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Art Now LA

Calder/Tuttle: Tentative
Relationships and Conversations Between Two Exhibitions
Pace and David Kordanski Gallery
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To fully experience *Calder/Tuttle: Tentative* one must cross La Brea Avenue and visit both David Kordansky and Pace Galleries. On view at Kordansky are Richard Tuttle's new, small-scale, wall-based sculptures, as well as intricate and minimal works on paper. Pace Gallery is showing works by Alexander Calder from 1939 selected and installed by Tuttle. The relationships and conversation between the two exhibitions flow forward and back with a force equal to the cars criss-crossing the avenue.

At Pace, one assumes they will encounter an exhibition featuring Calder's graceful mobiles and sculptures flowing freely within the space, but that is not the case. Each of Calder's works seem to be barricaded: surrounded by large sheets of white PVC hinged together to create walls and plinths that enclose or elevate the sculptures. These "pavilions" function as interruptions and are dominant enough to change the way the pieces are experienced. It is not unusual for Calder's works to be placed on special pedestals or for walls to be built to isolate the mobiles and sculptures from surrounding artworks and to direct where the shadows are cast. Tuttle's intervention is extreme, presenting Calder's works as if they are held prisoner. That Calder created these delicate works in 1939 amid the outbreak of World War II comes into play. Perhaps Tuttle's enclosures are a form of protection? Where these pieces fall within the trajectory of Calder's oeuvre may be important, yet their history and even their visual beauty is overshadowed by the installation.

The floor-based red wire sculpture *Sphere Pierced by Cylinders* is placed in front of two freestanding "walls" forming a "V" that limits the view to only one side. A smaller, untitled work rests on a pedestal that is enclosed by four "walls" with small rectangular slots that form

windows to provide cropped views of the piece. Tuttle also clusters a group of small sculptures/maquettes together, placing them on an ad hoc “shelf” that extends horizontally about waist high and is bordered by tall vertical partitions. He presents Calder’s work *Little Mobile for Table’s Edge* balanced not on a table’s edge, as it is usually displayed, but on a tower of nine small cubes that resembles a Minimalist (Sol LeWitt/Carl Andre) sculpture.

Across the road, Tuttle is “Tuttle the artist” rather than “Tuttle the curator,” where two new series are on view: *Black Light* (wall-based sculptures) and *Calder Corrected* (works on paper). In keeping with Tuttle’s “paradoxical relationship to dematerialization,” the seemingly fragile works that comprise the *Black Light* series are constructed from paper, tape, glue and t-pins, tinted with watercolors and marked with graphite. They are abstract forms— appearing as casual assemblage of shapes — long rectangles, curves and squiggles that are more like three-dimensional drawings than robust sculptures. As in Tuttle’s previous works, these pieces display a gracefulness and simplicity that alludes to more philosophical and conceptual ideas relating to confidence and certainty as referred to in the exhibition title: *Tentative*.

In *Black Light #10*, two tall thin boxes or miniature “beam-like forms” painted with a light brown wash are crossed by a third angled at a diagonal that could be seen as a hashtag missing one line. Above and in front of the single angled cross bar is a purple quotation mark reminiscent of a tear-drop against a small white parallelogram shape with a bit of yellow that seems to function as support. From the side, the dimensionality of the forms becomes evident, as does their funky construction: folded paper shapes painted delicately on their front sides only. *Black Light #22* is a vivid yet washy orange and yellow assemblage consisting of intersecting beams that could stand in for long warehouses seen from above, nested against a more compact central office. From the front, the shapes appear to flatten out and become a single entity while from the side, Tuttle’s stacking of the elements is more apparent. Many of these works have small handwritten numbers and letters, as well as words indicating placement like “top,” as if the pieces were maquettes.

While there may be anticipation that the *Calder Corrected* series will in some way relate to actual works by Calder, they in fact are pairs of pages from Tuttle’s notebooks containing doodles, lines and shapes that have been interrupted, yet come together as incongruous juxtapositions. In *Calder Corrected, 8*, two white and one yellow-gold rectangle meet along an imaginary center line. The yellow-gold rectangle is covered in scribbles whereas the collaged white rectangles cover stray pencil marks. *Calder Corrected, 2* is comprised of four disparate groups of slightly curved parallel pencil lines with all but one group covering a third of the pages. A rectangle overlaps the one set of lines that extend to the edges of the paper.

The ambiguous and provisional nature of these works also references the exhibitions title. While Tuttle’s works may appear tentative, they are always purposeful. The linkages to Calder are not obvious in Tuttle’s pieces, yet, both artists are interested in weight and balance as well as the relationship between positive shapes and negative space. It is enough to have Calder in mind when regarding Tuttle’s work, and Tuttle’s in mind when viewing Calder’s to think about how making art in pre-war 1939 may parallel the menacing and fragile world we live in today.

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