

Taylor Davis
Gallery @ Green Street
141 Green Street
Boston, MA 02130
October 12 to November 24

Review by Michael Cochran

In his book, The Sculptural Idea, James J. Kelly speaks about form, content and material in sculpture and the relationship between them. When they are all in balance, the work is complete and has a life of its own. In a marvelous new show curated by Director James Hull at the Gallery @ Green Street, it is exciting to witness this balance in the newest work of Taylor Davis.

Constructed of simple inexpensive plywood and pine, several of these human-scale pieces appear to be in a state of near collapse. Saw cuts through the plywood panels seem to weaken the forms and allow them to twist or turn on internal axes. However, upon closer examination, one finds that they are expertly constructed with screws and glue and are strongly supported by their own internal structure. Born on a farm east of Los Angeles, Davis' work alludes to cribs, troughs and pallets but that's as far as the rural metaphor goes. These are not functional references but more allegorical in nature with internal mirrors that reflect within themselves leading the viewer deeper into their framework or out into the world around them.

It is obvious that Davis loves working with wood as her joinery is meticulous and beautifully understated. The careful contrast of the surfaces of the unsealed wood is subtle and allows the viewer to reflect easily on the content within each form. The work "Untitled (crib), 2001" extends its "arm" from within its slatted bottom and reaches upward into space. Small mirrors recessed into narrow channels near the bottom reflect the surroundings and at the right moment, the viewer can be seen. Each reflected image extends the focus outside the sculpture's form. In "Untitled (trough), 2001," the form twists vertically on its axis making it appear more precarious but it is actually strengthened by lowering its center of gravity. A narrow trough mounted along the top edge holds a deep-set mirror which repeats Davis' concern for viewer interaction and reflection of external imagery in her work.

"Untitled (storage), 2001" is the most complex in the exhibition with what looks like four sets of table legs extending from one side of the sculpture and a series of narrow, nearly inaccessible shelves projecting from the opposite side. Due to a series of horizontal cuts in the mid-section of the plywood panel, the sculpture would collapse were it not for a pine column carefully notched and fitted into the form to create a strengthening support for the entire piece. The "table leg" shapes at the bottom appear to be assisting in stabilizing the form but the weight of the "table legs" at the top could topple the entire piece without the assistance of the pine column. As one looks thoughtfully at the shelves the question of functionality arises. What could one put in these shelves and would it stay there since only the bottom shelf is not tilted downward?

This is very interesting new work and a show not to be missed. The works are vulnerable yet strong, well crafted yet not overly controlled, exciting yet eloquent; form, content and material are very much in balance. And, the sculptures definitely have lives of their own.