

Christian Maychack at Gregory Lind Gallery

Over the past few years, Christian Maychack has proven to be one of the most compelling new artists working with sculpture in the Bay Area. Influenced by—without being derivative of—both the California funk-junk traditions as well as the more site-specific and architecturally minded artists like Castaneda/Reiman, he has forged a singular aesthetic practice that is both solidly organic and original. If his latest exhibition at Gregory Lind Gallery, *A General Record of Things Breaking Down*, lacked the cohesive vision of earlier shows, it nonetheless demonstrated Maychack's restless imagination, with new works hinting at several different new directions in his practice.

Working with a variety of materials, including plywood, polystyrene foam, wire, "Magic Sculpt," paint and resins, Maychack creates wondrously strange objects that often suggest a kind of twisted functionality within sculptures that are not "aesthetically beautiful" in any conventional sense of the term. Goopy appendages, dented walls, excessive strands of material, cartoonish monstrosities—such devices hint at a sly humor that certainly runs through all of Maychack's work. But he is not simply an ironic deconstructionist (of sculpture or of architectural space). Rather, his playful attitude to form adds to the uncanny nature of several of his pieces, which seem to have sprung up in some strange laboratory of the unconscious.

A good example is *A Slow Push Through*, which consists of a grouping of biomorphic extensions coming out from the wall, with bulbous ganglia practically pulsing with suggestions of life. Similarly, *Notes on Becoming* seems to be growing out from the purposely misshaped and uneven pedestal designed as part of

the sculpture. *The Other From One* likewise teeters with layers of overlapping foam and Magic Sculpt, seemingly in excess of its own formal dimensions. Throughout, Maychack explores the tension between the stillness of the finished sculpture and the larger forces of entropy implied by his particular approach to form and materials. Another untitled work looks like a rundown artificial landscape, with fake grass and structures, as if a Sol LeWitt grid sculpture has collapsed beside a modernist toy train station. More illustrative than self-sufficient as sculpture, this piece is less successful for Maychack. Still, it showed the gentle humor evidenced in several previous exhibitions of his work.

By far the most compelling piece was the large sculptural installation *All Together Now, or The Inherent Capacity of a Woodpile*, which at first glance looks to be a pile of leftover materials propped up in a corner of the gallery. Closer inspection revealed, however, an admixture of elements, including various wood planks and molding strips, each mutated at its base and twisted into each other. The longest plank reached up the false gallery wall and curved over the top to insert itself into *Coming and Goings*, the neighboring installation. In both pieces, the everyday building materials of wood and drywall meet the more uncanny twists and turns of a remodeling job gone wrong. *Coming and Goings* includes Maychack's trademark wall "dents," where the gallery wall bulges and burps with buckled drywall and subtle indentations, as if the artist had tried to quickly cover-up any evidence of a recent tantrum.

The seeming centerpiece of the exhibit was a large wall piece, *A Thinnest of Betweens*, which looks a bit like a giant Rorschach-test inkblot splayed onto the wall in mirrored swirls of deliciously goopy foam. Though somewhat reminiscent of Matthew Barney's work (in material as well as its more polished beauty), set against the other works in the gallery it provided a nice counterpoint to the more bizarre sculptures. Nearby, the wall



Christian Maychack, *A Slow Push Through*, 2007, plywood, Polystyrene foam, wire mesh, Magic Sculpt, paint, 18" x 13" x 10", at Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco.

piece *An Alternate Scenario for a 2x4, #9* showcased a twisted piece of Douglas fir, remolded into an almost grotesque and sinister body part. As with most of his sculptures and installations, Maychack once again demonstrated his deft balancing of twisted humor and uncanny command of form to great effect.

—David Buuck

Christian Maychack: *A General Record of Things Breaking Down* closed in June at Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco.

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