

Courtesy of the artist; Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco; and Jeff Bailey Gallery, New York



# Christian Maychack

Glen Helfand

*For the Empathy of Others, 2005//*  
installation view, Berkeley Art Center,  
Berkeley, California//courtesy of  
the artist; Gregory Lind Gallery, San  
Francisco; and Jeff Bailey Gallery,  
New York//

**T**he Hildewintera cactus is notable for prickly appendages that grow out in layers of flat, oozing blobs. It's a somewhat monstrous succulent, but it blooms vibrant pink flowers. Staring in wonder at the cactus is one of the first things artist Christian Maychack (who also happens to be an avid gardener) refers to when discussing his sculpture, works in which he manages to make solid objects and architecture appear to mutate out of their solid foundations. His 2005 sculpture *Uneasiness Is Twofold* appeared to be attached to an architectural intersection of red brick and clean, white plasterboard high on a wall in San Francisco's Southern Exposure gallery. The bricks seemed to slide down the wall and create angular indentations beneath the plasterboard or tumors in the building's infrastructure. You had to look up to see the piece, which was



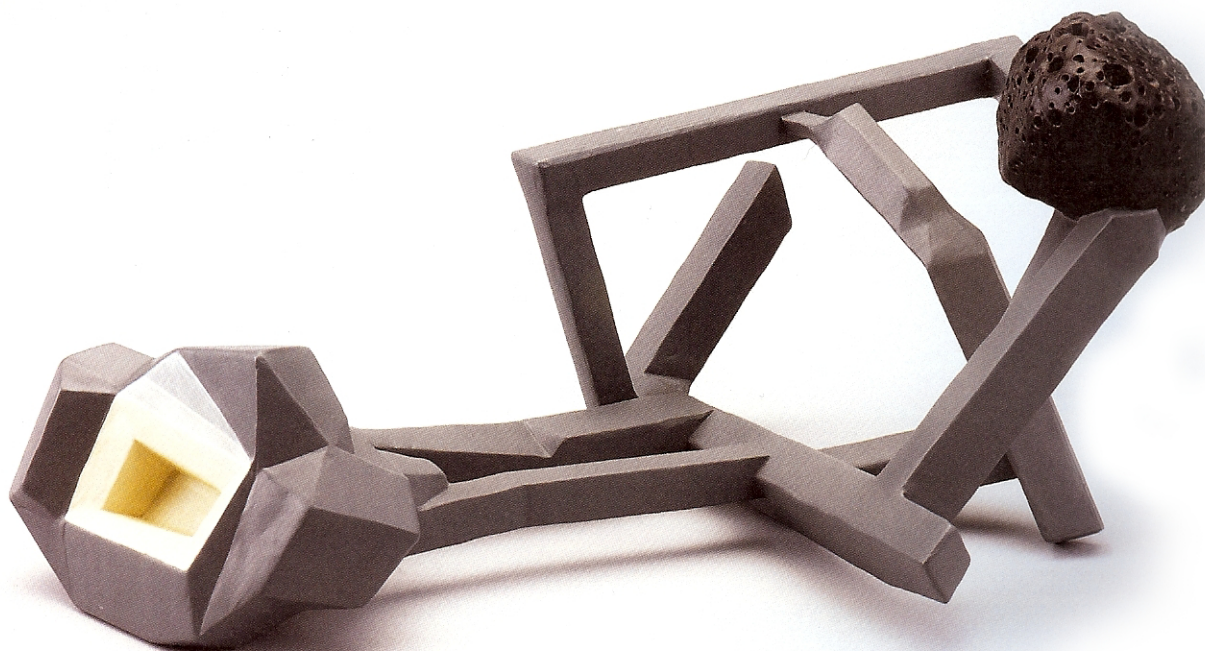
dramatic yet seamlessly integrated into the room. Maychack's work defiantly exists on a visual margin.

His extended forms simultaneously reference the digital and the organic, a theme that alludes to the visual effects of genetic engineering and the structure of 3D computer animation—the jovial, rotund Shrek character, before the application of his virtual green epidermis, is a skein of straight lines. Similarly, Maychack covers a basic foundation, be it for large-scale works or more modest sculptures, with a skin, but he uses low-tech, particularly tactile materials—chicken wire, foam, glue, and Magic Sculp, an adaptable modeling putty that allows the artist to shift course quickly. The process of Maychack's works evolves in a manner that mirrors their subjects: a tiny accident can divert a piece in a new direction in the same way that a kink in the gene pool ultimately results in a compellingly aberrant form.



*Out of the Blue*, 2004 (detail)//foam core, chicken wire, hot glue, sewing pins, latex paint//14 x 28 x 22 in.// courtesy of the artist; Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco; and Jeff Bailey Gallery, New York//

*An Untitled Cataclysm*, 2005//foam core, hot glue, Magic Sculp, latex paint//11 x 17 x 13 in.// courtesy of the artist; Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco; and Jeff Bailey Gallery, New York//







***We Are All Now***  
*Aimless*, 2004//wood  
 molding, foam core,  
 chicken wire, hot glue,  
 drywall plaster, Magic  
 Sculp, latex paint//13  
 x 17 x 11 in.//courtesy  
 of the artist; Gregory  
 Lind Gallery, San  
 Francisco; and Jeff  
 Bailey Gallery, New  
 York//

Another site-specific work, *From a Notion of Subtle Collapse* (2005), created for *Bay Area Now 4* at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, replicated the white railings of a main staircase with the addition of a bulbous but angular form—a “friendly growth” he calls it. Like the falling bricks, it was a major interruption that blended in. Many viewers overlooked it, a fact that the artist appreciates. Those who do manage to notice are rewarded with a gnawing desire to rethink ideas about solidity and functionality. The latter is particularly interesting to Maychack, whose work seems to constantly address utilitarian elements—the aforementioned wall and staircase, or perhaps a lobby bench—things that are so ubiquitous that we need a bit of goosing to pay attention to them again. He creates the equivalent of that peculiar cactus, which beckons and pricks at the same time.

***From a Notion of Subtle Collapse***, 2005  
 (detail)//installation  
 view, Yerba Buena  
 Center for the Arts, San  
 Francisco//courtesy of  
 the artist; Gregory Lind  
 Gallery, San Francisco;  
 and Jeff Bailey Gallery,  
 New York//

