

ARTFORUM

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Mary Miss

55 MERCER GALLERY

Although the work of Mary Miss has received some exposure over the past five years, it remains difficult to pigeonhole as to type. This is partly the result of her determination to steer clear of sculptural categories such as serial or modular or even antiform, and of journalistic designations concerning materials. She keeps shifting around, from wood (which she uses most consistently) through cardboard, chicken wire, rope, and metal to plastics (the least frequently utilized). But no matter what material she uses, she employs it as simply and truthfully as possible, stressing its natural qualities rather than debasing them. Formerly her work involved the delineation of spaces in terms of the view, placing markers which fused time and movement with repeated forms. More recent work has involved treating particular spaces as sculptural entities, blocking them off and structuring their interiors with materials such as wood, as she did last year at 55 Mercer Street. In her current exhibition at the same gallery, she has utilized cardboard and brown paper in one large three-unit sculpture which resembles a thick sandwich of origami-like lattice. None of its parts are identical with the others, and when an end is too weak to support interior paper, the paper flops over naturally. She exploits the little recognized strength of laminated cardboard to its fullest extent to maintain the upright stability of the piece which is only supported otherwise by a few crossbraces in wood. The show also includes three wooden sculptures: one a 4' x 8' sheet of plywood perforated with a row of one triangular and five lozenge-shaped cutouts; the second a 26'-long, 4'-high overlapping "picket-fence" construction in laminated thin plywood; and lastly a three-unit work in sticks of pine dowelled irregularly together into spikey herringbone configurations. One constant that united all these works was her use of notch shapes or vee grooves singly or in multiples, one of the basic structural units of her formal language.

—April Kingsley