

# CHEIM & READ



## Jack Pierson, "Abstracts"

★★★★★

**Cheim & Read**, through Nov 14  
(see Chelsea)

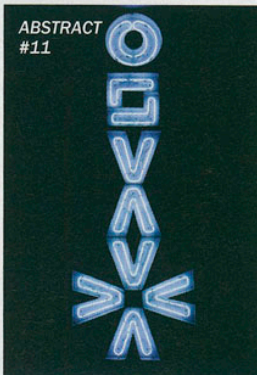
Jack Pierson has long used mismatched letters from old signs—the blocky, three-dimensional characters that once graced movie marquees and storefronts—as a signature material, combining them to spell out evocative words and phrases. His new reliefs and one standing sculpture employ the same medium to nonobjective ends.

*Abstract #11*, for instance, resembles a quasi-figurative totem with its column of *vs* and *ls* topped by an *o*, all exposing their white neon innards thanks to absent facing. *Flourish*, a swirl of red plastic letters and curlicues that recall vintage Coke or Pepsi logos, looks like a decorative bit of calligraphy.

But without the anchor of language and the concrete poetry engendered by

its juxtaposition with forlorn found objects, Pierson's arrangements devolve into formalism—more or less attractive assemblages of more or less attractive junk. At best, by playing with the shapes of letters, as in the flying wedge of red, yellow, black and silver *os* that constitute *Her ancient solitary reign*, the artist achieves an ornamental effervescence. Too often, though, he seems to parody Abstract-Expressionist or Postminimalist art. The neon squiggle, black dot and underlining red beam of *The shrine of Luxury and Pride* bring to mind a particularly clunky

Adolph Gottlieb, while the Plexiglas fragments of *Incense kindled at the Muse's flame* create a scrapyard approximation of a Robert Motherwell torn-paper collage. Like the arrow of blinking lights that Pierson has attached to the gallery's facade, his latest work gives us some retro flash while signifying nothing.  
—Joseph R. Wolin



PHOTOGRAPH: JACK PIERSON. "ABSTRACTS" COURTESY CHEIM & READ