



**Above:** *Black Warp Two*, 2007. Birch plywood and paint. 36" x 30" x 1.75"  
**Right:** *Alien Poker Two*, 2007. Birch plywood and paint. 36" x 30" x 1.75"



## Ara Peterson

### Ratio 3

**E**verything in science and physics explains something we cannot see, either because it is made up of tiny molecules invisible to the human eye or based on ephemeral chemical reactions. In physics, wave theory constitutes specific degrees of wave formation patterns made up of synthetic reactions, timing, and space.

Working within this realm, artist Ara Peterson's exhibition *Multidimensional Warp* is comprised of six wall-mounted works created from wood. From a distance, they appear to be paintings, but a closer look reveals the artist's formalistic sculptural training in the detailed, thin layers of laser-cut plywood. Some of the pieces have been constructed from more than eighty laminated pieces of wood.

This is Peterson's second solo exhibition at Ratio 3 Gallery in San Francisco, but the first series based on synthesized wave formation. *Black Warp One* and *Black Warp Two* are two separate pieces, each painted a solid black, that capture full, round wave vibrations. Placed beside one another, juxtaposed, the pieces work to articulate a single vision. The viewer is immersed in the visual experience of the pieces, remembering that there is no sound.

Studying Peterson's work is both a visual and visceral experience. Although physically still, the image will strangely begin to change as the viewer moves around each piece. An optical illusion of sorts, the pieces engage the viewer in a dual experience—they not only see the vibrations, but also experience the feeling of moving through water. While this engages the viewer momentarily, one can easily become bored. Peterson's subject seems to be the exposition of something intangible into a physical form. This attempt creates an alternative way of experiencing sound visually. It is based on the concept of looking at structures in the natural world and transferring them into

the physical, object-based world. But, the attempt fails when there is no residue. When the imperfections are perfectly placed on the wall in a sculptural based form. When the pieces of wood are perfectly laser-cut instead of hand made.

Pieces such as *Alien Poker One* and *Alien Poker Two* visually captivate the viewer with a variation of aesthetically well-made shapes and patterns, a notable strength of Peterson as an artist. However, it is his keen craftsmanship of sculpture that traps this work in a clean-cut, predictable form. Capturing movement and rawness in the making of the work, in color and composition, he could have potentially engaged the viewer in a deeper discussion about his subject.

Waves are made of multiple vibrations; when the vibrations meet at a focal point, they make specific wave patterns. In a literal, scientific approach to visually capture vibrations, Peterson uses multiple pattern layouts in his pieces. *Blue Green Warp One* and *Blue Green Warp Two*, although they function as polar opposites—one being a positive and the other a negative rendition—display the same daunting approach, too neat to allow for any other critique to take place. Besides being a well-crafted exhibition, what else is there to question or to imagine?

Peterson's work entices the viewer with a kaleidoscope of spirals, ripples, and graceful cuts of wood. The viewer engages in these wave vibrations momentarily, but then the interest falls short. The beauty and sophistication in Peterson's work is alluring to the audience in what could be an abstract painting. A skillful artist at his best, this is not representative of Peterson's other work that ultimately speaks of spontaneity, movement, and layering, and ultimately insight into creating a dialogue between sculpture, form, science, and art.

Written by Karla Diaz  
 Images courtesy of Ratio 3, San Francisco

