

Staff, "Herms and the Beat Aesthetic", ARTKURSH, 23 March 2005.



George Herms / George Herms / Jedediah Caesar / Lara Schnitger / Gedi Sibony

FEATURE

GEORGE HERMS AND THE BEAT AESTHETIC

The heady anti-glam aesthetic of the *Beats*, at heart, is about making the best of what's right in front of you. Its deceptively straightforward strategy, with both words and things, is to coax the beauty and hidden meaning out of everyday objects by unexpected juxtaposition. And as the long-overdue retrospective of seminal LA Beat artist [George Herms](#) at the [Santa Monica Museum of Art](#) amply demonstrates, its voice remains vital in today's cultural discourse. His recently completed *Thelonius Sphere Monk* communicates fresh ideas on the fusion of music, poetry, and visual art with vigor and clarity. It is easy to see why the rugged authenticity of this approach might be appealing to a new generation of artists.

Two artists appearing in the phenomenal *THING: New Sculpture from Los Angeles* at the Hammer Museum come to mind. [Lara Schnitger](#)'s monumental stretched Lycra constructions and the poured mixed media molds of [Jedediah Caesar](#) provide divergent but equally salient manifestations of these ideas. Each privileges non-art materials and the detritus of home and studio, but where Schnitger's work tackles the traditional delegation of labor along gender lines, Caesar's locates his vision outside fine art by formally mimicking the artifacts of sciences. Similarly, New York's [Gedi Sibony](#), whose sculptures are on view in *Greater New York* at PS1, explores the role of craft and construction in materials with an ambiguous yet established relationship to fine art. Wood, plaster, and carpeting are organized into forms that deftly address issues of abstract painting, architecture, and the human impulse to exercise dominion over one's surroundings.

Schnitger, Caesar, Sibony, and others enthusiastically embrace the legacy of Herms and the Beat Generation's gleefully untidy making of objects that are both inherently one-of-a-kind yet avoid preciousness through respect for the hand-wrought artifact. (SND)

George Herms: Hot Set, curated by [Walter Hopps](#), continues at the [Santa Monica Museum of Art](#) through May 14; *THING: New Sculpture from Los Angeles* remains on view at the [Hammer Museum](#) through June 5; and *Greater New York* at [P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center](#) in Long Island City runs through September 26.