

PRESS

Jeff Jahn

Vection

2 July - 1 August 2010

“Jeff Jahn at New American Art Union”

by Richard Speer

Visual Art Source - Weekly Newsletter

July 10, 2010

Fresh on the heels of co-curating the University of Oregon's Donald Judd conference and exhibition this spring, artist and critic Jeff Jahn mounts “Vection,” a solo show of his own in response to ideas he encountered during months of Judd research. These ideas are integrated with two of Jahn's longtime motifs.

First, in works such as “Canopy” - mounted on the wall ten feet above the gallery floor - there are the jagged, rough-hewn wooden teeth, which Jahn uses to communicate the sinister quality of nature in the Pacific Northwest, with its active volcanoes and tectonic volatility. Secondly, Jahn coats freestanding sculptures in what has become a signature color for him, a cross between lime and chartreuse. It's just organic-looking enough to suggest moss or lichen, but just artificial enough to suggest eerie, man-made materials such as industrial or radioactive waste. The large-scale “Middle American Mountain Migration” spans the gallery's south wall, its noncontiguous components blossoming across the space like a lotus flower made of oversized glass shards.

Across the gamut of the intuitively laid out and visually satisfying exhibition, Jahn offers a private, regionalized distillation of Judd's theses about the relationships among objects, observers and space.

“Wood In 3-D: Northwest artists yell ‘timber’.”

by Richard Speer

The Willamette Week

July 14, 2010

Northwest artists love wood. For good and ill, from old-growth forests to the ethical and environmental complexities of the modern logging industry, wood in its many forms lies deep within the region's DNA, and many of our best artists knowingly (or subconsciously) tap this phenomenon's deep roots. This month, three artists at different venues use wood as a sculptural material to filter their own concerns through the prism of the Northwest's most precious natural resource. At Fourteen30 Contemporary, **Jesse Durost** presents sculptures that are more organic than the rigorous constructions he exhibited last year. In the checkerboard-patterned *Up From Ashes* and the red-on-white-striped *Refigure*, he uses crumpled, acrylic-painted paper. Durost places the works atop elegant pedestals, elevating something that would normally be discarded (balled-up paper scraps) into objects of aesthetic significance. This transfiguration speaks to recycling and repurposing, a cornerstone of the environmental ethos.

Seattle-based **Cris Bruch**, showing at Elizabeth Leach, uses nothing but recycled wood in his 7-foot-tall sculpture *Blind*. With its slotted contours dropping down from an unseen sphere implied at the piece's top, it looks like a giant wooden cloth draped over a hidden, unknowable object, which may or may not be nature itself.

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Finally, ubiquitous freelance curator, writer and artist **Jeff Jahn** channels the region's rural/urban tensions in *Vection* at New American Art Union. His sculptures and wall pieces, all created from recycled wood, are painted a hue of green that lies somewhere between pond scum and radioactive waste. In *Canopy*—mounted 10 feet above the gallery floor—rough-hewn semi-abstract contours cast sinister shadows willy-nilly. Preferring natural materials such as wood and sand to more glamorous media like polished chrome or plastic, Jahn is intent on exposing the soul of the tectonically and volcanically fearsome Northwest. *Canopy* looks like part of a great, ancient tree that has just been bitten into by a chainsaw and now, snaggletoothed and mad as hell, is ready to bite back.

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