

artillery

September 2007
Volume 2. no. 1
pg. 43

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ARA PETERSON
Ratio 3

THERE IS A DECEPTIVE simplicity to "Multidimensional Warp," Ara Peterson's recent exhibition. The seven laser-cut wooden panels that hung in the gallery's two rooms were built from computer-rendered wave modulations. In each work, dozens of birch wood strips had one edge laser-cut to digital specification so that when stacked left to right, a plane was formed in the image of the modulation. However, before the strips are adhered together each is painted a specific color so that when connected, a pattern emerges. Hung on a wall like a relief, the works move with a soft pixillated intensity. Slightly resembling tiled desktop backgrounds made physical, the panels show in rippling detail their transmedia production. They sport a cold technical proficiency balanced with a familiar hand-shaped finish. The aesthetic is everybody's, not over-produced or ostentatious, each panel speaks to the handicraft imagination. *Alien Poker One* (all works 2007) and *Alien Poker Two* make this evident. The latter's color and pattern is a rhythm of thin alternating bands of red, yellow and a gentle blue-green across a span of grey; it nods as much to a Bridget Riley painting as it does to a paint-by-number hobby kit. It is how the technology of the future might look if it was modeled by today's most accomplished amateurs.

What will give Peterson's work longevity is not its formal characteristics, but the digital process by which it is created. The panels embrace a space where the digital and the artist's hand are both present. Where once a specific futurism or technological determinism came attached to work that is so upfront about its high-tech techniques, Peterson's work is more aloof, and perhaps, a bit more familiar. This is compounded by the frank dialog that the panels have with the artist's video projects. The connection causes the work to resemble a rippled monitor, or a crisp, painting-proportioned screen. The larger two works, *Golden Warp* and *Blue Green Warp Two*, enact their titles by resembling rifts; each an image of the space between the real and the virtual. The panels are shallow, but have great depth, they undulate colorfully, but are ultimately static.

One can make predictable linkages when it comes to Peterson's work and much of the Op art of the late '60s and early '70s. However, these pieces are not that nostalgic, if anything they highlight the distance between those forms of high formalism and artmaking today. Those less curbed by an art historical knowledge will see them as the object built by contemporary pop culture, by neon animation and music videos, by Internet surfing and video games. The work's sensibilities are far different from those concerned solely with modern painting and formalism, instead of locating the fundamentals of form, Peterson's work shows that when you look close enough, those core parameters are constantly in flux.

—Marc LeBlanc



Ara Peterson, *Blue Green Warp One*, 2007 (detail)