

ArtReview

Peter Alexander *Sculpture 1966–2016: A Career Survey*
Parrasch Heijnen, Los Angeles 9 July–10 September

Even when his works extend over two metres high, as his monolithic wedges do, Peter Alexander's sculptures always have a jewel-box quality. He is an object-maker of the highest order, and one often finds oneself entranced by the effects he produces using resin and urethane. A work like *5/6/16 (Lime Green Box)* (2016) glows to the point of losing its edges. It is unbelievably and totally green, a colour buzzing so intensely that it takes over the room. Right next to it is *Rose Window* (1969), pale and translucent, bringing the light in and gathering it up. What emanated in the green box now becomes absorptive in the pink one.

An Alexander exhibition always affords these perceptual movements, and his small survey at Parrasch Heijnen in Los Angeles is no different. Focusing on sculpture, the exhibition offers the most well-known slice of Alexander's work. It is a series of small encounters, beautifully installed and just enough of Alexander's work to give an insight into the whole of his career. One need not see Alexander's

paintings of landscapes (which he made for decades) to know he is going for sky and air. It is all there in the plastic.

Like so many others in Southern California during the 1960s, Alexander found his voice in polyester resin. It is common to read interviews from that period with artists being surprised to discover that others were doing what they were doing—casting resin and working with its fascinating properties. Resin was commonly used for surfboards, but artists found it a pliable material for exploring a range of metaphors about California. Light and space artists, as a group, represent the many facets of California during the 1960s. With one foot in hedonism and the other in industry, resin casters are as easily scientists as hippies; they can speak to aerospace engineering as well as hot rods.

In Alexander's work one sees a range of resin's properties. *Pink Block* (1967) sees to encapsulate perfectly its fascinating properties. A cube base topped with a wedge, it is a marine layer Santa Monica morning contained in

plastic, paradoxically hazy and crisp at once. Both liquid and solid, it is atmospheric, born of weather and sky and mist and rain, and early light on a surfboard. It is also unapologetically consumable, certain of its pleasures and unashamed by delight.

LA-based art critic Christopher Knight once wrote that Alexander helped originate 'the Pop wing of Light and Space art', and this observation proves astute over time. Over the run of his 50-year career, Alexander never seemed interested in finding a philosophical grounding for his work like Bob Irwin. He did not look to science and engineering like Larry Bell or DeWain Valentine. Nor did he seek to channel mysticism like John McCracken. Instead, he is a self-described Romantic, ready to fold the splendour of the Southern California atmosphere into sculpture and painting. There is certainly a Pop-like affirmation to Alexander; he follows his pleasures and his pleasures are colour and light.

Larry Wilcox



5/6/16 (Lime Green Box), 2016, urethane, 18 × 21 × 21 cm.
Courtesy Parrasch Heijnen, Los Angeles