

Of Necessity

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Primarily, art is a process, an experience, a question. Many ordinary things, and many extraordinary things find their place there. Tim Linn's works on paper are full of both. Largely made by putting one, two or three surfaces together and attaching them directly to the wall, each piece though similar in their vertical orientation and method, yields its own distinct experience. Each part combines with another like a word in a line of poetry to become interlocking visual conundrums that recognize the complexity and instability of perception.

The work is drawn from sources as diverse as architecture, the geometries of Pre-Columbian artifacts, workmanship of the recently discovered Staffordshire Hoards, shapes inspired by some of today's shampoo bottles, tap dance, jazz music, the paintings of Guston, Matisse, Cezanne, the Polish Constructivists, the enormous sculptures of Serra and many keen observations of nature. In his synthesis of these divergent sources it is evident that he is entirely at ease with the complex lessons offered by modern, contemporary, primitive and ancient art alike.

In Linn's hands ordinary things become extraordinary things with remarkably simple, and seemingly effortless manipulation. This is I believe, because his work is born out a logic that seems intrinsic to the materials he uses. This list of materials challenges in length the wide-ranging list of his sources, yet none are used for the sake of novelty; all are there out of absolute necessity. Linn's materials push way beyond what 'ordinary' has come to mean in the drawing and painting worlds today. Some of these materials are of the humblest origins such as packaging boxes, Styrofoam, ink, pastel, crayon and paint, run of the mill paper surfaces, planks and blocks. And some, Japanese hinge and Japanese veneer papers, latex, Vellum, part of a rusted old hayfork etc., are of more extraordinary derivation.

In their verticality with simple geometric forms or patterns that span and align across different colored papers, some of the stacked pieces (assembled primarily in '09) suggest warrior shields and totems. Some recall the sketchy working models of a set design, while others suggest the monumentality of architectural fragments placed together incongruently. None are alike. Even if the same system of say, page above page is used, vastly different results occur.

When placed next to another these individual surfaces and forms become integrated and notions like continuity and discontinuity become equal in power to each other. We realize there are many stories to tell and many being told.

Tim Linn was a student in Chicago in the 60's and 70's where he began showing his work before moving to New York City, in the early 80's where he currently resides. Linn and his family spend time regularly at their wooded property in upstate New York, where he has been able to watch closely and experience deeply, the cycles, systems and colors of nature.

Growing up in the wake of Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art and Minimalism, he began working for a while making 'field' paintings, and continued on by processing the influences of Stella, Held, Tworlov, Mangold, Rauschenberg and Warhol. He found young Oldenberg brilliant! As he developed, he found he was "looking for a different place" for himself, one where he felt he could "get to a place in the work that was truly open and rich in possibilities". In these works on paper Linn puts one or two or three things together as a way to free up individual action. In the artists words; "Two surfaces takes away the pressure on the single surface- it allows openness. These are very intuitional, chance operations, and the reason to keep the process open is to feel freedom."

Many (young) artists today favor found materials, and many shop at the hardware store rather than the art supply store for materials. Some have made careers using detritus and cast offs to comment on contemporary society. Much of that work can be clever and with the affect but not the effect of art. Linn's is, as they say 'the real deal'. Many of his materials have been collected over decades from both rural and urban environments; some have had roles in previous works. Many are selected purely for their tactile and visual qualities. And most of them seem - in one way or another - to have an affinity with the limited geometries of primitive, and ancient art. *No. 19*, for example, is a bar of Packaging Kraft Paper resting atop a split apple log. The two inch thick corrugated packaging material has been split open to reveal its inner

semi-square geometries. The apple log, having been split neatly in half stands vertically with a slight sway. Their brown and russet colors and their rough, ripped edges form an immediate visual bond that grabs the viewers attention while other aspects of the materials quietly set about doing other work, which may be to tell a story about the paper industry, issues of the environment, birth and death, transformation etc. The 'T' form of this combination underscores a sense that we are in an arena where fundamental and elemental issues are in play. Here, it declares nonchalantly, we have the raw and the processed. Linn doesn't work with specific narratives in mind or make reducible, definable objects. Yet, in considering his long relationship and deep affinity with anthropology and his genuine love of materials and artifacts, it is amply evident that in his work he is speaking more about how we view the world than about how we view ourselves. The lens is focused on the wide angle and the timeline itself is open ended.

Linn seems to favor notions of contingency and incompleteness over the static and complete. I suspect this is because he is interested in the word 'participate'. What he adds and how he adds to one of his many different drawing supports alerts us to a slowing down of experience where we can see the process of how things are made. The frankness and directness of material and action makes space for the viewer. It can be drawing or painting, carving, molding or tearing. It can be it a declarative, authoritative mark, a casual stroke, or an off-hand gesture. We are welcome, the work suggests, to experience the world as he does with a heightened sense of clarity and with a deepening sense of the mystery of it all.

No. 5 and 6 have two pages stacked vertically with a pattern of narrow diamonds on the lower page and on the top page, one has a sequence of tall skinny letters spelling 'INFRATHIN' and the other has a set of chalk lines and wide shadow-like gouache lines layered like musical rhythms. In each of these works few of the lines above align with the geometries below but there's a sense that if we looked away they may just nudge closer and align - if only in *our* mind.

Linn describes tap dancing, which he practices, as apt example of showing the medium and the process. Here, we can watch and listen as the dancer taps heel and toe or slides his foot to create a range of sound and movement. While Linn loves these expressive forms he is aware that they are dependant on the performer to exist. Without the singer, there's no song, without the dancer there's no dance. Which is why for Linn making things- painting and drawing- is so necessary; It allows him to continue to participate with ancient artifacts, not because he feels nostalgia for the past but in making these works that reverberate with so much material history he engages with the possibility of making or perhaps keeping the historical fresh. And, in remembering that an artifact is indeed material memory-I have come to see Linn's works as profound and highly complex contemporary artifacts.

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-just as he understands perception to be complex, unstable and dependant on circumstance, he believes time is a fluid yet fragmented continuum,