

The New York Times

ON THE WEB

ART IN REVIEW
September 12, 2003

The Paper Sculpture Show
Sculpture Center
44-19 Purves Street
Long Island City, Queens
Through Dec. 7

This cute group show is neatly attuned to the kids-and-crafts trend in art that is making an aging New York art establishment feel young at heart these days. Indeed, it seems almost a send-up of it.

Although 29 artists are included, their work takes up little space. Each artist has created a design for a small do-it-yourself sculpture; the designs have been printed on modest-size sheets of sturdy paper.

Visitors are invited to pick up the designs they like from stacks on a table, then go to one of the modular work stations created by Allan Wexler. There they can set to work with scissors, X-Acto knife and paste to execute the sculptures they've chosen, according to the instructions printed on each. Some instructions are simple. Janine Antoni, for example, asks you to crumple the piece of paper into a ball, and that's that. Fred Tomaselli supplies images of warblers lifted from a popular bird guide, with the suggestion that they be cut out and attached to the gallery wall as part of a collage that will grow organically during the show.

A few sculptures have potential use, like David Brody's design for a tiny camera obscura. Others, like the children's toys they resemble, are miniature versions of things we know: Glenn Ligon offers a boxlike show of his own paintings; Francis Cape and Liza Phillips provide a cool little house to be folded into shape, like models cut from the backs of cereal boxes.



Certain pieces — a pretty, pleated abstract form by Seong Chun and Aric Obrosey's paper glove — make modest demands on manual dexterity, while Charles Goldman's spit-ball shooter calls on other talents. Viewers paralyzed when confronted with written instructions should go for Eve Sussman's piece, which has none, and avoid at all costs David Shrigley's, which consists entirely of daft, unfollowable directions that end by telling you to undo whatever you've done.

Precedents for the show's participatory kindergarten formalism come quickly to mind: the Surrealist Exquisite Corpse game; Mail Art; the anyone-can-do-it aesthetic of Fluxus. Unlike Fluxus ephemera, though, these products are meant to have at least a brief material shelf life: viewer-artists are asked to leave their efforts in the gallery for others to see until closing day of "The Paper Sculpture Show," organized by Mary Ceruti, director of the Sculpture Center; Matt Freedman, an artist; and Sina Najafi, editor in chief of Cabinet magazine, in collaboration with Independent Curators International.

At the same time, possessive artists, or those requiring privacy to be creative, will be glad to find a workbook-style exhibition catalog of all the designs. As a bonus, it has a smart, charming essay by Frances Richard spelling out the many conceptual issues raised by the show.

HOLLAND COTTE

