

Brian Wall

Hackett Mill
San Francisco

British-born sculptor Brian Wall has lived and worked in the Bay Area for almost 40 years and has shown his sculpture in Northern California occasionally. But no exhibition in recent decades had made the case for his importance as powerfully as did this one. Drawing upon work the artist has long had in storage, "Spatial Planes: 1957–1966" showed that Wall was producing abstract sculpture in a Constructivist vein ahead of Anthony Caro, who broke with modeled, cast figurative pieces in 1960.

The striking maturity of an early work by Wall, such as *Standing Form XX* (1958) or *Sculpture 7-4N* (1960), takes nothing away from Caro except precedence. Encounters with the work and personality of David Smith provoked Caro's abrupt change of direction and technique. In contrast, Wall appears to have drawn authority from European sources such as de Stijl and the "Prouns" of El Lissitzky.

Among the strongest pieces on view,



Brian Wall, *Standing Form XX*, 1958, painted steel, 73" x 40" x 40". Hackett Mill.

Standing Form XX has enough compositional complexity to postpone the viewer's recognition of the number and position of welds that hold aloft its slender, black-enameled steel rectangles. The central pedestal of the sculpture obtrudes as its unresolved aspect. In *Caldo Nero* (1958), Wall dispensed with the pedestal altogether. In *Form Y1* (1959), he brought it back, but as a form so slender that the viewer almost loses sight of



Judy Pfaff, *Give the Duck a Bit of Bread*, 2011, bamboo, hosho and other found paper, lanterns, parasols, artificial flowers, ink, wax, and shellac, 89" x 113" x 6". Bellas Artes.

it—and its function—in the work's compositional poetics.

Wall has not had anything like a retrospective since the early 1980s. This show declared the need for one.

—Kenneth Baker

Judy Pfaff

Bellas Artes
Santa Fe

Judy Pfaff has long been known as a "collagist in space," an artist whose exuberant assemblages of cheerful and cheap detritus anticipated the sprawling installations of artists like Sarah Sze, Jason Rhoades, and Jessica Stockholder. This high-spirited show, which filled two galleries, offered a chance to survey her more concise efforts of the last two years.

Recent collagelike pieces hugged the walls, and assemblages spilled casually into the gallery space. In *Lay There by the Juniper* (2011), four paper lanterns in various stages of collapse float above a spill of artificial flowers, the whole apparatus balanced by droopy diaphanous cheesecloth (the title, curiously, is from a Bob Dylan song, "Copper Kettle," about making moonshine whiskey, and the piece could be said to have a tipsy feel). Almost ten feet long, *Give the Duck a Bit of Bread* (2011)—whose shape, perhaps accidentally, resembles a map of the United States—was one of several nearly flat constructions, this one incorporating bamboo, artificial flowers, receipts, and other bits of found paper. In its aura of

inspired, inclusive clutter, the work harks back to Kurt Schwitters. A sculpture from nearly twenty years ago, *Jingdezhen* (1992), was also on view, showing how the artist has moved toward an ever more graceful—one wants to say "feminine"—attitude toward materials. Her colors have grown brighter, her detritus lighter and more malleable.

Pfaff is at her most powerful when she allows her work to explode off the wall and into the viewer's terrain. In her capable hands, junk yields surprising pleasures.

—Ann Landi

Asuka Katagiri

TAI
Santa Fe

James Turrell's experiments in light and space immediately came to mind upon entering "Light Navigation," a quiet, meditative exhibition of eleven color photographs by Japanese artist Asuka Katagiri. Gazing at these ethereal, atmospheric images gives the viewer the sensation of floating freely, as if unanchored by gravity.

To make these works, the artist focused his camera on something in the sky, the sun or perhaps a cloud, then opened the lens for anywhere from 1 to 16 seconds while rotating the camera a full 360 degrees. The resulting abstractions are frankly beautiful, luminous circular forms rendered in an irresistible palette of pale blues, purples, yellows, and oranges, along with some grays and pinks. Katagiri