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Nahum Tevet Crafts Modernism's Shroud of Turin By Blake Gopnik

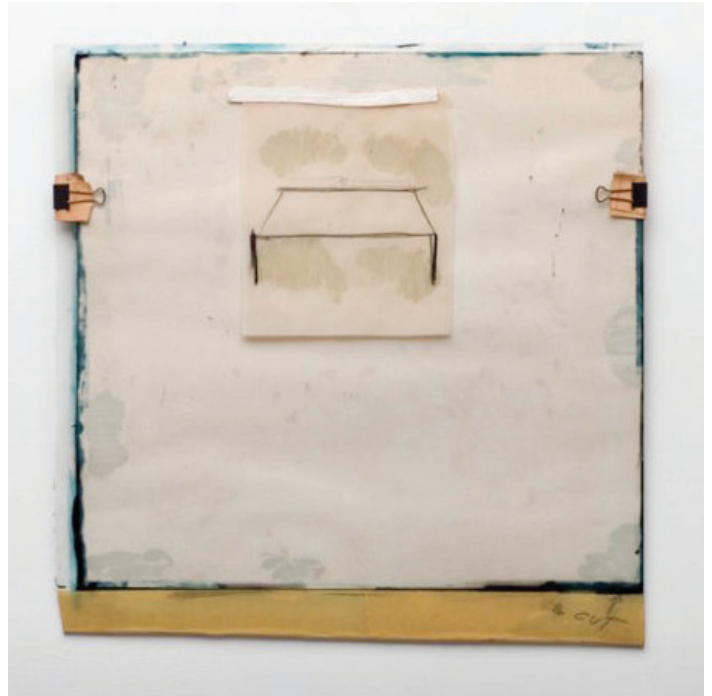
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THE DAILY PIC: At Hunter College, Nahum Tevet's glass works collect the scraps that remain from the sacred days of modern art.

THE DAILY PIC (#1680): In the Christian middle ages, the most potent cultural objects could also be the least aesthetic ones. I'm thinking of the scraps of bone and wood and old iron that worked as relics of the saints, and mattered more than all the gorgeous gold and lapis lazuli that went into their housings.

Relics and their non-aesthetics came to mind when I visited "Nahum Tevet: Works on Glass 1972-1975," a recent show organized by the scholar Thierry de Duve at the Hunter College Art Galleries. For those few years in the early 1970s, the Israeli artist made a series of compellingly scruffy assemblages built around panes of picture-glass that have escaped their frames. Some panes also feature bits of masking tape, braided picture-wire or maybe a little scrap of paper with a barely sketched-out plan for a Parson's table. It's almost as though Tevet's pieces of glass were magnetic, and had attracted to them all the detritus of a modern artist's studio - the way the altars in a medieval church might exert a magnetic pull on all the yellowed wood and bone that the surrounding culture counted as sacred.

In the early 1970s, the art world's sacred space was occupied by the recently departed heroes - and certainties - of modernist aesthetics. In the hands of a young Israeli just finding his way in art, the perfection of a Parson's table could only exist as a sketchy echo of its former exactitude.



The masking tape that shaped and ordered Barnett Newman's zips could only survive as a yellowing trace of the role it once played, a memento mori of abstraction.

Tevet records modernism's passage from color field to potter's field. Its miracles are in the past, but their aura survives into the present.

<https://news.artnet.com/opinion/nahum-tevet-hunter-college-755075>