

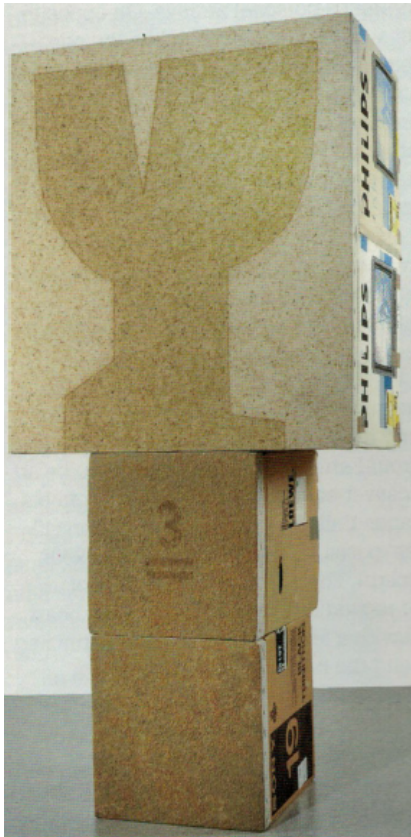
MODERN PAINTERS

AMIKAM TOREN: "Of the Times" Review

Jessica Silverman Gallery | November 22, 2013- January 19, 2014

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3 Only (Fragile), 1989. Pulped cardboard and acrylic on canvas on cardboard. 84 ½ x 38 ½ x 30 inches.

For his first U.S. solo show, London-based artist Amikam Toren continues a practice of appropriating daily detritus and transmuting his finds in a mordant inversion on the parley between consumption and refuse. With the several large paintings and stacked-cardboard-box sculptures on view, Toren looks to find in the quotidian ample evidence of the supramundance.

The eight paintings selected from his decade-spanning series "Of the Times," 1983-93, evince the artist's interest in the physicality of print media. Beginning with an edition of *The London Times*, Toren pulverizes the paper to a pulp—often using a coffee grinder—and applies the resulting textured, pigmented mash as undeniable letterlike forms upon unprimed canvas. Next to the painting, the excised masthead of the macerated issue offers a chronological marker cleaved from its editorial context. Toren's regurgitative process and the ensuing typographical enlargement deny any access to the textural information contained, instead foregrounding the very material substrates of their conveyance. Quite literally, the medium is the message.

Meanwhile, a trio of sculptural installations from his "Stack" series, 1984-95, further highlights an interest in the transcendence from the everyday to the monumental. As with his "Of the Times" paintings, Toren employs a process whereby found objects become endogenous sites of their reiteration. Cutting off one side of a cardboard box and pulping it, the artist then uses the pomace to paint shipping symbols on canvas before finally attaching the canvas to the absent end of the box. In *Stacks (Five Only)*, 1992-95, the sides of five boxes depict segments of an arrow pointing upward, while in *3*

Only (Fragile), 1989, the universal symbol for "fragile"—a large glass with a crack—looms large. The haphazard quality of the leaning structures, tenuously held together by brown packing tape, belies the deliberateness of their production. If Vladimir Tatlin's *Tower*, 1919-20, was an ode to modernity's streamlined promise, Toren's would seem to be its eulogy.