



Installation view

Ajay Kurian



AMONG OTHER THINGS, childhood is about learning to conform to a preexisting social narrative that necessarily limits cultural free will. This idea is ostensibly the theme of Ajay Kurian's show.

Born in 1984, Kurian grew up the child of Indian immigrants in suburban Baltimore, and like many first-generation Americans, he lived in two countries simultaneously: the one in the house and the one outside of it. This sort of dichotomy often prompts a young mind to retreat into a world of its own—a dissociative state

evoked here by mixed-media pieces that go into a recondite, defensive crouch.

One sculptural tableau features a pair of stick-figure kids made out of pool noodles. Both wear animal masks rendered in marble to resemble fabric hoods, and both are posed by a carved lion (like one you'd find guarding a building) without its front end—evoking, perhaps, a vision of childhood fantasy burdened by the demands of acculturation. Daydreaming interrupted also seems to be the subject of a video fixed on a playground entrance as ghostly filaments

drift across the image like eye floaters.

Kurian returns to adulthood with small leaded-glass shelves shaped like the balcony of his Williamsburg apartment. In one, a model of the Domino Sugar Factory being redeveloped as condos offers a view of gentrification undermining artistic agency.

Like a lot of millennial artists, Kurian makes work that risks being about everything and nothing all at once. His show takes a lot of explaining, but that doesn't detract from its cerebral appeal. ■ *Howard Halle*
→ 47 Canal, through Sun 16