

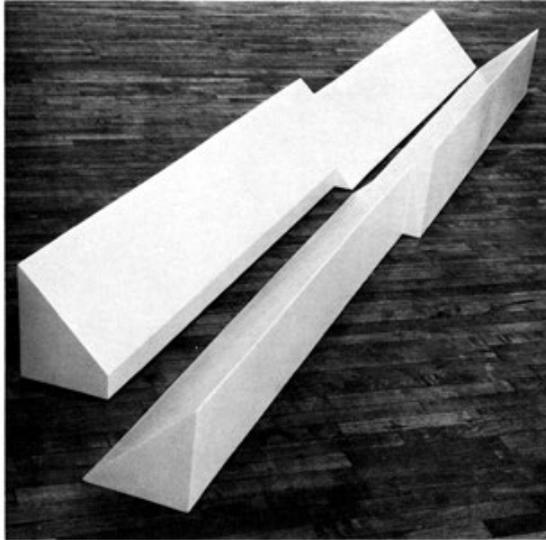
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REVIEW: ROBERT DURAN

By Amy Goldin

A young Californian, Robert Duran, in his first one-man exhibition (at Bykert) embraces the minimal style, but with reservations that imply a feeling for sculptural space. Each piece consists of a group of two, three or four closely related elements. Despite his flat painted surfaces and strictly axial relationships, Duran's work is more plastic and active than is usual in this astringent mode. His forms are not flimsy or wholly banal. The small self-contained wall-piece, for all its strict complementarity, generates a lot of tension with its harsh diagonal. In several of the pieces, however, his color seemed off. It is indecisive without being really neutral, and vitiates the cleanliness of his forms.



Robert Duran, untitled sculpture, 12 1/2", 1966. Bykert Gallery.



Wolf Kahn, Summer Sail, 18 x 32", 1966. Grace Borgenicht Gallery.

lery. Everyone wants to humanize the landscape. The plans included here attack a wide range of sites: the countryside, the city, the ocean, the desert — even a crater of the moon, which becomes a nest for Willenbecher's daisy-shaped set of ten giant metal balls. The most romantic structures are those intended for deserts or other desolate areas: Ronald Bladen's set of three giant slabs continually moving back and forth in parallel tracks and Tony Smith's *Tower of Winds*, a pierced hollow zigurat to be built of reinforced concrete, 88 feet high.

The same concept of the monument as an emblem of isolation occurs in Hans Hollein's sketches, which plunk down airplane carriers or enormous mushrooms of irregular rock in the midst of urban landscapes. Will Insley and Gerald Laing proceed in the opposite direction, setting stark metal structures of angled planes in the gentle countryside. Buckminster Fuller proposes to construct pyramid-shaped floating cities as a solution to urban blight; Christo merely suggests wrapping up some of the buildings in Chicago's Loop with twine and brown paper. The two most visually imaginative plans are Oldenburg's monument for Stockholm, which would have to be seen from the air in order to reveal fully the giant doorhandle and the pair of keys that compose it, and Otto Frei's project for the West German Pavilion at the Montreal Exposition. This prize-winning design of steel nets supported by masts of various heights promises to be equally exciting from above and below.

The ELIE NADELMAN show at the Zabriskie Gallery is large, consisting of 40 drawings and 20 pieces of sculpture. Some of the sculpture was borrowed from museums and consequently was familiar, but other pieces, including two painted wood figures from the Hirshhorn Collection, have not been seen in public for a long time. New Yorkers whose idea of Nadelman comes chiefly from the twin giantesses at Lincoln Center will surely be struck by three small models from the '30s. Like the original of the Lincoln Center figures, these were designed for mass production as decorative objects for the home, to be executed in *papier-maché*. The small size and broad handling of the masses give these

pieces an odd, mobile sort of monumentality.

Nevertheless, for us the most interesting aspect of Nadelman is probably not his form, but his taste. The dandyism of his earlier work, with its good-humored suavity, today seems overly arch, its mannerisms trivial, like old-fashioned slang. In the later work, however, Nadelman's rather vulgar love of decorative detail broadens into irony, and a more full-bodied expression of his basic feeling for artificial sensuality.

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WOLF KAHN'S show at Borgenicht gives us nature diluted by a temperament. His controlled understatement encourages intimacy; we are encouraged to imagine more than we see: brooding presences, dimly apprehended. A talented and deft painter, Kahn has always been interested in atmospheric effects and close-valued color. The new oils and pastels show him working toward a greater opacity and simplicity, especially explicit in the sailboat series. In these grey silhouettes, poised vertically against a grey sky and a little quiet grey water, poetic feeling is balanced by the weight of the color and the pigment. Kahn's lyricism is more blatant in the gaudier pastels. There the banality of the conception makes it all look too easy — houses huddling together between expanses of luminous earth and sky. The most interesting painting in the show was the large *Barn in the Woods*, a composition slightly riskier than most, which sets a large ominous mass of darkness against a narrow strip of silvery trees.

—AMY GOLDIN