

The Hudson Review

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FROM THE FIRST COLLECTION IN ENGLISH—

LETTERS FROM AMERICA ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE

Translated by Frederick Brown

Anne Stevenson's Poems of Memory EMILY GROSHOLZ

Elizabeth Taylor's Otherness WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Updike's Farewell BROOKE ALLEN

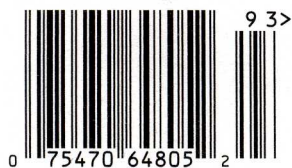
Prince of Lightness: Merce Cunningham MARCIA B. SIEGEL

POETRY BY Anne Stevenson, Gerry Cambridge, Jeff Hardin,
Floyd Skloot, Laurence Barrett

LETTER FROM PORT-AU-PRINCE Herbert Gold

REVIEWS BY David Mason, Peter Makuck, Tom Wilhelmus,
Karen Wilkin, Richard Hornby, Erick Neher

Display until January 15, 2010



At the Galleries

KAREN WILKIN

IT'S PROBABLY TOO SOON TO ANNOUNCE A TREND, but there are faint indications that the art world's infatuation with unripened talent may be waning. The past season included notable shows by mature New York artists with respectable exhibition histories: among them, works on paper and canvas by Graham Nickson, sculpture by Peter Reginato, and drawings and paintings by Nicolas Carone. These seasoned painters and sculptors have enough mileage on them and have been showing long enough for their distinctive voices to be layered both by their own accumulated experience and by our accumulated experience of their work over time—all of which added to the considerable pleasure of their various shows.

Peter Reginato, like his contemporary Nickson, began exhibiting in the early 1970s. "Steel Drawings," Reginato's show of recent work at Heidi Cho Gallery, both summed up his preoccupations of the past few decades and moved into fresh territory. "Steel Drawings" was dominated by two sprawling, arching constructions, typically "Reginato" in their evocation of landscape forms with loose-limbed drawing and exuberant shapes. *Ghost*, 2009, nearly seven feet high, was a spare improvisation of slender bars that diagrammed and caged chunks of space while casually framing a "now you see it, now you don't" sheet of clear Plexiglas, pierced with a giant "thumb hole," like an oversized palette. Reginato's overscaled steel loops and ovals simultaneously suggested tropical vegetation, cartoon animals, machinery, and a host of other, equally wide-ranging things. Furiously scribbled images—part philodendron, part bunny, part scaffolding—seemed to be taking shape as we watched but never coalesced. *Ghost* insisted that we rush through it. I suspect that was because of the transparency of the piece—*Ghost* is almost pure outline; our eyes raced along the paths described by Reginato's generous "drawing," leaping over the spaces described by his wonky shapes and zipping past the angles of his open forms, as we restlessly circled the sculpture, seeking fresh viewpoints.

The denser and shorter of the large sculptures, *Slow Burn*, 2008—five and a half feet tall and crowned with an openwork "box"—seemed to heave itself up into its mound-like shape, like a yoga adept working against the pull of gravity, weighted by its freight of solid, cutout shapes, substantial bars, and pleated forms. I was even more engaged by the shifting opacities of *Slow Burn* than by the assured, more easily grasped openness of *Ghost*, forced to change my viewing pace from speed-reading to leisurely contemplation, in order to enjoy the contrasts between *Slow Burn's* suave biomorphic planes and boldly drawn angular grids. Perhaps because *Slow Burn* revealed itself more slowly than *Ghost*—of necessity, since we couldn't easily see through it—I found it more surprising. My enthusiasm for Reginato's denser work was confirmed by two smaller, tightly packed sculptures, especially the unpredictable *Frostie's Boot*, which kept shifting scales between improvised architecture, grotesque footwear, and pure sculptural invention. Think squashed Frank Stella, from the period of his most aggressively layered relief paintings. But Reginato's vocabulary of shapes, which he has developed over several decades, owes nothing to Stella's derivations from drafting instruments. Rather, Reginato seems preternaturally alert to American vernacular imagery of the 1950s: outdoor signage, kidney-shaped swimming pools, cartoon conventions, streamlining, George Nelson designs, and even the swoops of tail-finned cars.

For years, Reginato emphasized the street-smart, playful aspect of his work by differentiating the parts of his sculptures with color. But recently, he has exploited the tension between the subtle modulations of unpainted stainless steel and the staccato rhythms of his ambiguous shapes. As a result, his sculptures seem more complex; since the internal orchestration of parts isn't spelled out by color changes, we're obliged to look harder to understand what's going on. When we looked hard at the works in "Steel Drawings," we discovered that they were among Reginato's strongest, most inventive works to date. He keeps getting better with time.