

# BARTLEBY REVIEW

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## A Mirage On A Hill     •••     Michael Cook

**Kalli Niedoba**

*'A Mirage On A Hill'*

*CSA Space*

*2422 Main Street*

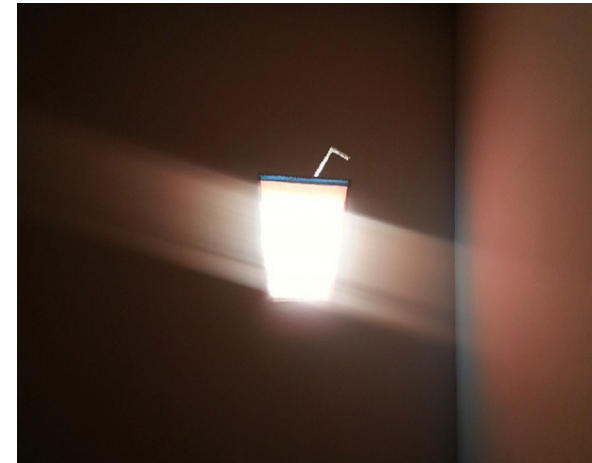
*Through May 31*

I was tempted to begin this review with, "Like Kalli Niedoba's *Big Beige Eyes* exhibition at 221A, which interrogated the function of industrial design in financial institutions, or *I.O.U.* at Unit/Pitt which soaked a crate of her friends' artworks in the ocean for a month before the exhibition—*A Mirage On A Hill* is an exhibition that engages the practice of iconoclasm." It is that. But to reduce the works to their destructive capacity is to miss the complexities of their affect.

In the hallway approaching the gallery space, the visitor begins to hear the slowed down notes of Kim Mitchell's vaguely threatening "Go For A Soda." The pitch-adjusted loop entitled "Well, The Bomb In My Head Is Love (Kim Mitchell)" (2015), is accompanied by a warm,

softly-modulating light that emanates through a hole in the high corner of the west wall. This hole, cut through the drywall in the shape of a soda cup and straw is covered by a 638 gel filter affixed with a single piece of tape, allowing it to flap gently in the warm air that moves up through the space between the window and the wall. The title of the hole, “Varying Degrees Of Optimism (Or I’m At My Best At 7:35 PM)” (2015), hints that it works most effectively as the sunset shines through. On the floor beneath the soda-hole, a pile of dust and scraps from the cutout are mixed with some kind of reflective additive. Along with the gel filter, the scraps are an important element of the work, but the central material is the absence of material: the space where the drywall used to be and the natural light that shines through that space. The absence of a thing is the thing: the intangible, ephemeral, and experiential.

Finally, the central work, “I Love It Here! (Monument To The Floor)” (2015), is a minimalist sculpture of a person in prostrate prayer with arms outstretched towards the setting sun. Like “Thanks!” (2014), the central table sculpture in the *Big Beige Eyes* exhibition, “I Love It Here!...” is made from framing lumber and drywall, and dominates the gallery space. It is built in eight segments: arms, legs, head, torso, feet—each piece a whitewashed, irregular, geometric extrusion, which, standing alone, would read as an abstract form or a misshapen plinth. In fact, the size of the work in the small gallery



space forces a close perspective on the viewer, obscuring the wider view that together these shapes represent a figure.

There are several jokes to be read from this exhibition: the idea that a person in prayer is truly worshipping the floor, the celebration of history’s most embarrassing example of CanCon rock, the inclusion of “hole” in the listed media, and the musical references throughout the didactic material that exhort against snobbery. If the works are considered in their warmth and subtlety, they no longer appear to be tearing down our relationships with icons: on our stereos, in our prayers, or on our gallery walls. Instead, they invite us to consider the ways of devotion implicit in these structures, the several functions of a wall or the layered meanings of a terrible pop song.

**Michael Cook**