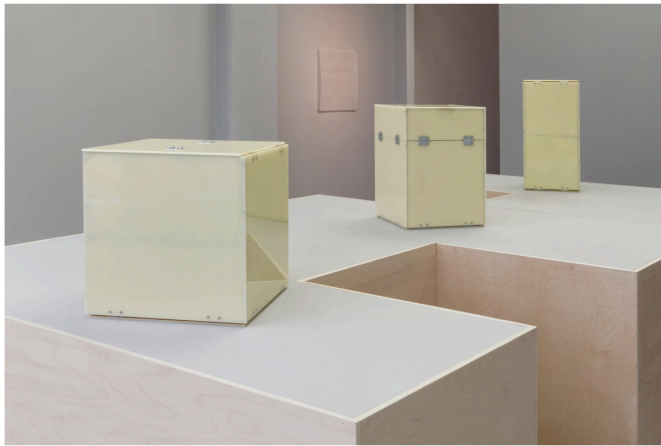
Josh Smith's Reaper paintings; David Taylor and Marcos Ramírez ERRE's border markers; and Alina Tenser's shape-shifting boxes.

May 16, 2019



### Alina Tenser

Through May 24. Crush Curatorial, 526 West 26th Street No. 709, Manhattan; [crush-curatorial.com](http://crush-curatorial.com).



An installation view of Alina Tenser's mixed-media "Reading Room." via Crush Curatorial; Zorawar Sidhu

Alina Tenser's installation "[Reading Room](#)," at [Crush Curatorial](#), centers on a waist-high, S-shaped wooden table with a fabric-covered top. On it she has placed four open-topped acrylic boxes lined with synthetic suede. Two of them are attached to each other, and the other two are free-standing, for a total of three discrete constructions, each of which is entered on the show's checklist as a separate piece ("Volume 1: Twinning," "Volume 2: False Bottom" and "Volume 3: Spider Splay") along with the whole display.

The boxes are held together with a mix of hinges and magnets, so that anyone with good faith and clean hands can unfold them into three flat crosses, one green, one purple, one gray. Or, if a previous visitor left them flat, you could fold them up again. Or you could fold up one, unfold another and leave the third untouched — and so on. The options are all in front of you. The only thing you can't do is arrive at a configuration that's either final or complete.

In another context, that would simply make the boxes toys, or a design project. But in a gallery, this open-endedness feels profoundly liberating, like an inexhaustible well of fresh experience. I had plenty of ideas about the piece while I was looking at it: It's a picture of the art world as a magic act, an abstract portrait of dislocation and loss, what Donald Judd might have made if he'd been interested in human beings. It's a Montessori koan course, a hands-on demonstration of what it means for signs and objects to be both empty and real. But none of my ideas would stick to the boxes' slick acrylic sides. They just slid off onto the floor, leaving "Reading Room" exactly the way it was when I came in. *WILL HEINRICH*