

ARTFORUM

Gary Webb

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05.07.09-06.20.09 *Bortolami*

“Diamond Standard,” Gary Webb’s second solo exhibition at this gallery, consists of six totemic sculptures that toy with historical influences, from Constantin Brancusi to Franz West to Roy Lichtenstein. Each work comprises cast-aluminum sections, sprayed with automotive paint in slick synthetic colors—sour apple, watermelon, caramel—which are then pieced together into irregular organic shapes, which appear at once humorous and miserable. Some sculptures, such as the multicolored *Big 1* (all works 2009), tower impossibly at nineteen feet, while others, such as *Glo Baby Glo*, reach upward only to split into two arches, thus beginning and ending on the floor. The scale of each sculpture, hovering just above an average viewer’s height, unifies the works so as to dwarf both the gallery and the observer. The installation suggests a modern sculpture park, a contemporary counterpart to the gardens of Niki de Saint Phalle.

In *Hand of Brazil*, the artist joins brown aluminum elements into the form of the titular appendage, whose limp pinkie threatens to detach. A silver splint surrounds the lame finger, while a yellow glass disk magnifies the juncture of the joints. The yellow piece points to the artist’s precarious balance of syncretism. Webb treats these ductile sections as though they were rigid serial elements; consequently, the form of each sculpture is almost undermined by the irregularity of the pieces that compose them. His new works demonstrate an interstice between opposites: anthropomorphic and abstract, synthetic and organic, pure and contrived. The artist’s fetishistic attention to these details awkwardly positions this exhibition within the wake of David Smith and of modernism’s treatment of form.