

The work as a whole tells the history of its own making. It is the tracing of the connections and links between thoughts manifested in wax, the story of an artist making art, and a record of that thinking which is involved. The piece reads in a linear fashion as a developing history: the first table of objects marks the point at which the work was started, and the last table of objects is the current state of the work. Each piece that is begun is worked to completion and is placed on the table without editing. No one object is conceived of by itself, but is a function of the things that surround it: some of the objects refer to art and objects outside the work, while other objects refer internally to specific work within the piece.

The piece is a visual record of my activity, thought and surroundings. That the work was produced through a passage of time is emphasized by the change that has occurred in the look of the objects from the beginning to the present. In the earlier work, the objects have a playful, roughly fastened and tentative quality, while in the current work there is an increasing attention given the exactness of construction resulting in an overall simplicity of form.

I consider the use of memory in this piece as an important tool, not unlike the other tools used to fashion wax objects. Memory is an element in a mental fabric that functions as a filter through which my surroundings are assimilated and recorded; therefore, I rely on my memory of the previous work to determine what information is of value to current and future work. As a result, I make very little visual reference to objects within the piece made in the past.

The objects have developed into an evolving synthetic language within

which there are characteristic recurring units or forms. This language is modified both by the changing forms of the objects as they are produced, and by the duration of time that elapses between the forms' appearances within the objects. The individual objects are considered resolved in a manner analogous to determining whether a sentence is complete. Some objects never reach this stage, and turn out to be phrases or words, instead of completed sentences or whole ideas. Sometimes I find these incomplete ideas recurring at a later time in a more complete form in different surroundings. The importance of the work's connotation of language lies not in any one particular interpretation of a meaning or translatable story line, but in that the work is a visualization of the thought processes involved in the making of the work. There should be no attempt to decipher the meaning of any one piece as to its possible symbolic meaning.

I think of the wax functioning in my work much like the syntax of a language functions as a framework for words. The wax functions both as a glue to hold the parts of work together and as a material which gives the objects structure and form.

As the work has progressed, the visual surface quality created by the application of the wax has become increasingly prominent, while the details of the construction have decreased. There is a painterly quality to the surface which removes the object from existing solely as a sculptural form, and is the sole remaining element of the hand-made feeling of the earlier pieces. This painterly marking in the surface of each piece repeats and reinforces the central theme of language in creating a sense of handwriting on each object.

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RICHARD ALPERT

The work of San Francisco artist Richard Alpert will be on exhibit at the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art from February 3, 1979 to March 2, 1979. Alpert is recognized for his strong contribution of performance sculpture, video and concept-oriented drawings and sculpture. A portion of his present work is concerned with the observation of a language that develops through the treatment and use of found and found-like objects. He takes particular objects and reduces them to an equal status that is similar to "equality" as we understand it in literary terms. No one object then has more importance than the next, nor does it exist effectively alone. Alpert achieves the visual reduction through a wax covering, bringing the objects together into one readable unit. He presents the objects on a series of tables that are seen as appropriate to the statement, positioning the objects in a way that allows the viewer to perceive the time increment as more important than the juxtaposition of the objects. The tables become specific in terms of containment, and read one to another in a linear progression. Alpert considers each table as a temporal unit in an evolving process.

The Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art is located at 2020 S. Robertson Boulevard. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 12 to 6 p.m., Thursdays 12 to 9 p.m. Information may be obtained by calling 559-5033. This project is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency in Washington D.C., and through sponsorship by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Los Angeles.

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San Francisco, California

Each of the tables is a piece, and each piece is part of a larger narrative. The process of making the pieces is like writing: the wax which holds the objects together is like the rules of grammar that hold words together in sentences. I do not distinguish any individual part in each piece as being more or less important than any other. All are part of an evolving story and each piece is a chapter in a larger history. As in writing, some objects are constructed easily, and others have to be worked and reworked, as some ideas flow into words and sentences, while others require rewriting and revising.

--Richard Alpert

6 March 1978

