

# Art in America

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View of Peter Reginato's exhibition, showing (left to right) *Mound of Mo*, *Sweetheart* and *Tall Cool*, all 2006, welded steel; at Heidi Cho.

## Peter Reginato at Heidi Cho

Peter Reginato's signature compositions in lively, acrylic-painted steel reflect the exuberance of early 20th-century modernism—the lyricism of early Kandinsky and of Matisse's late cutouts. After 40 years of association with a buoyant pop palette and jazzy, graffitilike forms, Reginato has ventured what amounts to a sea change with a series of unpainted sculptures. An exhibition titled to suggest the new work's relative ease of care, "Low Maintenance" featured sculptures made of stainless steel that is brightly burnished, torch-cut, welded, bent and curved—techniques that demonstrate his enjoyment of the medium. They allow him to retain the playful forms of a Hanna-Barbera cartoon while introducing a connection to the brushed steel work of David Smith.

Reginato's intersecting planes and stacked forms are combined and cut away with a vitality that remains very much a part of his style. The ornament that runs down the complex surface of *Sweetheart* (2006) as though tracing an invisible plumb line helps make it a coherent, stable whole. Roughly 6 feet on a side, this sculpture has corrugated steplike elements and highly polished, biomorphic forms ventilated with a torch. Elaborate filigrees open up one plane like lace, and the apex reaches to the cut-steel heart of the title, which also suggests a pair of ears. The use of welding is

apparent but not insistent, most deliberately visible in a cluster of juxtaposed triangular shapes.

By contrast, the appropriately named *Tall Cool* (2006), a totemic structure nearly 10 feet high, is composed of stacked elements that constitute something like a glossary of Reginato's forms. Arabesques of extruded steel coil upward to a kidney shape with a serpentine cutout, which is in turn surmounted by what looks like a cactus. Above it are panels of pleated steel, one set at an angle and featuring a window-shaped cutout. The biomorphic profile evident from one view virtually disappears in the next, and the whole is capped by a small tornado of spiraling torch-cut steel.

Built like a deranged tank, the 43-by-50-by-34-inch *Mound of Mo* (2006) opens up out of a central massing, with corrugation giving way to gentle curves, and a coil of steel spurting from one side like a Fourth of July rocket. The sculpture retains its quirky pleasures in the round, an effect maintained in a number of small domed structures, all less than 2 feet high and presented on pedestals. Comfortable in disparate mediums, Reginato also showed several fine acrylic-on-canvas paintings dated 2005. Some of them exaggeratedly horizontal, at 88 inches long and less than 24 high, they are alive with the forms discovered in these recent sculptures.

—Edward Leffingwell