

The Highlights - Keith Tyson at PaceWildenstein

Keith Tyson's *Large Field Array* at PaceWildenstein is a single piece of epic proportions being exhibited in New York for the first time. The installation is composed of about 220 modular, mostly cube-like forms arranged in a 14×14-piece grid, like some strange garden with just the right amount of foot room to roam. *Large Field Array* takes its name from the collection of telescopes in New Mexico, which all focus on a single point in the universe as a way of revealing greater amounts of image-data.

Keith Tyson, *Large Field Array*, 2006

Entering the installation I found it to be a truly overwhelming experience. It spins, crackles, chimes, and buzzes its way across the reaches of the room and into the brain, where its layout wedges itself somewhere between thoughts of pixels, digital palettes, and chessboards. Its refrain, the timed release of a static machine that builds up enough inertia to periodically electrocute the air, punctuates the minutes that tick by as I wonder what the hell Tyson is up to.

He travels globally and in time, pinpointing here and hesitating there, allowing me only enough time to shift my attention from one dazzling sculptures to the next. He travels like an Internet surfer does - horizontally - strengthening connections between forms like links on a page, like one with simultaneous access to all possible images. It would be tempting to claim the piece challenges the myth of individuality. Yet one of the remarkable aspects to the exhibition is that Tyson's style emerges almost in spite of himself. A similar sense of humor pervades the work, as does a recurring interest in food, the body, sports, and decay.

Large Field Array operates like language, each form locating its meaning in relation to and negation from those forms surrounding it. The melting cube of ice is only the melting cube of ice because it is not the cubic snowman face or the world's blackest box. Endlessly layered connections cease to silence themselves. They bubble up from the floor or exude steam or spinning detritus. Frequently, subtle references to art history are overwhelmed by loud-mouthed references to pop culture. A silent phonograph endlessly twirls a Bob Dylan record like some hypnotic Duchamp. A few squares away, hand-painted portraits of the Friends starlets gleefully stare out from a giant coffee mug like degraded Oldenburg sculptures squeezed through a Warhol celebrity press.

The shortcoming of the work rests in its intermittent lack of invention. When the forms work best, they rely on formal play. At their worst, they are psychic forms, those forms most expected - like a giant football, top hat, kettle, and telephone. A manufactured look to most

of the parts seems to reference modular consumer (Ikea) furniture or art, and the parts themselves are anything but discreet. However, when a form reads simply as a fabrication of a sketch dashed out by the artist, I looked to the next cube for a boost of invention.

If there is knowledge to be gained, Tyson seems to say, it lies in the collective, the democracy of the web, the static hum of a planetful of human thoughts and opinions. Not one of us on our own could have guessed how many sculptures line the walls of PaceWildenstein, or how many jellybeans are in the jar. But the average of all our guesses would be the perfect answer to any question asked. Those answers are each a different permutation of the grid of sculptures, like three-dimensional pictograms, rearranged like endless sentences on a field.