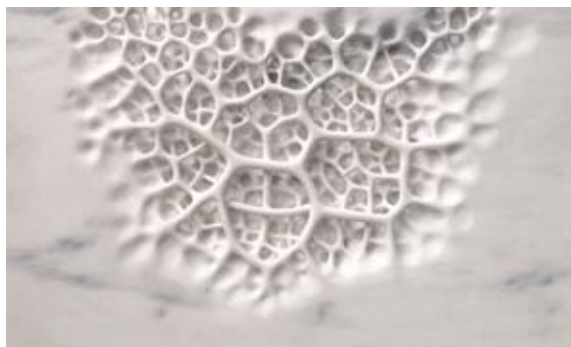


Art Set in Stone

Posted on March 28, 2011 by Megan M. Garwood



DM Contemporary presents solo show:

Michael Kukla | New Works

On view from March 18th until April 29th, 2011, at 39 East 29th Street, #2B;
Wednesday through Friday 12.00 – 6.00 pm; Saturday 12.00-4.00pm

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Left: Michael Kukla, "Beneath Sky," 2009, marble, 16 x 26 x 3.5"

On the surface, Michael Kukla *New Works*, an exhibition of recent painting, drawing and sculpture of Kukla, depicts an abstraction of natural life and death derived from Minimalistic techniques and empirical facts. Kukla renders an organic ethos from static medium by concentrating on cellular-level figuration and form; by building upon and reworking two-dimensional pieces; and by subtracting from three-dimensional façade.

Not only does *New Works* revive Kukla's solo career (once famed for Apple Computer's 1992 commission of Kukla's designed marble pedestals), but also the show addresses the relevance of contemporary minimalist conceptual art in juxtaposition with more-celebrated art discourses, e.g., reappropriation, Virtual Art.

In his works on paper and painting, Kukla plays with negative and positive space by building thick layers of monochromatic, repetitive shapes, which he has borrowed from cellular structure. Heavy-handed pictorial space echoes the ethereal cycles found in biological creation. Kukla interlocks growth and decline by grippingly interweaving dark amoebic lines with similar highlights. Although his drawing and painting merely capture life, not death, because their highlights and silver hues outshine dark crosshatching and shading.



Michael Kukla, "Beneath Earth," 2009, marble, 16 x 26 x 3.5"



Michael Kukla, "Kuro 4," 2011, slate, 12 x 12 x 4"

However, Kukla's astute sculpture captures decay as a fossil transforms an organism into negative space. Kukla mediates on the same motif found in his works on paper and painting while working on his three-dimensional pieces. He carves at natural medium (normally slate, marble, plywood slabs) to form a sculpture in the round as well as see-through, exposing several layers beneath the surface. In *Kuro 4*, Kukla has calculated a number of sculpted layers trapped by the walls of the rectangular sculpture.

Moreover, purity exudes from Kukla's marble work, in which Kukla mimics the patterns found in the stone to achieve realistic surfaces. These works hardly look touched by the hand of man, more by the hand of nature.

New Works provides the viewer with Zen-like forms that has been overly-attributed to late 20th-century minimalism. Recently, a few other galleries have invited artists, similar to Kukla, to exhibit solo shows. A number of these galleries are not located in Chelsea and branch out to neighborhoods East and North. Furthermore, artists who have contributed to the prior period of minimalism continue to pop up in Downtown galleries, such as George Quasha's performance at White Box this past February. Seemingly, young artists may consider cerebral subject matter and reconsider past medium and tools.



Michael Kukla, "Star 1," 2011, marble, 12 x 12 x 4"