



SCULPTOR PETER REGINATO'S 'RINGLEADER'
In New Show at Watson/de Nagy Gallery

In-Current Joint Show

N.Y. Artists Contrast Points of View

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Two New York artists — painter Dan Christensen and sculptor Peter Reginato — are sharing the bill at Watson/de Nagy Gallery, 1106 Berthea. As a pair, they present some interesting contrasts in artistic points of view.

Christensen, a painter of the color field school who has gained a respected reputation in certain quarters, uses a complex combination of paints and application techniques to create works which, for all their technical virtuosity, appear more reductive than additive. Always highly focused, these more varied paintings retain the same integrity with an extra rich textural dimension.

On the other hand, Reginato, whose 1973 sculpture "High Plains Drifter" can be seen outside Allen Center, has moved from simpler, more massive shapes to welded steel works of extravagant frills and arabesques. Rather than strengthened by the increased assortment of shapes and directions, Reginato's work now simply appears fractured.

The visual vocabulary that Christensen uses is admittedly limited. He puts most of his weight on the effects of impastoed textures built up with thick paint of a plaster consistency and the seepage of various glazes into the impasto. What mottled color design that results has little to do with the wide, ridged scrapings left in the impasto by the artist's brush or palette knife. Occasionally in these new paintings, areas of concentrated color suggest hazy shapes which don't necessarily lend any structural strength to the paintings.

What is most appealing about these new Christensen paintings is his use of deep chocolate browns and blacks, departing from his white and off-white works of the past. The porous quality of the impasto medium separates out the value variations possible with these dark hues: Whites and grays surfacing from lower paint levels give a polish-like sheen to the velvety colors. Blues and purples flicker amid the browns of "Kahlua Lumpur," while oranges and blues appear through the beige and black of "Neptune" to enhance the sheen even more.

Yet, except for a very handsome large painting called "Mexico" in which Christensen's basically homogenous paint quality receives full exposure, the paintings have a kind of facile, easy expressiveness that refers more to the crafts than to the more substantive requirements of fine paintings. Colorful and decorative, they are like hors d'oeuvres and not the main course.

Reginato's sculpture relates structurally enough to his earlier work to suggest that this artist is in transit to some yet unattained visual idea. The same enclosed quality of the more massive pieces is repeated in these new sculptures whose shapes are now outlined with steel tubing and defined with forms that constitute negative areas. These are interesting three-dimensional ideas, reaching toward demarcation of volume without using explicit physical boundaries.

But Reginato has not yet conquered the delicacy of transparent planes with equally delicate imagery. The arcs, zags, circular shapes and wiggles in the sculpture are cheap efforts that don't hang together well. The results look like spontaneous jungle gyms that take themselves far too seriously.