

International Art Objects Galleries

Mark Hagen

'Paleo Diet'

September 7 to October 26, 2013

Press Release

China Art Objects is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by Los Angeles based artist Mark Hagen. This exhibition will reflect Hagen's continued exploration of categorical slippages that point to alternative trajectories for material, cultural, and conceptual histories. Using common or utilitarian materials and processes that steer their inherent tendencies, Hagen creates sculptures and paintings that can record the physical circumstances of their manufacture, or act as arenas and frameworks within which the unintended, the amorphous, and the impractical flourish, ultimately suggesting mimetic portraits of the art world as just such a normative system.

Central to *Paleo Diet* is a new installation made from Hagen's "Additive Sculpture" space frame modules titled *The Alhambra* (after both the Moorish palace in Granada, Spain and the California city east of Los Angeles). Approaching the architectural and the monumental, yet opposing both with their typical veneration of power, hierarchy, and permanence, *The Alhambra* recalls the space frame's early history (championed by 1960's radical artist/architects like Yona Friedman and Constant Nieuwenhuys as a means for achieving a democratized, architectural nomadism) while resuscitating it from its current consignment of industrial utility and corporate/civic decor. Traversing the gallery *The Alhambra* transforms from a "wall-free" ethereal canopy into an improvised and eccentric structure titled *The Ramada* (after provisional shelters of the America Southwest which also have roofs but no walls). Here Hagen's reconfigurable space frame becomes perversely cemented into place as well as provocatively contaminated, sprayed over with a "papercrete" made from concrete and pulped magazines (a 1999 "Y2k Survival Handbook" and several 1980's issues of *Truckin'*) found in the attic of the artist's home.

"For the past few years," Hagen writes, "I've been developing objects that are designed to be rearranged as well as perform in various capacities simultaneously; as sculpture, as installations, interventions, display devices. Modularity and the reconfigurable have been among my means but also my subjects. I am interested in the unfixed, the incomplete, and the cyclic, in opposition to the finished, the completed or 'linear' work. These pieces allow me to extend my agency in any exhibition setting but also extend the agency of the work itself in time, allowing for continual flexibility: future iterations, additions, subtractions, enhancements." "My space frame pieces," continues Hagen "illustrate the volume of the exhibition space by dividing it into identical units that one sees in perspective. This brings to the foreground the singular subjectivity of the viewer, allowing the viewer to locate their authentic, yet impoverished, spatial/temporal specificity, which appears in opposition to what the space frame is capable of and why it is still such a potent and compelling form."

Interacting with this space frame installation is *Vapor Parade*, which appropriates and transforms a decorative film used in gift-wrapping, holiday decorations, and novelty items into a simple spectrum-producing device, casting rainbows that rove the space over the course of each day. Despite its beauty, for Hagen this piece also highlights the limitations of our experience, illustrating the viewer's visual perception as limited to the visible colors which is estimated to be less than 1 % of the entire electromagnetic spectrum.

Displayed on the space frame are new "Subtractive Sculptures" made from salt licks and volcanic glass. The salt licks start as 50lb. compressed mineral and salt blocks fed to cows who have progressively licked them into their present sensuous shapes. The obsidian pieces are cut from large boulders into rectilinear forms, which are antithetical to the amorphous structure of the glass, and polished to a mirror finish. These sculptures mine the extensive historical importance of obsidian while capitalizing on its abandonment as a significant material for contemporary culture. The conical fractures and cracks record the process of their making and handling, and become highlighted imperfections that contrast with their

enchanting iridescent faces, which themselves evoke authorless, autonomous, process-derived abstractions.

Also debuting in this exhibition are Hagen's "cast tile" gradient paintings. Here rearrangeable, off-the-shelf plastic tiles, plastic sheeting and packing tape are used as the textural mold for acrylic paint, which when dried becomes an analog of the material circumstances of the painting's fabrication. By pouring paint onto the "back" of burlap sheets and squeegeeing it through to the "front", Hagen generates atmosphere-like images complicated by sculptural textures, and makes paintings that simultaneously combine the linear sequence (the non-repeating nature of gradients) with the repetitious (read cyclic) quality of patterns.

Mark Hagen was born in 1972 in Black Swamp, Virginia. Recent exhibitions include *Made in L.A.* 2012, at the Hammer Museum; *Handful of Dust*, at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara, *TC: Temporary Contemporary*, at the Bass Museum of Art; and *Lost Line: Contemporary Art from the Collection*, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; *California Biennial 2008*, Orange County Museum of Art. Hagen's artist book *2013?* was published in 2012. He received his MFA from CalArts in 2002 and lives and works in Los Angeles, California