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Inside Helmut Lang's New Art Show



By Jordan Hruska
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Ten years ago, Helmut Lang sold his stake in his eponymous label and shifted focus to making art at his studio in East Hampton. Tonight, he opens his first New York City solo gallery show at Sperone Westwater in SoHo, presenting a body of sculptural works from 2010 to 2014. Some include repurposed materials from his past vocation, while other, more recent, works comment on the passage of time in a less narrative and more metaphysical way.

Following a studio fire which singed and destroyed portions of his fashion archive, Lang decided to toss the remains in an industrial shredder and make a confetti of denim, cotton, threads, zippers and other studio detritus. He then cast this mixture in various colored resins and pigments inside the molds of ribbed industrial metal tubes. The resulting untitled sculptures are shiny, skinny

cylinders that measure between 10 and 12 feet high. From afar, the paler-hued works seem to possess the striations of a birch tree trunk. On closer examination, viewers can locate familiar objects within them, such as discarded Helmut Lang hang tags, buttons and reflective fasteners of all kinds.



More recently, in 2014, the artist doused stacks of die-cut cardboard boxes in resin and pigment. At first glance, the sculptures seem more austere and quiet than the pillar works; however, up close are cracks, air bubbles and cardboard swelling against the pull of packing tape or plastic banding. They seem almost eroticized in their struggle: little torsos heaving impatiently, ready to burst from their formation.

This sense of restraint and permission, push and pull, inspires Lang throughout his creative practice. “What happens to me during the work process, intellectually and form-wise, is that I approach a piece with an imaginary idea which I have not experienced and therefore remains innocent, waiting to be explored,” Lang says. “This emotion results in a flow of works or procedures that can be interrupted at any point. These are condensed, layered, broken up and again collected and suddenly taken over by another. At any given moment, loss of control takes effect. If the sculpture is strong enough to fight back, that is often a good moment to stop.”

Open through Feb. 21 at Sperone Westwater, 257 Bowery, speronewestwater.com

All images courtesy the artist and Sperone Westwater, New York