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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in January

By Jillian Steinhauer

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Chinatown

Emily Janowick

Through Feb. 8. Parent Company, 154 East Broadway, Manhattan; 929-324-6615, parentcompany.net



Emily Janowick, "Wet Blanket." Credit... Emily Janowick, via Parent Company; Photo by Olympia Shannon

Two giant obelisks are currently wedged into Parent Company's basement space for a show called "Wet Blanket." They're crossed in a tidy X, as if they'd fallen perfectly — one between two structural columns and the other on top. A pointed obelisk tip juts into the gallery's doorway, a bit menacing, but its sharpness is allayed by the sounds of rolling and crashing waves.

Emily Janowick makes sculptures and site-specific installations that try to bridge the built and natural environments. A more accurate word for her work may be "interventions" — as when, in 2022, she filled a gallery with a staircase so big that you could only either climb it (and see the vines growing at the top) or walk beneath it.

In this exhibition, the wood obelisks, which Janowick constructed on site, restrict your movement. You can walk around, under or over them, but you can't avoid them. The sculptures have transducers inside that play simultaneous audio recordings of the oceans on two coasts: Janowick recorded in Malibu, Calif., and her friend James Chrzan recorded in Kure Beach, N.C.

The installation is an astute conceptual gesture: two fallen monuments marking the turmoil of the country that stretches from sea to shining sea. But for me, at least, the show's greater power is in its visceral effect. If you touch the obelisks, you can feel their vibrations. I laid down on one (with permission) and closed my eyes, and for a moment I could picture the crumbling of empires, replaced by the replenishment of the earth. JILLIAN STEINHAUER