

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

NEW COLLEGE TRY

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If you've ever slogged through prose about "the problematizing of expectations" hoping to deepen your understanding of art, then you know why academic writing sometimes gets a bad rap. (For a gimlet-eyed analysis of such jargon, read Alix Rule and David Levine's recent essay "International Art English.") But in a small basement on Eldridge Street a cadre of graduate students from Hunter College is giving pedagogy a good name with an ongoing experiment: the Artist's Institute. Guided by the nimble curator Anthony Huberman, they choose one artist per season to consider in depth, organizing shows and events and writing in language that's playful and lucid. This fall, their subject is the sculptor Haim Steinbach, whose seductive arrangements of objects on shelves have the addictive appeal of unsolvable puzzles and whose rigorous, intuitive work is too often mislabelled as consumer critique. (Through October, he's paired with the young gun A. K. Burns.) Some might call this slow process of inquiry an "interrogation," but think of it as a lesson in learning to love art more. ♦

