

## The Intuitive Target

Peter Eudenbach at Sarah Bowen Gallery

In the Quay Brothers' classic film, *Street of Crocodiles*, a handful of stubby, rusting screws are animated through the stop-action process to slowly burrow themselves out of the worn wooden floor they've been holding in place. Their un-spiraling is so convincing and somehow so familiar, it quietly changes the way we look at screws for months after the film is over. Peter Eudenbach's solo exhibition at Sarah Bowen Gallery leaves viewers with this same quietly changed feeling - about doorstops, pencil shavings, wind-up Santas and a medley of other "regular" objects, all rendered alchemical in Eudenbach's hands.

The work in *Transformative Intuitions* meanders around the obligatory labels, incorporating sculpture, video, installation, project proposals, site-specific works, and found objects, but the organizing principle for all these diverse media is the handling of the Found Thing. Be it the view from a bridge, a roll of toilet paper hanging in a shed, or a black plastic whistle, Eudenbach regards his finding with a cool and curious eye, tinkering the object into its alter ego; its secret self. Often this involves a marriage of unlikely articles, like *Pneumatic lens*, where the pea of a plastic whistle is replaced with a tiny spherical lens that reflects the entire room, fish-eyed and upside-down. Video of this piece shows the artist "blowing" the whistle with a pneumatic hose, allowing us to see the kind of visual vibrato generated by the air pressure against the little orb of a lens. But it also allows us a glimpse of what the studio practice of Eudenbach must be like; a rigorous yet playful examination of, as he describes it, "how close function can be to absurdity."

In the video, *Table Tide*, we witness this proximity to absurdity in a sturdy, wooden table – dark and thick, like one from a Dutch master's still life – but unapologetically immersed knee deep and bobbing against the breaking waves of the sea. What follows is a masterful manipulation of two human tendencies. The first of these tendencies is our perpetual desire to witness an undoing - to want to feel the solid thud of a thing as it hits the ground. The second, setting in even before the guilty pleasure of the first turns bitter, is our propensity to root for the underdog. Eudenbach's video simply chronicles a table getting banged about in the shallows, but we find ourselves internally cheering – first for the ocean, then for the furniture - as if we were witnessing an epic saga. There is a similar dynamic at work in the fifteen-second charmingly funny video, *Santas*, where two wind-up plastic toys toddle across a dining room table. In the course of their eighteen-inch trek, we project a complex narrative - complete with protagonist, plot twist and tragi-romantic ending. As in most of the shorts in this show, there is little or no editing or postproduction sound; just one carefully recorded shot. But the timing of these clips approaches elegance.

One finds this kind of precise restraint in much of Eudenbach's three-dimensional work, as well. *Afterimage*, is a defunct monitor from an old black and white surveillance apparatus, on which the faint image of a hotel's carpeted hallway has become permanently impressed. It is quite a remarkable found object, compressing what could be years of recorded time into a single, silvery ghost of a picture, and Eudenbach has had the good sense to not mess with it. It is one of the more direct examples of the artist's ability to reveal the secret lives of his objects, or to do nothing but pay scrupulous attention, as they reveal themselves to him.

With *Imperial*, the artist takes a much more hands-on approach to an 1950's carpet sweeper. It has been perfectly restored to its nouveau splendor, but modified with lowrider-style purple neon under-light, fat track wheels and an inset glass window, which also glows violet. Something about the particular collision of automobile cultures implied by the lines of the Cadillac-smooth sweeper base, the highly polished chrome trim, and the hover-inducing glow, sits comfortably in this form, if not in our historical psyche. The resulting piece is completely ridiculous, and inarguably right.

Eudenbach achieves that untenable rightness most often when he meets the objects midway between their function and his fancy. When he tips the scale too far in either direction, the work lacks resonance. Fortunately, he hits this intuitive target with remarkable accuracy, and the mystery and humor of these pieces, as well as the crafted precision of their presentation, lingers long after the show is over.

