

LOVE AND P'S

PETER SHIRE

NEW GALERIE

January 15 to February 27, 2016

Opening reception: January 15

Interview between Julie Boukobza and Peter Shire

What does one see when he enters your studio for the first time?

Chaos. A fantastic cross between a toy shop, a manufacturer, and a campground cooking kitchen. When you enter my studio for the first time, you cross the line between the outside world and the world as it should be. Of course, within my studio things relate to each other, begat each other, and talk to each other.

Do your surroundings shape your work?

The surroundings outside of my studio are both lyrical and human, and offensive and crass. The things that shape my work come from these two factors with a heavy blast of the things that I adore: Japanese movies for their drama, humanity and morality; Italian movies for their sense of the surreal quality of reality; and French film partly for its humor but especially for its lyrical sense of the ephemeral and its profound romance.

Cars, cars, cars! My goodness, I'm a California car guy. It's not just the aesthetics of this California custom but also the mechanics of their suspensions. Not only the cars themselves but also the freeways and the scale and movement of the architecture. These things are very apparent: music becomes a visualization, the expanse of the ocean, and the colors of disconnected things. Well, there are probably quite a few other things, but that will do for now.

After working with materials such as steel, ceramic, and glass (to name a few) are they still fields you haven't covered yet?

Working with different materials makes me want to keep on going. When I'm neurotic and can't make a decision about finishing something, I go to another area of the studio until the solution comes to me. Sooner or later space age materials will start to become available to me, and what will make my involvement interesting is my basis. On the other hand, what's driving me

crazy right now is upholstery, and the kind of shapes and details and textures that can be attained makes my head spin. Although all of it relates to my initial inspiration for furniture, I love its ability to not only become sculpture but to change the way we think and be as radical as possible.

Are anecdotes sometimes the starting point of a work of art?

Yes, it seems that everything is a story. Not only are there stories, but there are also jokes. One way or another these verbal sometimes simply mental literary constructs are like the poles in an air race that airplanes have to fly around to plot their course.

Can you tell me the story of your first encounter with Ettore Sottsass?

Oh, my gosh! Ettore. My great love, well, everyone's great love, I'm sure. For many years, many different people who saw my work would say "Do you know Ettore Sottsass?" "No." "Oh, you've got to meet him!" Then, one day in 1979 he was in my studio with Barbara Radice. He had come to visit me. We talked and walked around my studio, and then we went to lunch. As we drove through Echo Park, we went past a house that had been driving me crazy for years. It had the weirdest corner addition. I had driven past it hundreds of times with hundreds of different people, and none of them had ever said anything, yet alone noticed it. He looked up as we passed by and said "Look at that!" He'd nailed it instantly. Just like we think things that are sentences and paragraphs but have no words, I thought... "Uh huh... this guy is something special. Unbelievable!!" At that time we found a remarkable Chinese restaurant that served chicken with cashews in a wonderful sauce, and everybody had the feeling settle over them that a good meal and good company bring. We went back to my studio, and I was working up the nerve to ask him if would be all right to come to Italy to visit when he turned to me and said, "When will you be in Italy?" That's how things work with Sottsass -- intuition. Perhaps even psychic understanding and experiences, and as often happens when you come

LOVE AND P'S

PETER SHIRE

NEW GALERIE

January 15 to February 27, 2016

Opening reception: January 15

across someone really great, you march off into destiny together. Sometimes with clumsy boots.

What is your relationship to color?

Ask me something simple. There are parts of it that are very structured and relate to systems. There are parts of it to which over time I have assigned theories of origin. Ultimately, I don't understand it at all. Sometimes

I try to make things that are full of gravitas and grey and full of storm clouds, and as I'm doing it I say something to myself like, "Now, they'll understand that I'm serious." But when it's all done, somehow it's red, blue and yellow with a little bit of green and fuchsia. Needless to say, bright. So, consequently, happy optimistic colors that open the sky must be very serious for me.

Do you feel related in some ways to any West Coast artistic movements?

Very related to West Coast artistic movements, not only in liking them and respecting them, but also evolving from them, and in the drive to make something important, have come away not entirely like any one of them.

Can you talk about your Olympic Village Disco?

Here's another long subject. Now it is part of my life and part of my memory. At the time, of course, I knew it was important. The thing about being in the middle of something like that is that it was simply something that I was doing. I didn't have Norse Gods in helmets with wings guiding me from above and saying "Everything you do is wonderful"... or something. It was a great moment with a great imperative to GET IT DONE IN TIME. I met many beautiful people, many of whom I still know, including one couple who actually met there and are still married. We look at each other with big eyes and breaking hearts that say, "Wasn't that a time, and isn't it amazing that our time still continues?"

One last question: can you say a few words about the works you selected for this show?

These works are my favorite kind of show with most of the aspects of my work that illustrate, that talk about, the nature of IDEAS flying into reality and transcending and transposing it. I like the aspects of the nature of European shows and the picture that I saw of the gallery itself, celebrating and causing these things to not only assume their importance but to somehow become a thing apart. I'm really glad you liked the Jacques Tati "stuff". He's one of my true idols.

