

# site95

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## Interview with Christian Maychack by Kris Scheifele 3.2012

Kris Scheifele: In your recent work, you often use chair caning and baskets as supports. What's behind your selection of such porous items?

Christian Maychack: I started using caning when I organized this portfolio for a friend's birthday. I couldn't figure out what to do since I don't draw or make flat work in general. At the time, I was reading some anthropological theory and was thinking a lot about weaving as one of the earliest forms of making. I wanted to incorporate caning or baskets into my sculptures, but was having a hard time not being literal about it. So then, I was trying to make this really flat sculpture for the portfolio out of epoxy clay and needed to reinforce it with something and I had the broken caning right there next to me. So at the start, it was really a structural decision, but then in the manipulation by sanding and carving, I realized it could act as a support and help create an abstract pictorial plane, which in turn led me back to an interest in abstract painting. I've thought a lot about the caning in this work as a nexus between the object and the pictorial. Lately though, I've been building wooden matrices that I'm thinking about in a similar way to the caning, where the support also acts as image and creates a figure/ground relationship.

KS: That swirl of the epoxy clay conjures the all-overness of Pollock but embedded—almost parasitically—in the ordering grid of the weave. Tell me about the interplay between your ground and the irregular shapes and solid bands seemingly superimposed over it. In some instances you flirt with perspective.

CM: I approach the all-overness of this work much differently from Pollock. His was a layering of actions that ended up with an all-overness, which I see as pushing at the viewer almost like an object and works to limit entry into the picture plane. I try to use an all-overness that's more uniform which first presents itself as the surface of an object only to draw a viewer closer and into a visual field.

The lines and shapes that superimpose the ground are themselves embedded/inlaid into the surface and don't merely exist on the surface. It's important that I think of them as integrated into the object in this way, so as not to let go of the physical. I use them and their color to simultaneously create optical space and to frame the sculpture from within, referring back to the object.

As far as flirting with perspective goes, we flirt awkwardly and I'd like to keep it that way. Like I said before, I don't really draw and because of that I have a skewed sense of perspective. I think it would be too easy to rely on perspective to create a sense of space and less interesting for a viewer, so if I let myself use it, I have to find a way to sabotage or confuse it without the whole thing seeming too tentative.

KS: Your intimate scale also draws people up close to the work. Once there, how do the wall and the way the work hovers before it play into all of this?

CM: I really like the graphic and sculptural presence created by that little bit of space from the wall. I think it changes how you approach them. I feel that the way we interface with painting and sculpture is so different, I want the viewer to start the approach with the idea of sculpture in mind. So the shadows and being able to look around to the structure and how it's made are crucial. I want you to realize that the seemingly two dimensional line or shape that hovers in a visual field extends behind the piece and has this whole other life as part of the wooden support for the object.

KS: What about the floor pieces? I've seen the joined cluster of upturned baskets, *Surface Exchange*, and the one that looks a bit like a podium.

CM: Those two are about the approach as well. With both pieces, I was thinking about the different ways we're comfortable and accustomed to interacting with two-dimensional information. With the larger basket piece, I looked at a lot of abstract imagery in rug patterns and wanted the viewer to look down at the sculpture like a rug. With the other piece you mentioned, I was thinking about lecterns and informational displays. I think the experience of approaching that piece as a functional object only to end up engaging with an abstraction is interesting. I really wanted to recreate the experience someone would have standing at a lectern or podium.

For that reason, it's definitely not a sculpture in the round, although that's not to say I didn't think about how it would look from every other point in the room.

**Christian Maychack was one of the artists recently exhibited in "The Bricoleurs" at BRIC Rotunda Gallery in Brooklyn, NY. He is represented by Jeff Bailey Gallery in Manhattan and Gregory Lind Gallery in San Francisco. (Compound Flat #14, 2011 image courtesy of Jeff Bailey Gallery, all other images courtesy Gregory Lind Gallery)**