

ARTFORUM

“Patrick Jackson: Picks 5.21.08”

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Black and Midnight Blue, 2008

05.03.08-06.07.08 Chung King Project / Francois Ghebaly

Like a model city built from an exotic Tinkertoy set, Patrick Jackson’s exhibition “City Unborn” blends references to early modernism, Surrealism, and finish fetish to create an ur-city, the id of urban planning. The eight table-height sculptures that compose the installation are made of fiberboard boxes of varying dimensions, painted with generic shades of lustrous car paint and topped with alternating layers of clear glass and small gray cement pyramids. Seen from across the room, the stacks of pyramids form undulating columns, reminiscent of Constantin Brancusi’s *Endless Column*, 1938, itself an ur-form connecting heaven and earth. Viewed from above, they cast complex reflections in the glass that suggest the fractured planes of a Futurist drawing. These delicate structures would almost be classic modernist sculptures were they not punctuated with decidedly less streamlined objects. In one piece, glass shelves rise from a slim ochre base to display a wrench, a wooden cane, a huge lollipop, and a black plastic comb. In another, a long, skinny box is laced with an industrial metal chain; the smooth blue surface of a third is inset with a rusty sewer grate.

These mundane incursions, with their surreal scalar and tonal contrasts, disrupt the purity of the rectilinear sculptures and amplify their status as imaginary, dreamlike forms. While the modern city plan is typically proposed in the name of reason and order, these fragile, uncanny structures gently point out the irrational underside of the utopian enterprise.