

frieze

-May 2008-

Ian Pedigo

Pianissimo, Milan, Italy



Ian Pedigo, view of exhibition 'OnBalanceVolume', courtesy Pianissimo, Milan

The work of American sculptor Ian Pedigo enjoys a unique mobility among the aesthetic of refuse currently collecting in some of the main arteries of the art world. Largely eschewing the impulse to stretch art's formal terms to reductive breaking points, Pedigo's work instead uses a certain formal complexity to enter into - if not to synthesize - a number of different discourses. For his first solo show in Europe, the Alaska-born, New York-based artist presents five sculptures and two wall works, offering a restrained yet incisive introduction to his practice.

Pedigo composes objects from found materials that range from scraps of wood to cardboard to magazine clippings to swatches of cloth, Plexiglas and multicoloured electrical tape. Working in the historical mode of assemblage, the artist hybridizes found objects in the venerable tradition of Bruce Conner and the late Robert Rauschenberg, for their deployment of recycled stuff, as well as Richard Tuttle, for his use of transparent plastics, among other things. Gedi Sibony is an easy mark when discussing Pedigo's work, for their kindred materials, but any other resemblance ends there; it would be altogether more compelling to bring up the work of, say, Manfred Pernice and Ian Kiaer.

frieze (continued)



Persuader to enclosed space (civic messages) (2008), courtesy Pianissimo, Milan

Persuader to enclosed space (civic messages) (2008), the first work one comes across on entering the gallery, is made of a white, patterned cardboard box, cut and geometrically articulated so as to resemble a maquette of sci-fi futuristic architecture. The cardboard is placed on a low pedestal made from a grey formica-covered countertop, the base of which is painted in blue and orange. Pedigo's distinctly drab, second-hand store palette feels similar to that of Pernice (whose palette, incidentally, seems to draw heavily from Berlin's U-Bahns), while the maquette quality of the object brings to mind Kiaer's precious intimations of utopian architectures, countering the British artist's delicacy with a laboured, highly structured ruggedness. However, Pedigo's practice seems to have fully internalized the interest in architecture, incorporating it into its formal vocabulary, as opposed to creating sculpture about architecture. In other works these concerns become less apparent, but are nevertheless still there. *Surroundings are Left Open* (2008), which comprises gridded swatches of fabric partially circled by a taped-down string, comes off as a topographical depiction of a building or a compound.

Wall from Distant Memory (2006-8) and *Glacier-rich Avenues* (2008), play out sci-fi tropes a bit more conspicuously. Incorporating a used wooden doorframe, wool, Plexiglas, a plastic sheet, and wooden sticks, the inclined form of *Glacier-rich Avenues* brought to mind a kind of space ship. As did the more painterly *Wall from Distant Memory*, despite primarily doubling as the silhouette of a skyline, which consisted of pyramidal cardboard shape attached and propped against the wall by a series of two-by-twos, jutting out from the top and bottom of the cardboard's borders. *About to Clear* (2008) is the work that most patently synthesizes the numerous formal stakes of the show. The cylindrical form of the work, along with the corrugated craft paper that envelops the lower section of the structure, is initially evocative of Pernice's urban emblems - his columns or rubbish bins. But the insertion of lighting gels, which suggest windows, along with the bamboo sticks rising up from its hollow centre, which suggest antennae, shifts the work towards a kind of sci-fi tower maquette or even the fuselage of a rocket poised for take-off. In this way, Pedigo's shape-shifting sculptures are made to wear the different hats of severely articulated detritus, sci-fi motifs or architecture, and anonymous, urban elements, all of which are fused together to form a soundly ramshackle whole.

-Chris Sharp, May 2008