

CHEIM & READ

ARTnews

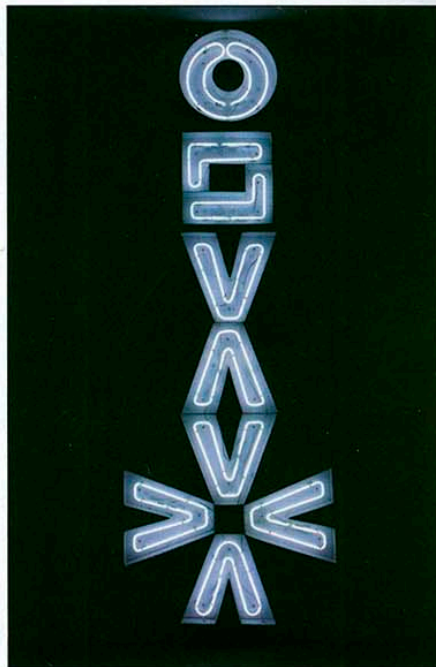
January 2010

Jack Pierson

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Jack Pierson's magical new works are constructed from the discarded signage letters he previously used to make sculptures in the form of evocative words. In these text-based pieces, the meaning of such terms as "vanity," "ghosts," "betrayal," and "romance" is amplified by the varying sizes, colors, and styles of the letters. It's as if the words came together from different times and places to reveal the essence of the concepts they describe.

For this show, whole or broken letters were selected for their abstract appearance instead of for the sounds they connote, which led viewers back to the relationships between colors and shapes



Jack Pierson, *ABSTRACT #11*, 2008, white neon lights and metal, 144" x 49" x 5". Cheim & Read.

as they sought to decipher the narrative in the works (sometimes they were aided by Pierson's titles). *Through slaughter to a throne* (2009), for example, sets up a story that begins with a lineup of four crimson fragments. Next comes a bright red upside-down exclamation point, followed by a horizontal wooden *I*, which is painted the color of dried blood. A culminating round scarlet period could be the triumphant king, hovering over the carnage he's created. And in *Purest ray serene* (2009), a bright blue broken rectangle missing a side is followed by a faded rose-colored frame holding two lines of empty lightbulb sockets. The viewer was left to imagine the long-lost light.

Real illumination is present in *ABSTRACT #11* (2008), a vertical composition in white neon glowing against a plain white wall. At the top is an *O* that reads as a head, and the two *V*s on their sides at the bottom could be outstretched hands, or even the wings of a suspended angel. With explicit meaning removed from the sculptures, feeling is paradoxically intensified—we still remember the words that are now gone. It's as if unseen mouths were struggling to communicate inexpressible emotions. —*Elisabeth Kley*