

# The New York Times

FRIDAY, MAY 23, 1997

## Art in Review

■ From trash-heap materials,  
a tilt toward the poetic ■

### Tony Feher

*D'Amelio Terras  
525 West 22d Street  
Chelsea  
Through June 21*

Tony Feher is a latter-day Minimalist, as apostatic as he is devout. In this beautiful solo exhibition, his second, he veers back and forth, embracing and then denying its ideals, all the while subverting them with humble, cheap materials — jars, bottles, Styrofoam, wood, most simply lifted from the nearest trash heap.

In certain works, Mr. Feher seems to love horizontality and unattached elements as much as Carl Andre does: he masses 100 smallish glass jars into a neat square on the floor, just as Mr. Andre might have arranged copper or zinc plates. Like Donald Judd, Mr. Feher favors bright, pure, intrinsic color almost everywhere, making the red lids of four different glass jars the focus of one piece; or, in another, 15 green

marbles, placed on the tops of 15 clear glass soda bottles. In "Blue Rise," 10 bottles filled with different amounts of blue-tinted water are lined up, their changing water levels defining a gentle curve, not unlike a Judd progression piece.

But Mr. Feher's common materials and easy-to-read structural ideas redirect Minimalism toward the poetic, achieving an equality between thought and material untypical of the style and fueling an emotional undercurrent that is all his own. The directness and ephemerality of his pieces speak not only to life's everyday joys and beauties, but also to its fragility.

This is clearest in "Suture," a cluster of plastic bottles half full of red-tinted water that hang along a rope, their connecting wire suggesting stitches. There's nothing opaque or hard to get about his efforts: we see his eye and mind respond to a possibility, as when in "High Low" he accents the incised pattern of a swatch of brown-toned carpet by filling it with marbles. And in a rare moment of unrestrained excess like "Crawl (House for a Green Bird)" — a seemingly chaotic jumble of bottles, jars, sticks, red plastic slide boxes, pennies and paper cups — the generosity implicit in all of Mr. Feher's work is suddenly made overt.

ROBERTA SMITH