

Jason Peters Anti.Gravity.Material.Light.

Exhibition Dates: January 28—April 11, 2010

The NEW FRONTIERS: series for Contemporary Art at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art is a new exhibition program that will introduce the Oklahoma City community and region to the work of individual contemporary artists and to current perspectives in the field. The series will provide a framework for the exchange of ideas between the Museum, artists, and the community. NEW FRONTIERS will connect the Museum to the international dialogue on contemporary art and emphasize the importance of the art-of-our-time as a critical and dynamic part of our daily lives.

Contents

NEW FRONTIERS 1

Jason Peters Artist Statement 1

About Jason Peters 2

About Ready-made and Found Object Art 2

Lit Sculpture - Buckets and Fluorescent Tubes 3

Chair Sculpture 3

Lesson Plan 4



Jason Peters, *No More No Less*, 2008

JASON PETERS ARTIST STATEMENT

My installations investigate the relationships of actual space, environment, and materials with the viewer's inherent, visceral, and often programmed or base opinions of them. My goal is to challenge intrinsic perceptions by suggesting that the objects of our reality are not always what they seem. I use found objects because they help redefine prescribed meanings and values, especially when assembled into entirely different structures. The question I want to ask the viewer is, "Are these familiar objects just as recognizable when serving an entirely different purpose? And just as important, does their transformation modify their value?" In the instance of 110 used tires reconfigured on the surface of an 12-foot sphere, the viewer is challenged to assess the evolution of the tires from once functional objects, to castoffs and the substance of a structure, whose existence within a functional space is itself transient. Equally significant is the alteration of the space in which the "new structure" is installed. The installation creates a chaotic moment that appears to be a natural occurrence and thereby tests the pre-existent purpose of the space. People encounter such installations as a speed bump in their perceived reality. Once the installation is removed, the memory of that "bump" is a lingering consciousness of the limitations we impose when restricting reality to face value alone.— jasonpeters.com



**Jason Peters, *11 Inner Tubes*, 2008
 (Tire Sculptures are not in Exhibit)**



Jason Peters at his studio in Salina Art Center

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Jason Peters
No More No Less
2008
Installation View

About Jason Peters

Jason Peters is a New York-based artist who creates large-scale, sculptural installations, using ready-made objects. In a recent interview posted on Art:21 Blog, artist, writer, and art critic Georgia Kotretsos states, “He is a builder, a maker, and a worker who often turns trash into precious and delicate structures by using modular elements, which he then interconnects like building blocks to create entirely new forms.”

Peters has recently had solo exhibitions at White Flag Projects, St. Louis, MO (2008); Slowdown, Omaha, NE (2007); Robert Berman Gallery, Santa Monica, CA (2007); Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, PA (2006); and Center for the Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe, NM (2004). Group exhibitions include *The Light Project*, Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, St. Louis, MO (2008); *Tooth and Nail*, Stay Gold Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (2006); d.u.m.b.o. art under the bridge festival, d.u.m.b.o.

arts center, Brooklyn, NY (2002-2003); as well as *OPTIONS 99*, 9th Biennial Exhibition, Washington Project Space, Washington, D.C. (1999). He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts (cum laude) in Sculpture and minored in Asian Art History at the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore in 1999.

— jasonpeters.com

About Ready-made and Found Object Art

Ready-made, a term coined by Marcel Duchamp to describe work which consisted of mass-produced objects selected and displayed as works of art. Ready-mades differ from *objets trouvés* (found objects) in that they are always mass-produced (i.e. not unique) objects, and no aesthetic criteria should be used in their selection, restrictions to which *objets trouvés* are not subject. Duchamp's first ready-made was *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), and its many successors included *Bottle Rack* (1914), *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1915) (a snow shovel), and, most notoriously of all, *Fountain* (1917), a gentleman's urinal embellished with the

date and the signature R. Mutt (all originals lost). Ready-mades were paramount in Duchamp's crusade against taste and aesthetics, an active form of criticism that both challenged and sent up traditional notions of refined and hand-crafted art. Despite the furore still provoked by Duchamp's actions, the war on taste has not been won: in 1962 he commented, “When I discovered ready-mades I thought to discourage aesthetics...I threw the bottle rack and the urinal in their faces and now they admire them for their aesthetic beauty.”

—The Oxford Companion to Western Art



Marcel Duchamp
Fountain, 1917



Marcel Duchamp
Bicycle Wheel, 1913

Lit Sculpture - Buckets and Fluorescent Tubes

One of Jason Peters' signature creations is his bucket sculpture. These installations have been described as resembling "thick arteries" and "miniature amusement park thrill rides" by Paul Brewer, independent curator and writer for the exhibit *The Space in-Between* (2005) at Supreme Trading in Brooklyn, NY. Brewer continues, "The sculptural practice of Jason Peters combines the politics of the readymade with an intuitive process that takes the inherent character of the materials he employs to guide his construction strategies. Using ingenuity and superior craftsmanship, Peters succeeds in achieving his stated goal of 'creating moments in time that cause people to contemplate or reconsider their values or ideas of time, space, and objects.'" In Brewer's article, Jason Peters has said that the Japanese have a word, "*ma*, which is a consciousness of place or experimental space. It is not an enclosed three-

dimensional entity, but an unfolding event that takes place in the human imagination while experiencing architectural elements." Brewer writes, "It is in this aggressive layering of spatial concerns with readymade references and architectural frameworks that Peters succeeds in activating on multiple registers both the physical and mental space between his audience and his objects." When Jason Peters uses buckets to create sculpture, he is taking something that was originally meant for the transportation of liquids or solids and connects many units of buckets in order to create something new. He lights them from the inside with a light rope, strung throughout the entity. In an interview for *The Light Project*, Matthew Strauss asks Jason Peters the following question about his bucket sculptures. "Were the bucket sculptures always conceived of as lighted works? You tend to exhibit them in darkness; and in some ways it almost seems

like the darkness, the negative space, is as important to the viewer's experience as the sculpture itself." Jason answered, "Initially the bucket works were not conceived of as lit sculptures. It dawned on me later—through a dream, actually—that I could create a glow equivalent of what a candle achieves in a dark room. I wanted the experience of the sculpture to be not only spatial but also, in a way, spiritual—to create a kind of seductive visual experience for the viewer." Jason Peters also uses fluorescent tubes to create geometric structures that emit a glow in a darkened room. These works have been compared to those of Dan Flavin, whose work was also exhibited, posthumously, at the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts' exhibit, *The Light Project*, in St. Louis, MO in 2008.



Jason Peters
No More No Less
2008

"What I want to achieve is a visual happening that causes the viewer to reconsider their surroundings and the work's context."

- Jason Peters in an interview with Matthew Strauss for *The Light Project* at the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts (2008)

Chair Sculpture

The perfect and most supportive chair has been a quest for architects and designers for hundreds of years. Paul Brewer writes, "Peters' chairs betray their function as autonomous objects distributing corporeal weight by acting as spindly bricks in sketchy architectural improvisations that easily heap into unprecedented heights.

These towering structures are a vivid articulation of the outcome to some of the basic questions that guide Peters' process, such as 'What can the objects do? Or what can I make them do?'" Jason Peters began working with chairs in school. He would use available stools and chairs from classrooms and studios. He uses gravity

and tension to hold the chairs in their place. He has stated, "Philosophically, all objects are 'becoming' in a continuous process of birth and death, because nothing is permanent." The ability to creatively see the chairs' potential is a big part of the sculptural process.



Jason Peters
Finally
2002

Discussion: Theme - Purpose

What is the definition of purpose? Do we as human beings have purpose? Are we defined by that purpose? Can our purpose change based on events or experiences? What is the original purpose of a bucket, or a fluorescent light tube, or a chair? How does the purpose of these items change when many of them are combined to create something new or when they are placed in a different setting? Does the purpose of a work of art change if it's not placed in a museum or gallery?

Activity

Teachers have been collecting toilet paper tubes, jars, boxes, etc. for years to help their students create works of art. Think about what you use at your school or home that would normally be thrown away and collect those objects. Once you have a large collection, answer the following questions to create a readymade or found object work of art. This could even be a writing project before or after you begin the creative process.

- What do you want to create and what would its purpose be?
- What is the original purpose of your collected objects?
- How does the original purpose of the object change during the process of creating?
- How are you going to connect the objects?
- Will you add anything to your creation, like color or light?
- How do you interact with your work of art and what gives it energy?
- How does your work energize the space between it and you?
- What do you like about your sculpture?
- Describe your resulting sculpture using analogies and the elements of art. For example, "The line of the chair sculpture is as fluid as a wave;" or "The shape of the bucket sculpture is as twisted as a snake;" or "The texture is as varied as the people who sit in the chairs." or "The colors are as bright as a kaleidoscope of gems."

Sources

Artist Web site: www.jasonpeters.com

Paul Brewer article from Supreme Trading exhibit (PDF): <http://www.jasonpeters.com/final%20draft.pdf>

Matthew Strauss interview with Jason Peters for *The Light Project* at the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts: <http://lightproject.pulitzerarts.org/interviews/jason-peters/>

Inside the Artist's Studio: Jason Peters, Art:21 Blog with Georgia Kotretsos: <http://blog.art21.org/2009/07/31/inside-the-artists-studio-jason-peters/>

Discussion: Theme - Energy

What is energy? Can it be something that you feel? What gives energy to a work of art? How can the space between you and a work of art be energized? What do you bring to a piece of art that could give it energy? How does energy play a part in the work of Jason Peters? How does showing Jason Peters' lit works in a darkened space, versus an outdoor or regularly lit space, change the energy of the sculptures?