

Art Review:

REVIEWS: USA

Anthony Pearson

David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

11 December – 5 February

Anthony Pearson's photographic accidents, writ large in brilliant solarisations and crosshatches of light, have all the markings of a material practice based on aleatory interactions with the primary equipment of his craft, the camera. Once snapped, these photos take on second lives as objects, the rhythms and scratches often (as here) made form in oozing sculptures and cement-plinched steel. These accidents of light made from a faulty lens and a hermetic process linger like black-hole suns, like alien masterpieces found in crashed spacecraft. Despite this methodology's propensity to unemotive modes of photographic abstraction, these works seem to mood and brood, their *Sturm und Drang* swishing out of the photographic frame and into the hardened liquid of cast bronze.

But material investigations in this closed system are just the vehicle, not the drive. The drive is an obsession with systems of organisation and a fetish for surface, both of which hearken back to the artist's previous life as a master record collector, where surface, organisation and the ability to find and deliver (investigate, even) are a dominating force. Looking at the sculptures lingering around the edges of the gallery, one gets the feeling that the black ooze has the same smooth, sexy black surface of the finest vinyl a record company ever pressed, the hallowed 'mint' of the serious connoisseur.

To look at these things as just material process – darkroom ass-grabbing and simple closed-system 'mediations on the sunset art' – is to miss their gothic charm, their role as a record collector's fetish and the weird relationship we all have with objects. Whatever formal purity they have (which turns us on) becomes adulterated by our desire for them. What is a rare, sought-after record to the collector who digs through storage spaces and garages, shacks and thrift stores getting coated in the muck of disuse? To aficionados, the objecthood of these anointed LPs reigns supreme. The old-style camera, with its chemicals and cellulose, is, like the record, a dying technology, kept alive by those who love its thingness, the warmth the medium delivers to its content, the accidents and limitations of its form.

There have been more than a few dissertations' worth of hubbub about the long dark teatime of both the record and, more lately, the analogue camera. But the artefacts of a dying empire nevertheless wend their ways into the hands of collectors and historians, who dream the dreams of the makers and former masters as they handle them, fingering their surfaces and figuring the stories of these tokens, this art.

Andrew Berardini



Untitled (Tablet), 2010, bronze relief with cobalt patina, 21 x 16 x 4 cm. Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles