

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

Newcity
October 2010

Review: Anthony Pearson/Shane Campbell Gallery

RECOMMENDED

Small is beautiful in Anthony Pearson's show at Shane Campbell's new gallery space on Milwaukee Avenue. This sparse exhibition consists mainly of Pearson's abstract untitled photographs that are actually pictures of ink drawings the artist made on aluminum surfaces and then discarded. Pearson's original drawings are also abstract with layered grids crisscrossed by quick brush strokes. By transforming these ink-wash drawings into photographs, Pearson reminds the viewer of the watery darkroom origins of his shimmering silver gelatin prints. The photographs are more than simply a reproduction of his drawings because Pearson solarizes his negatives, reversing the lights and darks, distancing the photographs from the original drawings. The result of this entire process is that Pearson supplants the tactile, textured drawings with their visual record—the relatively flat, low-contrast photographs.

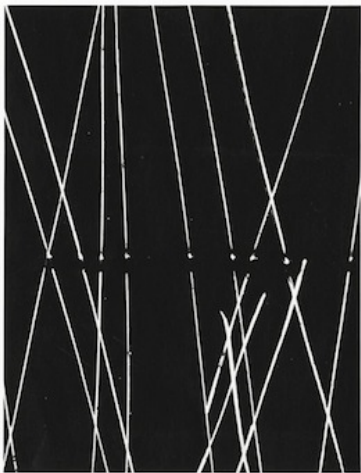


Anthony Pearson, "Untitled (Tablet)," 2010. Bronze sculpture with silver nitrate patina. Courtesy of the artist; Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago; Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York

Compared to his quiet photographs, Pearson's two untitled sculptures are the most alluring works in the gallery. These chunky grids, or "tablets" made of stacked strips of clay, are cast in bronze, then coated in silver and hung directly on the wall. They gleam beside Pearson's subdued photographs that are various shades of grey. Despite his use of materials typically reserved for much larger sculptures, Pearson's "tablets" are not much bigger than his photographs. The scale of Pearson's work overall, regardless of the medium, is somewhat an anomaly amongst the gigantic photographs and grandiose video installations that have proliferated in the contemporary art world over the past decade.

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"Untitled (Solarization)," 2010.
Solarized silver gelatin photograph

Viewing Pearson's work alongside recent exhibitions of Hilary Wilder's modestly sized pattern paintings at The Suburban or Stephanie Syjuco's handmade modular sculptures at Gallery 400 suggests a return to smaller scale works of art, as well as a return to abstraction in contemporary art. In particular, a return to early forms of abstraction like Man Ray's "Rayographs" or Hans Arp's curvilinear "Dada reliefs" created around 1920. In advancing these outmoded ideas, this group of contemporary artists, Pearson included, broaden the function of abstraction by employing it for their own unique conceptual ends. (Regan Golden-McNerney)

*Through October 15 at Shane Campbell Gallery,
673 North Milwaukee.*

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