



Peter Reginato,  
Toranonga, 1978.  
Welded steel, 93 x 54 x  
40". Courtesy Dianne  
Brown Gallery.

## PETER REGINATO

For the past few years Peter Reginato has been one of the best of a number of younger artists working in the tradition of open, welded, and constructed sculpture. As he has come to understand his own particular gifts as an artist, his work has grown stronger and more emphatic while curiously becoming more refined and sophisticated in its vocabulary. His most recent work, shown at the Dianne Brown Gallery in Washington, D.C., this spring, continues this direction.

In these new pieces the sculpture is raised on three legs, creating a sort of tripod arrangement, although the legs are made from different shapes and sizes of metal and

do not sit in any standard arrangement. These legs terminate at a "waist" plane, a little above the midpoint of the sculpture. The remainder of the piece is raised above this level by one of the legs which continues upward. Crowning the work is a "ring" made from varying segments of arcs, rectangles, corrugated planes, and other shapes which join to form an enclosure. All of this combines to give the pieces at first look a certain figural quality reminiscent of works by David Smith. This is true not only in the relationship of the legs to the waist, but also in the manner in which the sculpture defines its own area or zone—i.e., the space in the sculpture removed from the more public space in which the work is placed, much as a stockade fence defines the inside and the outside of a fort.

But this quality is more intuited than stated, as Reginato's works are open and thus transparent, and the space-defining "rings" are not solid but built up piece by piece.

In fact the works belong less to the tradition of figural sculpture than they correspond to ideas of still life assembly. Several of Anthony Caro's works are related to the image of the table with objects upon (and below) it, and David Smith did works which are directly still lifes, such as *Voltri XVI* and others which are more abstract variations, including *VB XXIII* and certain of the *Cubis*. But Reginato's more planar vocabulary, combined with the sense of discreet enclosure, places his work more in the spirit of the great *guéridon* still-life paintings by Braque and Picasso

from the early 1920s. Indeed, in these most recent sculptures—and in a few made two years ago, such as *Don Giovanni*—Reginato has made overt references to this style. Interestingly, this phase of Cubism emerged out of collage (the main source for constructed sculpture) into more three-dimensional, painted compositions. Reginato's linkage to this aspect of Cubism is not only a matter of his sharing a similar vocabulary of crisp planes which are often folded and joined, but also one of compositional ideas, a complex assembly of planes and passages raised up on legs. In the Cubist paintings, Picasso and Braque defined the volume of the still-life objects by bending the planes in such a way as to lead the eye around them; by setting these elements side by side, they could contrive a sense of volume. At the same time the thinness of their planes and the disconnections of the arrangements would make the image more two-dimensional. It is this aspect of Cubism which we find paralleled in Reginato's recent sculpture, as the separate elements of the piece brake the pace of the spatial definition, while at the same time skipping the eye around the work so as to complete the sense of volume.

This is not to say that the paintings of Braque and Picasso fully inform Reginato's recent work. There are major aspects of them which are without precedent, either in the Cubist tradition or within the lineage of constructed sculpture. What is most impressive about the works is the way in which Reginato has been able to use heavy components of steel—some have a real feeling of mass—in the work in such a way as to not deny this sense and yet at the same time work in a style which clearly requires a sense of nuance and subtlety in the joining of the components. This may be possible because of his clear understanding of what the piece basically is; thus the questions which arise in the making of it are more ones of appropriateness than of definition. The result is some very original and very good sculpture.

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