

Gloria Luria Gallery

1033 Kane Concourse/Bay Harbor Islands, Florida 33154/Phone (305) 865-3060
Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday 10-5:00 p.m.

MEL KENDRICK

BRYAN HUNT

PETER REGINATO

Essay by Phyllis Tuckman

NOVEMBER 7 - 29

Opening Reception November 7, 7:30-9:30

The Road Now Taken by Phyllis Tuckman

If you haven't reckoned with the Zeitgeist of the 80s, you might find Bryan Hunt, Mel Kendrick, and Peter Reginato an unlikely trio of sculptors to band together. For several years Hunt has been modeling in plaster and casting in bronze work which melds motifs from nature and allusions to Greek goddesses with the principles of abstraction. Kendrick has carved from all sorts of woods scores of dense, smallish forms which are non-representational and multifaceted and integrated them with equally unique, leggy pedestals. Reginato welds sprightly steel constructions with fanciful shapes of his invention and paints them with exuberant combinations of color. Although each artist employs a different technique, their concerns are related. An eclectic spirit and eccentric tone currently prevails in the art world. And process and procedure have become as idiosyncratic as the properties they are used to realize.

One-person shows Hunt, Kendrick, and Reginato held in Manhattan last season revealed that these three artists share a lot in common. This includes attitudes about size, surface, shape and color; the relationship of parts to the whole; and the influence of the past on the future. Their imagery is personal as well as stylish. All rely on intuitive practices rather than the cerebral precepts canonized by the Minimalists two decades ago. Meaning nevertheless is not attained at the expense of quality. And then they're considered together, it's apparent there's not a right way of a wrong way to execute a three-dimensional form. These three work as freely as the Early Modern masters who broke no rules because they were making them.

When you encounter a sculpture by Hunt, Kendrick, or Reginato, you're likely to draw close to it. A number of factors engender this response, and several reverse the way things have been since the mid-60s. Work by these artists entails the accumulation of parts. These elements, which are fashioned by hand and/or hand-held tools, can be interesting if isolated from the rest of the sculpture. Because everything can be handled by one person, what's executed tends to be smaller and less cumbersome than Minimalist structures shopped out of fabrications and not overwhelming and dislocating like room-size installations.

You enjoy an intimate, less public relationship with a sculpture by Hunt, Kendrick, or Reginato. Although Robert Morris once partially accounted for how something like this can occur, your experience rises above theoretical premises to a more enchanting, purely visual realm. Seeking to justify the sensibility of the sixties in an article published in *Artform* in October 1966, Morris pointed out that Egyptian glassware, Romanesque ivories, and such have "highly resolved surface incident" unlike larger, broader-planned objects. Hunt, Kendrick, and Reginato actually animate their sculptures with a variety of means. Hunt's surfaces are so detailed light and shadow become enticing, practically palpable substances and by retaining the natural tones of plaster, wood, and steel in his *Barcelona Series*, he underscored the individuality of each section. Kendrick choreographs a corp of angles and enlivens his planes further by drilling holes, leaving pencilled guidelines

visible, and adding patches of color. Reginato juggles an assortment of unusual, often biomorphic shapes and applies different hues so that drips, splashes, and splatters whet your curiosity.

For a number of years some critics have been predicting, a few have even been asserting, the demise of Modernism. During the early 70s, there were writers who were claiming that the finest talents were becoming filmmakers. Others were suggesting that performance art and photography were supplanting in importance and creative heights the traditional media of painting and sculpture. When I read these things, I could never understand whether the end of art as it had been known during the course of the 20th century was on a path where objects were hurdling at great speeds toward an insurmountable brick wall, as if they were runaway planets in a Science Fiction movie which were about to crash into the sun and shroud the Earth in darkness. Or was another scenario being projected? Were artists merely inching along as a slower and slower pace until everyone would stall and entropy would set in?

The doomsayers were mistaken. The traditional arts are in a healthy state today. No one disputes that painting is thriving and Hunt, Kendrick, and Reginato's latest sculptures similarly confirm the vitality of the present moment. During the free-for-all 70s, the course of Modernism was somewhat stymied, but now a number of artists are replenishing its sapped coffers. They're taking an untravelled path, a road their immediate predecessors forgot existed. It's the one that was left "for another day" and which Robert Frost suspected in 1916, "knowing how way leads to way, I doubted if I should ever come back."

Aspects of Modernism are now encountered which weren't explored fully when they were introduced by previous generations. Consequently, the nature of both linear and horizontal histories is being redefined. At times it seems as if artists are going backwards and forwards simultaneously. Hunt's sensuous surfaces, for example, call to mind of Rodinesque bumps and hollows rejected by Brancusi. At the same time they're the sculptural equivalents of the marks and strokes on painterly canvases by his contemporaries, Neil Jenny and Susan Rothenberg. When Kendrick creates compound angles and complex planes, he has one foot planted in a past populated by Boccioni's Futurism, Archipenko's Cubism, and German Expressionist sculptures while his other foot is striding toward a future shared with things as grandiose as skyscrapers from the firms of Helmut Jahn and Moshe Safdie. If Reginato was influenced by David Smith early on, now he's developed more radically images and themes which once concerned Lipchitz and Gonzalez that Smith overlooked. And he's examining pictorial premises that have engaged Miro and Leger as well as Murray and Miami Vice.

Advanced technology has made it possible for Hunt, Kendrick, and Reginato to achieve qualities the Early Modern masters could only dream about. Because silicone is now used in the casting process, Hunt can exploit the mimetic capacities of bronze so that the inherent properties of the different materials of his *Barcelona Series* are still in evidence. The availability of electrical power equipment for cutting all kinds of odd, geometric configurations and drilling all manners of holes from wood has enhanced what

Kendrick can realize. And the perfecting of heavy-duty industrial paints has let Reginato color his steel so that it will be practically maintenance-free out-of-doors.

High tech innovations partly explain what Hunt, Kendrick and Reginato have been able to accomplish. For each artist has also mastered a host of traditional skills. Hunt's *Barcelona Series* is a lexicon of sculptural practices: he carved, modelled, and welded wood, plaster, and steel and the platform on which his parts are perched might once have been a Minimalist structure had it been blown up in size. To make his lively pieces Kendrick has not just harnessed the forces of progress, he's also manipulated a variety of handtools as well as glue. When Reginato torch-cuts elaborate forms from sheets of steel, he's benefiting from the up-grading of welding equipment; however, he forges curves and bends the old-fashioned way, too.

You might expect equipment, once dormant craft procedures, and a wealth of historical images and ideas upon which to draw to generate a jaded, know-it-all character. But Hunt, Kendrick, and Reginato's sculptures have an air of adventure about them. Their work is ebullient and at times downright zany. Theirs is a world of sinuous curves, not a spartan diet of hard-edges and hollow volumes. What they make seems haphazard even when you know it's not — you know their pieces would topple over if they weren't thought out or tested to their limits. Irony is conspicuously absent. Rather, a kind of bonhommie permeates their art. A jazz age raffishness seems to beckon us toward their forms.

Hunt, Kendrick, and Reginato haven't used the past the way Arnold Schoenberg did when he orchestrated several compositions by Bach during the twenties. Nevertheless you feel something comparable has ensued because a gallery filled with their three-dimensional images might resemble a sculptural version of Picasso's *Three Musicians* of 1921 in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. Although that magical canvas, synthetic interpretation of Cubism and a painted version of papier collés, is checkered with patterns, upon know you're looking at a Pierrot who plays a clarinet or recorder, a Harlequin with a guitar, and a Monk or Domino who holds a sheet of music.

Hunt, Kendrick, and Reginato deal with similar complexities within a framework of clarity and cohesiveness. But they grapple with this blend of components from an opposite direction. They begin with abstraction as a given. These three sculptors, after all, belong to the first generation to inherit the legacy of the 60s. They still respect some of the principles expounded by Andre, Flavin, Judd, LeWitt, and Morris; they practiced them early on in their own careers. However, there are deep-seated qualities rather than the superficial look of Minimalism which survive in their sculpture. When you realize this, you recognize where they're taking us. Hunt, Kendrick, and Reginato are immersing us in a new chapter in the history of the plastic arts. They are enriching a vocabulary that had been reduced to its essentials. All three are freshly reinterpreting the original premises of modernism. They have retrieved lost values from the first half the century and combined them with the lessons of the more recent past. Hunt, Kendrick, and Reginato have restored to sculpture its heroic dimension.