

sculpture

Reviews: "Tony Feher, Pace Wildenstein" by Stephanie Buhmann, pp. 73-4

NEW YORK

Tony Feher

Pace Wildenstein Gallery

Tony Feher finds poetry in industrial and consumer products, which he assembles and arranges in unusual conglomerates. In his hands, plastic bottles, cans, scraps of metal and wood, pieces of tape, and rubber bands form unlikely alliances and become festive odes to everyday trivia. Though Feher is also known for his expansive site-specific and (occasionally) outdoor installations, this exhibition brought together a generous selection of comparatively smaller, recent works, which together offered a colorful overview of his multi-faceted oeuvre.

While striving for structural clarity and pursuing a minimal approach to color and form, Feher's sculptures generate a strong sense of whimsy. The works of Richard Tuttle and James Hyde come to mind, but Feher's inherent playfulness is more in the spirit of Klee or even Calder. Feher, indeed, often appears like an artist at play: his towers made of metal or glass jars, plastic bottles filled with colored water, and groups of squished cans, coins and marbles might easily stir up childhood memories. It seems as if he still seeks surprise in his works as much as sophisticated compositional harmony. In fact, one of his main challenges is to balance improvisational freedom with sober editorial decision-making without seeming pretentious or too calculated. In the past, he has described his key motivation as the



Tony Feher, installation view of exhibition at Pace Wildenstein.

search for "the 'trick' in materials, that indescribable something that allows me to exploit an object for my own purposes: a reflection of light, a color, a play of density versus transparency, a little something that sets it off."

But Feher not only poses challenges for himself. By placing disposable goods

center stage, his works enable us to see the overlooked as something surprisingly exotic and thereby force us to confront our own value systems. At their best, Feher's works make us find mystery in what is already known and accept that throwaway objects can become enticing protagonists in their own realm. This might



**Left: Tony Feher,
*The Fluorescent
One*, 2007. Glass jar
and nylon
monofilament, 13 x
24 x 24 in.**

explain why Feher preserves the familiar characteristics of his objects. He abstracts his subjects by contextualizing them with unexpected counterparts – but never beyond recognition. We always know what the objects are, and Feher's manipulations remain minimal. In this sense, he combines materials as much as he created relationships between objects. Usually foreign to each other, these entities, despite their newly installed union, remain autonomous.

Though Feher's aesthetic is post-conceptual, his works also contain a romantic appreciation for nostalgia. They are engaging and lighthearted without seeming predictable. Like a great melody, they excel through a compositional structure that is simple, yet not simplistic. In visual art, as in music, this is one of the most difficult qualities to achieve.

- *Stephanie Buhmann*