

For Immediate Release

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Stephen De Staebler
Figure Columns

October 24 – November 22, 2003

“No other American sculptor has explored so extensively
the expressive potential of standing man.”
-Dore Ashton

For the past forty years, Stephen De Staebler's work has successfully melded the traditions of Bay Area Figurative painting with the action clay aesthetic of Peter Voulkos. As a former student and protégé of Voulkos in the early 1960's, De Staebler learned to exploit the clay's inherent tendencies (cracks, clumps, splits, etc.) as elements of expressive vocabulary - first in his horizontal landscape works and eventually in the vertical figurative works that have been his predominant focus over the past twenty-five years.

Segmented and stacked in a totemic formation, De Staebler's *Figure Columns* were hand-built in sections each within a framework of bricks. The title *Figure Column* references the inherent architectural component of the human figure itself. Subtly scored and striated, the fired surfaces suggest ligaments or muscles of a body not quite calcified, possibly mummified or preserved. Horizontal lines slice across the figurative forms creating a vignette where each section joins. Vestigial elements of the body and its limbs are rendered with impressions made within the clay's structure. The resulting relationship of body and earth delves into themes with which De Staebler has been obsessed throughout his career.

The pigments in this new body of work present a more optimistic tone than that of De Staebler's previous work. Vibrant and multiple colors on each piece illuminate the beauty in the decay and natural fragmentation of the physical world. Rich aqua blues, violets, rusty oranges and mossy greens all call to mind this beauty, like the brilliance of western sunsets and desert landscapes. While some pigments seem to rest on the surface of the clay like a fine dust or wash, others glow from within the clay suggesting a relationship between the earth and the body that reaches the core.

This exhibition is on view October 24 through November 22, 2003. For images and further information on the artist please contact the gallery at 212-246-5360.