

Andrew Kuo
Critics Pick
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by Michael Wilson

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There's a fascinating back and forth between the serious and the light-hearted in [Andrew Kuo's](#) practice that can easily mislead viewers to a hastily conceived notion thereof (I'll admit to having been one such person prior to this show, which is confrontationally titled "My List of Demands"). So while it doesn't take long to grasp Kuo's basic strategy—he repurposes geometric abstraction as a graphical information system by which to plot the ins and outs of his day-to-day existence and the fluctuations of his psyche—it can take a little longer to understand it as more than just a snarky gimmick. True, Kuo's work sticks it yet again to the perceived pomposity of high modernist painting—a critique, surely, long since done to death—and the texts that key us into each work's theme can seem jokey at first. But keep looking, and especially reading, and a genuine complexity will emerge.



View of "My List of Demands," 2011. From left: *Purple, Plastic*, 2011; *Flower Face 1*, 2011; *Flowers, Window*, 2011; *The Greatest Story Ever Told as of March 2*, 2011.

In *The Greatest Story Ever Told as of March 2, 2011*, for example, a rectangle divided into straight-sided fields of blue, pink, and purple is captioned at its base with a litany of slice-of-life observations, including "Even though the right vibe is always: 'You can be anything you want to be,' you definitely can't be almost all of the things you want to be." The application of casual tone and colloquial wording to a universal sentiment in that phrase is an effective characterization of Kuo's achievement. That he also makes it part of a conversation with a visually forceful design (and these works do feel *designed*) only adds to its critical sophistication. A few flower paintings seemingly thrown in for good measure, while pleasant enough, can't compete.