

Art in America

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LOS ANGELES

Leonard Seagal at Post

In this decade of ephemeral installations, cast metal is a tricky medium. All too many sculptors seem to be weighed down by its imperturbable mass. L.A. artist Leonard Seagal's three new cast-iron works, however, manage to transcend the frozen stolidity of metal in their sly simulations of human gestures. Executed during Seagal's recent stint at Wisconsin's Kohler Art Center, the works are full-scale casts of parts of the artist's body.

Two Legs, Pink Love Beads, Steel consists of full casts of Seagal's legs and feet, starting with his rounded haunches. Both appendages are hinged at the knees and ankles, and the two legs are hoisted six inches off the ground by a heavy chain hanging from the ceiling. The weight of the hinged left foot causes it to flop down and touch the floor, making it look as if it is standing on tiptoe. Hanging parallel to the cable, a thin steel wire strung with pink love beads lifts the right knee into a prancing position. Both legs thus assume a balletic pose. The cable and wire create the illusion of a freeze-framed gesture.

In another sculpture, a cast of the artist's arm and hand, placed on the floor and hinged at the elbow and wrist, is slightly

Leonard Seagal: *One arm, multicolored beads*, 1998, mixed mediums, 6½ by 15 by 8 inches; at Post.



raised at the wrist by a wire strung with multicolored love beads. The fingers graze the floor as if playing a piano. The single line of colored beads, funky and upbeat, hoists the arm into a gesture of subtle grace.

A third, smaller work employs no ceiling cables. A pair of hollow forearms cut off at the wrists and elbows nestle next to each other on the floor like forlorn castaways. The texture of the skin, however, is vigorously rendered; the ridged veins accent the metal's surface sheen. The rounded edges of the hollow sculptures make them seem like snouts or sheaths—or conduits now emptied of life. Even in this simpler work, Seagal's attention to the body's delicacy is not overwhelmed by his medium. Mitigating heavy metal with love beads and sophisticated humor, he tweaks the conventions of realist sculpture, adding a fresh direction to the current figurative revival.

—Michael Duncan