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April 11, 2005

Peter Reginato Interview with JMG Artblog: Discussion of "Small Dot" sculpture in 'Paint on Metal' exhibit at Tucson Museum of Art



SMALL DOTS

Peter Reginato, Sculptor

32"x17.5"x7"

insl-tron, steel, plexiglass

1998

[JMG: Can you give me some background on the creation of "Small Dots" and the other pieces in your series 'Eye Candy'?](#)

PR: Some of my concerns were trying to see if I could get up in the air, continuing this idea of a vertical sculpture. "Small Dots"

came at the tail end of a group of work that I had been using Plexiglas in. I pretty much had felt by the time I had done "Small Dots" that I had used up the ideas I had for Plexiglas. I dropped the Plexiglas at that point, but some of the shapes and forms stayed. Mainly I was trying to see how to make a vertical sculpture, that gets its height organically, without feeling too forced or the engineering overriding the visual concerns. It was at this point that I felt like I wanted to go back down horizontal and not be so concerned with the limits of a vertical structure.

[JMG: What influenced the series? "Small Dots"?](#)

PR: All the work is influenced by the previous work in the sense that I see a certain amount of correction of issues and problems that I was dealing with and trying to find a more satisfactory answer to. Also, some of the work at the time particularly pieces like "Area 51", I had an idea about the work being a mix of disparate elements, that had different characters but worked together. I was also trying to create a somewhat environmental feel. In "Area 51" I was also experimenting with Plexiglas, which wasn't the first time I had tried to make a transparent shape with plastic. This was also the first time people related my work to Calder. I hadn't been thinking about Calder, but took a look back at his work. I was taken with his early work, but I'm not crazy about his later pieces.

[JMG: What were you trying to say/create with "Small Dots"?](#)

PR: On formal terms the shapes are all hand drawn which has been a recurring theme of mine since the first sculpture I made and the idea of the drawing/quality of the line being very important. Basically I've eschewed all found objects and what I've termed as "neutralized" forms or drawing. The same could be said

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what I've termed as "neutralized" forms of drawing. The same could be said about the color. It is all very intuitive. And I would say that I tend to paint the pieces trying to emphasize the spirit of the structure. In this particular case I was trying to create an energy that was driving upward and kind of just hanging in space, something joyous but not really "whimsical" as much as I hear that word quite a bit in describing my work, I think joyous describes it more fully, i.e. a deeper feeling.

JMG: What type of paint is used on "Small Dots"? How did you choose the various colors?

PR: I use an industrial paint called Insl-tron which is used for outdoors applications. As I said above, the color is an intuitive decision, based on capturing the mood of the piece or in some case changing the structure by composing with color, and sometimes its just as simple as what looks great.

JMG: What started you painting on metal?

PR: Back in the mid-60s when I was making fiberglass sculpture I was always painting it. When I started making steel sculptures I dropped the polychrome aspect, because I didn't really know how to properly apply the paint and I was also learning how to weld at the same time. I continued to paint them one color into the mid-70s, but by the early-80s I found myself saying to myself "theses shapes are asking for color" and at the same time the shapes and colors played off of each other. The shapes became more organic and fluid. I didn't want to paint the pieces the way I had before. I phoned up Dupont one day and asked them how they keep paint on cars. It is a long drawn out process but it works.

Also, I can't imagine a piece of abstract sculpture without color on it. Its like why is it that a figurative work that follows a realistic idea about figure drawing doesn't follow a realistic idea about color? Why isn't a bronze figure sculpture painted realistically? *Or in another sense, most figurative sculptures are abstracted to a certain extent towards an ideal. Why then is there no use of color in a similar abstracted sense?* (The italicized last sentence added by Peter in an email later the same day)

JMG: How did you come up with the particular metal pieces to include in the structure?

PR: The shapes have been an ongoing process, even going back to some of my first minimalist shapes, like the "W" or corrugated form I have been using since the mid-60s. And then everything has kind of progressed out of 7 or 8 basic forms. Some of them stolen from other artists and some that are totally unique that I've made up.

JMG: Were there any difficulties in the creation of this series?

PR: It's difficult just getting up in the morning. The only difficulty I can think of is that it was very hard to sell the more ambitious pieces and ironically 5 years after I've made them they seem to be selling quite well.

JMG: What were you sculpting before Eye Candy?

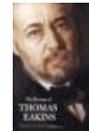
PR: The work before it was fairly similar, I think the biggest difference is that I opened it up in "Eye Candy" and the use of Plexiglas. And in some ways I probably painted them even brighter, but mostly this linear curved forms that almost operated as an armature probably defines the "Eye Candy" series best.

JMG: How did you find out about the "Paint on Metal" exhibit?

PR: Julie Sasse, the curator of the Tucson Museum, got a hold of me. She was told about my work by an artist named Jim Wade.



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JMG: Where are some of your other works on exhibit?

PR: At the moment I'm in a group show called "Whimsy" at Amy Simon Fine Arts in Westport, Connecticut. "Area 51" was recently acquired by Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton, NJ. Many of my older sculptures are on view at museums around the country.

JMG: What are you working on now?

PR: I just finished up this piece which I had a couple of technical problems with that I have straightened out. I've been making a lot of drawings with some new ideas about structure. I'm not sure how big I want to go so I'm just fooling around with that right now. I've also made a few small paintings. Which is a nice break from the demands of sculpture.

JMG: Can art collectors purchase your work? How?

PR: Yes, just send them to my website. I take phone calls and emails too. I'm available.

JMG: Thanks for taking the time to do this.

Photo: Peter Reginato at his studio with a young fan.



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