Installation View

Peter Alexander: Early Works, 1965-1972
March 15 — April 23, 2021

Franklin Parrasch Gallery is pleased to present Peter Alexander: Early Works, 1965-1972, the inaugural exhibition at the Gallery’s new location at 19 East 66th Street. This show, open March 15 through April 23, comprises a group of key early works that exemplify Alexander’s engagement with cast resin over the course of seven years.

Peter Alexander (b. 1939 Los Angeles, CA; d. 2020 Santa Monica, CA) began work on his signature resin sculptures in 1965, while still a graduate student in UCLA’s MFA program; he used liquid polyester resin, a relatively new material at that time, to repair dents in his surfboards, but through some experimentation found that this material could be volumetrically cast. Ironically, though resin was associated with surfer culture - a culture that rejected participation in the Vietnam War - it was research and development by the aerospace industry that helped make resin available as a working medium. In many ways, Alexander’s engagement with this material served as a response to the times: it allowed the artist to create a sense of aesthetic order within a chaotic environment, while reflecting the absence of formal and material limits amongst this emerging
breed of California artists. For Alexander, however, continued engagement with the medium was impossible as the toxic nature of the resin forced him to abruptly end work on this series in 1972.

Alexander’s purist approach to form and consummate focus upon elements of light and space were formulated out of his architectural orientation to sculpture; prior to his graduate studies, Alexander trained as an architect under Louis Kahn at the University of Pennsylvania and eventually worked for Richard Neutra in Los Angeles. In each of the early works on view in this show, Alexander puts optical effects to the service of formal pursuits. Forms and pigments are suspended within the translucent resin, rendering varying chromatic densities and creating a basis for interpretation of light, color, and form. The viewer’s focus oscillates between each of the works’ respective geometries and the light and color refracting within and around them. A wax drawing facilitates a glimpse into Alexander’s process, and his exploration of color, space, density, and mass. As precursors to the resin sculptures, this work on paper highlights Alexander’s chromatic and spatial investigations through the layered application of wax and color; the dimensional works project the same effect as they interact with light and their ambient surroundings.

Peter Alexander has been widely exhibited in galleries and museums worldwide since the mid-1960s, including solo exhibitions at Robert Elkon Gallery (New York), Nicholas Wilder Gallery (Los Angeles), Laguna Art Museum (Laguna Beach), and Orange County Museum of Art (Newport Beach); and group exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago), Museum of Modern Art (New York), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (San Francisco), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles), Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art (Malibu), Norton Simon Museum of Art (Pasadena), J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles), and Martin Gropius-Bau (Berlin), amongst many others. His works are held in the permanent collections of such institutions as the Speed Art Museum (Louisville), Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Museum of Modern Art (New York), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York), Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), and the Broad Foundation (Los Angeles). Peter Alexander’s Estate is jointly represented by Franklin Parrasch Gallery, Parrasch Heijnen (Los Angeles), and Pace Gallery.

Peter Alexander: Early Works, 1965-1972 will be on view Monday through Friday, 11a-6p, from March 15 to April 23, 2021 at Franklin Parrasch Gallery, 19 East 66 Street, New York, NY. Appointments are required and may be made by visiting https://fpg.as.me/schedule.php; for images, biography, or further information, please contact the gallery at info@franklinparrasch.com or 212-246-5360.