

The New York Times

Eric Fertman

Susan Inglett
522 West 24th Street, Chelsea
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You don't see much fine wood-working in New York contemporary art. Who has time to invest in demanding craft? So Eric Fertman's comical, lovingly made, semiabstract wooden sculpture is a refreshing if not strikingly original change of pace.

Multiple influences are evident in the works in Mr. Fertman's first solo show. (He is in his mid-30s and lives in Brooklyn.) With its *mélanges* of bulbous forms, cartoonish representational elements, dowels, posts and other structural or anthropomorphic parts, his work is a goofy sort of Cubism seemingly devised by a committee of Miró, Guston, Westermann and R. Crumb.

There are small pieces resembling simplified penguins walking on skinny legs and pod-shaped feet. "Pooch" is a dog abstracted into sausagelike shapes connected by slender rods. Other purely abstract works suggest a visionary architect's models for airy, cantilevered towers.

Standing almost 10 feet tall, "Goon" and "Skeezix" have ungainly conglomerations of droopy, vaguely fecal forms, slender, bent wood parts and spearlike rods topping posts thick as telephone poles, each standing on a big, rounded foot. The equally tall "Monument" looks like a partly broken antique spinning wheel. All these pieces exude an infectious, playful exuberance.

The question is, where is Mr. Fertman in all of this? If his work is to be more than an adept juggling of influences, he needs to figure out how to absorb his sources into a personal exploration of the awkward, the absurd and the scary. **KEN JOHNSON**