

Robin Peck ◀◀
Sarah Braman

Canada is a new gallery in New York founded by artist and curator Philip Grauer and some of his friends. Open since last September, it has hosted a number of peculiar shows. December's "Crystal Show" was no exception.

The show was a complicated twist of theoretical rhetorics, formal languages and histories that combined works by American sculptor Sarah Braman and Canadian sculptor Robin Peck into an optimistic vision of what is possible in sculpture. Spanning two rooms and twenty years, Braman, 30, and Peck, 50, share the amorality of crystalline form as a departure for beautiful contemplation.

Stuck to the long wall of Canada's front gallery, Braman's *In the Canyon of Gratitude* (2000) is a multi-coloured spread of creased, bent and distended contact paper. It is the same kind of appallingly awkward form that she has been developing for ten years and provides a register to sort out viewers just looking for "taste" or "cool." To dismiss it, or disregard it, is to be too distant, arrogant or dignified to care for art, or trust that it might show you something that could help you. It is accompanied by an equally awkward floor piece that fills the entire back room. *Without sculpture as my core, I am a rudderless ship, worthless to myself and others* (2000) is a monumental sculpture of faceted cardboard, held together by packing tape and piecemeal stains of paint and shellac.

Situated in between Sarah Braman's works are Robin Peck's cast bronze and carved plaster white gypsum crystals. Peck's sculptures, which range in size from big stones to large boulders,



ROBIN PECK/SARAH BRAMAN
Installation view of "Crystal Show" at Canada,
New York City, December, 2000

are distinguished from each other by varying planar intervals and complicated tonal gradations of white. They are lovingly built and coloured: touched lightly and massaged not out of nervousness or indecision, but out of an abiding affection.

If Braman and Peck make what looks like the modern, minimal sculpture of Tony Smith or John Chamberlain, they do it out of a reverence for the grace, humiliation and victory of the form. Their sculpture is not an ironic rehabilitation of geometric abstraction, or a demonstration of cyber-imagery. Rather, it contains a conspicuous lack of skepticism.

Crystals provide inanimate evidence of rationality, making them a mirror for humanism. But crystals also belong to a geological time that is vast enough to demonstrate the

fluke of civilization and the relative insignificance of human achievement. Braman and Peck understand the crystalline to be without judgement, ideology or morality. Peck rhymes the magnitude of its history with the non-hierarchical replicas of shattered crystal. Braman delights in the amorality of the facet because it cannot critique the maker or viewer. She is passing through the crystalline on her way to a new morality.

Between Peck's white plaster and yellowing bronze and the monumental scale and material thinness of Braman, Grauer has willed a beautiful resonance that reveals an uncommon and complicated sensuality. Canada has provided the weirdest show in New York this season. The "Crystal Show" is not just an exploration of ideal forms. In harmonizing death, optimism and obscure perversity, it possesses the appearance of civility, but is completely savage. AARON BREWER