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ALAN SARET AT BYKERT GALLERY

by Emily Wasserman

After plodding around, for the better part of the last year or so, through sundry heaps of minimal monuments and dirt piles, flailing plastic biomorphs, sodden or silly polychrome wiggles, and uninspired planks and boxes, I was beginning to think that the prospects for a sculptural renaissance were pretty slim. Recently, several one-man shows by artists under the age of thirty have suggested, to the contrary, that some fresh ideas are circulating again, making for a lively and inventive new group of objects, sculptures, and in-betweens.

"Mountains of Chance, Documents of Ruralism . . . Changing Manufactures," is the way Alan Saret characterizes his work in his first one-man show at the Bykert Gallery. Putting current labels of "anti-form" aside, 23-year old Saret has, to my knowledge, been working for over a year with chicken wire, soft rubber, electrical and fencing wire, and other flimsy materials, creating strangely reticent, though airy, energetic and lyrical webs, clusters, and billows ("sculpture" seems almost too heavy a designation for Saret's work). The stiffness and rigidity of wire sheets and strands are contrasted with the weightlessness and linear fragility of woven, strung-out grids tacked high on the wall. Or the process of wadding is disembodied either by color sprayed onto chicken wire or by the passage of light through the interstices of the dense, tangled masses. Saret has tried his hand at a variety of approaches, and since I first saw his work he has gained in sophistication and in the assurance he brings to his newer pieces. While I found a wall-hung formation of twisted, flexible black electric wire more than vaguely reminiscent of Pollock, a similar work done with thick metallic green fence wire demonstrated an ability to mold space beyond the wall without referring to pictorial concerns. A grid-weave was pushed out in cylinder-like protrusions, swinging up and through space with snipped segments in pinched together or open, tensile curves.

Strangely enough, I found things like the pile of yellow sulfur mixed with strips of orange rubber dumped casually in a corner, or the swirling baroque mass of chalky black rubber sheeting which cascaded lushly from a box support onto the floor, much more ingratiating than the wire pieces, and somewhat less resolved, for all their funky attractiveness. The velvety looking trains of black rubber had some of the almost private, evasive sensuousness which was evoked by one of the most absorbing and more decisive works, a coagulated mass of silver chicken wire which seemed to spray and explode at its peripheries like a heaving celestial body.

In another, though earlier work, Saret draped and wove brown rubber strips through an irregular skeleton of blue rubber-coated wire which perched (or even seemed to float) on the floor. The octopus-like tentacles of rubber added a feeling of weight and loose containment, fleshing out the non-structured wiring, whose hollow core was filled only by air and light. A fine group of colored pencil drawings showed Saret a bit less romantic, with their whip-lash taut streaks and twirling or compacted energy-bound lines. A careful sensitivity to the subtleties of weight, formal contrast, unconventionally used yet prosaic materials, and an elegant, though not overly arty sense of shaping mark Saret as a vital and promising talent. He has a suggestive and well-considered group of works behind him already.