



Peter Reginato: *Blue Float*, 1978, mild steel, 80 by 58 by 41 inches; at Tibor de Nagy.

Peter Reginato at Tibor de Nagy

Princess de Boisgeloup, *Blue Float*, *Loose Ends*, *Soolie*: the fanciful names with which Peter Reginato titles his sculpture are a counterpoint to the enigmatic, intriguing and ultimately serious aura they project. And they do project, they are not passive objects: one can even feel an odd rapport with them, though this "animal" quality diminishes when it is seen that their components are abstract shapes.

Their size, verging on 7 feet high, is just large enough for maximum impressiveness without being rhetorically monumental. The material is mild steel, which Reginato sands (leaving a random surface pattern), waters for intentional rusting, and then coats with polyurethane; the resulting color is a rich but muted bronze.

Reginato has consciously gotten away from the proposition that the base of a sculpture has to be the heaviest part, in order to support the rest. In fact, he works from the top down, welding and re-welding the shapes of the upper section together until he has the results he wants. These shapes, in a repertory of about seven or eight, are pre-cut in numerous variations, so that when Reginato goes to construct a piece, they function as found objects and he is free to work quickly and intuitively (he never works from maquettes or preliminary drawings).

The shapes Reginato has been using include both biomorphic and geometric ones. There is a kind of leaf shape, an "M" or "W" depending on which way it is turned; a shape similar to the outline of California; and various polygons, some curved or folded, and sometimes with a square hole cut out. None of these forms is specific in reference, but all have a broad and rather mysterious allusiveness. The square cut-out emphasizes the already airy and open feeling, an aspect (along with their size) that makes them particularly sensitive to their surroundings. The pristine white of a gallery is definitely not ideal—they need a more personal or more varied environment with which to interact.

Perhaps the most surprising feature of these pieces is that any one of them looks very different, even radically different, from minute changes of viewpoint: there is really no best angle. (The Hirshhorn Museum has acquired *Princess de Boisgeloup*; it will be interesting to see how they install it.) And it is just this "all around" property that distinctly separates Reginato from two major early inspirations: the primarily frontal Cubist sculpture of Picasso, and the planarity of David Smith.

It has been ten years since Peter Reginato abruptly left painting for sculpture. These new works do not present a great difference in form from the sculptures immediately preceding them, but they now have a refined (and deceptively easy) sense of balance and a sure, light touch—two of the components that go to make up their inherent visual interest that keeps the viewer looking.

—Tony Towle