

Reviews

“Land Grab”

★★★★★

apexart, through Dec 22 (see Soho)



Lars Vilks, *Nimis*

Don't let the density of information in “Land Grab” dissuade you from spending time with the show. The works here address the difficulties of artists and creative types in maintaining a place in a world of skyrocketing real estate prices. Some pieces are art; others, documentation of more tangentially related projects or endeavors, including several utopian artist communities in Northern Europe.

In Michael Smith's video *Soho*, Smith's alter ego, Mike, offers a fictional sale tour of a live-work space that has served as his home and

showroom for 20 years. The piece is both humorous and strangely touching, as the artist details aspects of his loft and of his pursuits both professional and personal. One senses both his reticence to part with treasured items and a sense of relief at unloading them. Art and the business of it are clearly at odds in his narrative.

The micronation Ladonia, declared in 1996 by artist Lars Vilks after a years-long battle with Swedish authorities over his site-specific sculptures, is represented by a wooden structure that recalls one of his initial driftwood creations, *Nimis*. Accompanying stills document Ladonia-associated items, such as its currency and flag. While nobody actually lives there, more than 12,000 folks claim Ladonian citizenship thanks to the Internet.

Most of the projects here speak to the sense of urgency and need of artists whose livelihoods are endangered, but the tone of the show is humorous and hopeful. The range of options presented reflects creativity born of necessity, and it's an inspiring alternative to the usual pessimism over this growing problem.—*Tova Carlin*