



cal commonplace book, which was used to compile quotations, stories, observations, and thoughts in a time before blogs. The private notations demonstrated how significant it is when an artist transforms experience so that we remember our sensory capacity in a felt space and, with it, the early desire to call forth language.

—Geraldine Craig

#### NEW YORK

##### Enrico David

##### Michael Werner Gallery

Idiosyncrasy in contemporary sculpture has a way of communicating pleasure and humor, and Enrico David's recent show did exactly that. His works play with the figure but also maintain a genuine sculptural intelligence that supports his off-beat themes. We know figurative sculpture is one of the West's oldest visual traditions, so that it is no longer easy to find openings for new visions within its established legacy. But David's work, with its bodies sculpted on top of each other so that they repetitively construct three-dimensional forms, pushes forward despite—or because of—its engaging eccentricity. This work presents itself, then, as an independent way of seeing, to the point where the odd forms can claim new insight. Although David often risks his enterprise by approaching caricature, we can recognize his quirkiness as

something we have not yet experienced.

David mostly creates drawings and tabletop-size sculptures. *Tools and Toys III* (2014), one of the most striking sculptures, consists of a figure-like shape with four extended limbs but no head. A halo of thin metallic wires extending from the body likely represents an aura. One of the upward-rising limbs is distinctly phallic, eroticizing a form that seems otherwise spiritually inclined. It is hard to find precedents for *Tools and Toys III*, even within David's output. It poses questions about figurative form and about presenting a mental conception at once ethereal and sexually direct. In *Putting Up with It* (2014), five human forms, their gender unknown, sitting one on top of the other, present a conundrum. What, exactly, do these figures mean? David offers no clue or hint to indicate how we might read the form, and so we are left with a ghostly presentation of five beings whose recalcitrance to interpretation is part of a compelling, intelligent mannerism that keeps us interested.

**Above:** Jane Lackey, *Enveloping Space: Walk, Trace, Think*, 2014. Fabric scrim, wood benches, books, wool felt, and chalk powder, dimensions variable.  
**Right:** Enrico David, *Tools and Toys III*, 2014. Jesmonite, graphite, and copper, 23.25 x 20.5 x 3 in.

To appreciate David's work is to envision it on its own terms. One untitled sculpture from 2014 presents a standing female nude, head tilting backward in a heaven-directed gaze. She bears a distinct resemblance to the female forms of the Modernist sculptor Elie Nadelman, though David's figure is more than a bit disquieting—a feeling generated by many of his pieces. The absurdity, however, ensures that viewers will look closely at the embodied structures that David makes so carefully (usually he uses jesmonite, a fairly new material, for casting).

*Life Sentences* (2014), one of the most interesting pieces in the show, consists of an open bronze network of stick-like forms slowly rising to a human head. The figure holds a book, and while the overall concept is decidedly unfamiliar, it cannot hold back the work's forceful mixture of abstract and representational forms. This is not an easy sculpture to interpret—the title gives little help—but it remains in the memory,

like most of David's sculptures. David sacrifices clarity for uniqueness, and it is our job to make sense of and clarify his anomalous style.

—Jonathan Goodman

#### NEW YORK

##### Ted Victoria

##### Robert Miller Gallery

Ted Victoria continues to baffle and enlighten viewers with works that explore relationships between actual objects and their photographic representations. Iconic sea monkeys, aswim in projection boxes, along with banal objects sequestered within enigmatic camera obscura constructions, still prevail. But Victoria now gives greater stage presence to his process, incorporating it as an integral component of his photography-as-sculpture. The results have us experiencing his works through the double lens of optical science and visual perception, their outcomes amplifying the disconnects between reality and illusion.



BOTTOM: © ENRICO DAVID, COURTESY MICHAEL WERNER GALLERY, NY AND LONDON

Two installations in this exhibition finesse optics as handmaidens to Victoria's imaginative pieces. The first, *Lightbulbs, Male and Female* (2015), consists of two Plexiglas projection boxes, one holding an ordinary pear-shaped tungsten filament bulb, the other a phallic-shaped halogen, both unlit, but illuminated by spotlights, reflected in mirrors, and projected through a lens. These structural compositions—interesting sculptural arrangements in themselves—become remarkable when they beam the light bulbs side by side against the wall. With little resemblance to their store-bought cousins, the bulbs morph into erotically charged mates, their sensuous painterly outlines embracing eerie light from no distinct source. *Krill* (2009–12), a Plexiglas box holding a small tank of minuscule live sea monkeys (brine shrimp), a baby food jar, and requisite spotlights and mirrors for angling and projecting, is even more haunting. When projected, the highly magnified shrimp appear to swim in the jar like a swarm of vermin cultivated as creepy bioscience specimens. Earlier iterations of these projections concealed their inner workings or relegated their boxed constructs to darkened exhibition spaces. By giving the optical elements of his photographic projections sculptural form, even housing them in containers that fit within sleek, elegant pedestals, Victoria heightens the tension, jamming one's sense of reality by making elusive claims for its clarification.

Victoria has also made his well-known camera obscura constructions more accessible. Unlatching *Keep Out* (2014–15) exposes the device's black interior. It's furnished like a primitive Joseph Cornell box: a photograph of a shipyard hangs upside down; a small motor rotates a razorblade; and a mass of wires, lights, and mirrors connects and ricochets these objects through a lens. Close the box and a razorblade revolving

**Right:** Ted Victoria, *Lightbulbs, Male and Female*, 2015. Projected installation of tungsten and halogen lights. **Below right:** Ted Victoria, *Keep Out*, 2014–15. Photo with razor blade projection, 20.5 x 20.5 in.

before a shipyard appears on the outer, glass surface. Victoria has enclosed this moving image in a Polaroid-inspired painted frame. When the box is turned off, a separately powered continuous light fills the "Polaroid" frame with shifting color, like a Mark Rothko painting evolving within an Albers square. This is a compelling touch for Victoria, who always considered himself to be a painter.

Victoria uses a device known to the ancients to bridge centuries of art history and to link two recent generations of artists: Postmodernists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Heinecken, who dealt with the visual dislocations between photography and sculpture, and younger millennials for whom the photograph has become increasingly ephemeral since they've seen it dispatched from its traditional frame to be stored in a cloud. Some say this dissipation of photograph-as-object, along with the ease with which an original image can be digitally manipulated, has led many artists to merge mimetic imagery with sculptural form in order to hold on to the physicality of both. But Victoria, who's been doing it all along, reminds us that this impulse is nothing new—artists have always seized available technology to probe dislocations between the actual and the perceived. Whether it's been jury-rigged within a camera obscura or digitally manipulated, stored, and recalled, the object-as-art will forever be just that, something viewed and reimagined through the lens of the mind's eye.

—Joyce Beckenstein



**NEW YORK**  
**"Rite of Passage: The Early Years of Vienna Actionism, 1960–1966"**

**Hauser & Wirth**

"Rite of Passage: The Early Years of Vienna Actionism, 1960–1966," curated by Hubert Klocker, was the first show to present the early years of the Vienna Actionists to a New York audience. Klocker and his academic associate, Gloria Sutton, carefully outlined the importance of these artists—including Hermann Nitsch, Otto Muehl, Günter Brus, and Rudolf Schwarzkogler—in two superbly delineated essays in the exhibition catalogue.

Many of these actions, objects, and photographs are striking for the outlandish perspective they reveal, balanced between volition, naivety, endurance, and courage. In each case, they seem to move toward some ultimate veracity of art, testing the limits of how far the artist is willing

to delve into primal, presumably unconscious desires. While one may question the intentions of the Actionists, one cannot deny the evidence: they have gone deeply into the body as the source of art. While the body may retain a certain representational value, it takes on an aura of ritualized expressionism, involving mutilation not simply as an illusion but as the subject of transformation, even transubstantiation in the case of Nitsch. Their mediums include blood, detritus, bandages, and paint liberated from the panels on which it normally appears.

It is important to understand these works delivered from Vienna as unmitigated and raucous gestures that parallel the revolutionary antics of the '60s that spread from Europe to the United States, from South America to Japan. As with other neo-avant-garde manifestations in Europe and around the world, the Actionists, and their revolutionary