

PETER REGINATO

57th Street Gallery West

REGINATO'S sculpture contradicts the nature of his medium in form, concept and especially spirit. Although the works are constructed of steel sheets, they are not factory fabricated—Reginato cuts, bends, twists, accordion-pleats and punctures the steel by hand, removing the industrial reference that normally prevails in sculpture in that material. The work has a sense of lyricism and lighthearted play that undermines the sculptural traditions at its source; the illusion of spontaneity and immediacy, the negation of weight and gravity and the denial of the slow, exacting process of the work's execution create the impression that the pieces are held together by some invisible magic force.

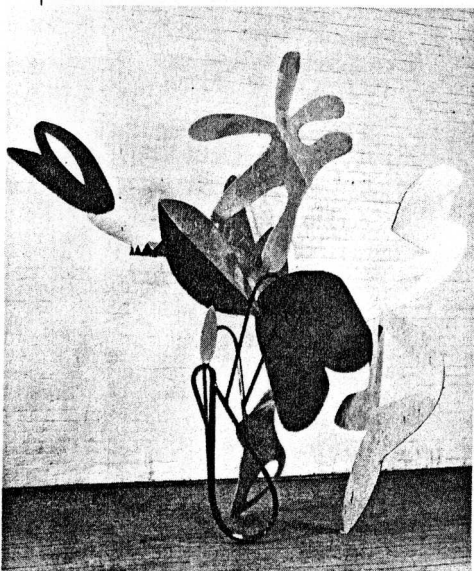
The curved polychromed planes that seem about to soar into space here, poke through an adjacent member there and open as peepholes elsewhere are delightful provocations for viewers' fantasies. Surreal shapes run the gamut from flowers and fish to spoons and baseball mitts; open and airy, joyful and witty, their vitality is enhanced by hues that may be spotted or streaked, their slapdash layering hinting at sudden, impulsive decisions. Reginato's pastels—colors like lavender, aqua and celadon—seem sun soaked and are accented by more vibrant colors and occasionally black.

Paradise Found shapes space with steel twisted into an enlarged paper clip at the base, curved forms with cutouts and starfishlike tentacles at the top. Its one uninterrupted flat plane resembles an opened bivalve and is painted bright blue and sprinkled with sparkling dust. *Free Cone*, topped by a gestural flourish of space-framing piping and balanced on tiny feet welded to the tips of four elements at its base, appears to be revolving around its open core.

Reginato's sculptures seem additively conceived, but they form an organic whole, reaching up like plants seeking the sun. Despite the free-swinging invention that liberates them from established norms, the works have a coherence that establishes their esthetic integrity.

—M.S.

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Peter Reginato's Paradise Found, 1985, painted steel, 99½ by 99 by 58 inches, projects a sense of lighthearted play.