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Eric Fertman

Susan Inglett Gallery

Eric Fertman's world mixes comic, Suprematist, and egalitarian art movements with innovative shapes and subtle wood processes to offer works strong in punk, funk, craft, and form. His first solo exhibition featured 20 framed, ink-on-paper slabs and blobs and 16 sculptures, all of which "spoke" to each other like quibbling siblings at a family reunion.

Together or in isolation, the four monumental sculptures imply fistcuffs or some kind of power struggle. *BPDP* (2008) is a white-painted shape with protruding beehive forms and a crudely torn wooden derrick. The title stands for "British Petroleum Double Penetration," a critique of the oil industry and its effects on the environment. *Goon* (2008) and *Skeezix* (2008) seem to be facing off with "shields" and bulbously tipped "lances." Each "fighter" stands on a single large foot, so neither is equipped to navigate far beyond his own "territory." *Monument* (2007) seems to be a homemade war machine, its parts possibly alluding to a movie projector, a helicopter, a broken wheel, and a baseball bat. The odd, interconnecting oblong shapes are joined seamlessly, especially at the core, which consists of a series of ovals interlocking around an ovoid hub. Five double-triangles form stars that symbolically perch

on the broken steering wheel or dangle close to the ground. This military operation is in trouble.

Aesthetically and symbolically, *Monument* and *Private Dick* (2008) stole the show. The latter, a small-scale work, humorously turns Raymond Chandler's hard-boiled noir detective Philip Marlowe into a prototypical "big dick" with a soft spot for the ladies. The form is constructed from dowels of different sizes set on diagonals that hold larger-girth horizontal forms. A beautifully crafted oak hat tops this pyramid of wooden forms and open spaces. The diagonal movements, "in your face" message, and air-borne abstract linear qualities are original and witty.

Philip Guston's late figurative style has been a huge influence on Fertman, whose club-footed forms also recall Popeye cartoons. Fertman says, "What I like about Guston's later paintings is that he can use humor and still have the darkness and a lot of mystery." A graduate of Cooper Union, Fertman has shown his sculpture at Museum 52, the Rivington Arms Gallery, the SculptureCenter in New York, and at galleries in London, Los Angeles, and other cities.

—Jan Garden Castro

