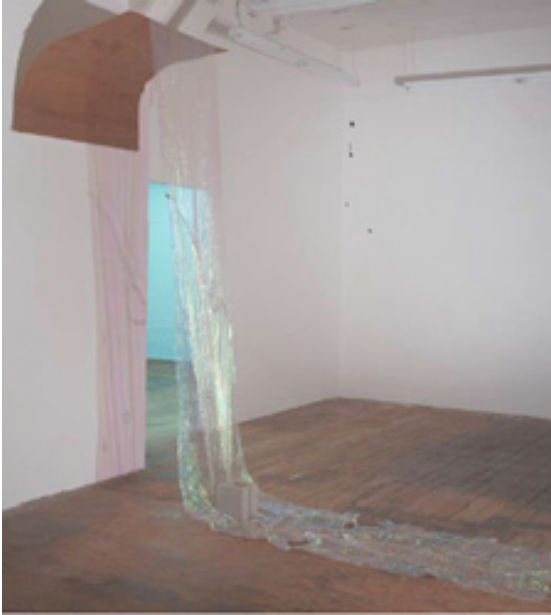


WHITNEY BIENNIAL 2008

Exhibition Catalogue (Excerpt)

Mitzi Pederson, *yellow and orange*, 2006.



Born 1976 in Stuart, Florida; lives in San Francisco, California

Mitzi Pederson explores the formal qualities of abstract sculpture, juxtaposing such disparate materials as cinder blocks, plywood, plastic, cellophane, silver leaf, and aluminum tape in carefully balanced constructions that challenge the viewer to directly engage with the materiality of the work. Her sensitive use of specific media results in visually compelling works drawing on the legacy of modernist sculpture from Constantin Brancusi's attention to wood and stone surfaces to Donald Judd's use of industrial materials.

In *yellow and orange* (2006) a tall mast of cinder blocks supports a construction of thin, bowed wood paneling and shimmering orange cellophane. Extending from the tower, the cellophane is drawn taut by a sheet of wood that, anchored between two blocks of a second, shorter column, in turn bends and yields to the pull of the plastic. The thin, tacky cellophane emphasizes both the heft of the cement and the strength of the arced wood, but by withstanding the strain of the forces acting on it, the diaphanous strip proves improbably strong and resilient. As she draws our attention to the properties of these simple, everyday materials, Pederson illustrates the tensions between them as well as their collaboration. Hinting at her early training in architecture, she often utilizes the gallery infrastructure in her work. Here another strip of bowed plywood is secured between the corner of the gallery and the cinder stack, while a second sheet of plastic extends along the wall. The design relies on the inherent qualities of each component and its environment, the elements engaging in a tenuous interdependency as they reach equilibrium. This implicit interaction and movement imbues the work with its disarming impermanence.

The precarious balance of her constructions is central to Pederson's practice. In *untitled (ten years later or maybe just one)* (2005) the arrangement of coarsely chipped cinder blocks—smaller, solitary fragments leading to larger, stacked pieces—is reminiscent of craggy mountainscapes or historical ruins. Placed without mortar to adhere the blocks, the work is at once transitory and enduring. Pederson has overlaid the exposed, rough edges of the broken blocks with dark gray glitter, visually offsetting the weight of the material and its connotation of building construction. The sparkling fragments take on an organic, crystalline appearance that transforms the banal building material into a timeless, otherworldly substance. Elegantly negotiating and balancing the properties of her materials, Pederson creates subtle, enigmatic sculptures that resonate with an allusive ambiguity. S.G.