

# Art in America

INTERNATIONAL • REVIEW

## EXHIBITION REVIEWS

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View of Mark Cooper's exhibition "More is More," 2011; at Samsøn Projects.

### MARK COOPER SAMSØN PROJECTS

In his recent show "More is More," multi-medium artist Mark Cooper crammed over 2,200 individual works, made between 2005 and 2011, into Samsøn's long, narrow gallery. As a professor at Boston College and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Cooper has long been an influential presence in this city. He's best known for his biomorphic fiberglass sculptures—large, crude, colorful—several of which were displayed on walls or the floor, or hung from the ceiling. He is also a skilled ceramist, photographer and painter.

All Cooper's mediums were represented in the souklike installation of this show. Cascades of over 2,000 overlapping rice-paper cutouts featuring line drawings of organic shapes fluttered gracefully on the walls. Created with black etching ink on white paper and ranging from palm-size to long and frondlike, they formed a soft backdrop for the other work.

Nearly 50 small, vibrant, gestural paintings on wood panel were casually stacked here and there into columns, but the floor was dominated by tall, raw wood structures—curving, multistrutted shapes with hardware joinery in full view. Resembling

outside furniture designed by Dr. Seuss, the pieces are based on the infrastructure of Cooper's biomorphic sculptures. During a conversation in the gallery, he told me how, while tinkering with the latter pieces, he became intrigued by their bare framework.

Here, he uses the exposed struts as shelves to display his quasi-functional ceramics. Though crafted like venerable majolica and celadon, these vessels flout finesse. Ranging from hand- to tabletop-size, they are displayed just as they come from the kiln, all imperfections welcome. Squashed, lumpy, sagging, cracked, with glaze flaking off in large chunks, they were the most appealing objects here. The gourdlike celadon pieces are especially primitive. The newer majolica works come closer to conventional ceramics. **Jacks Are Wild #11** (2011), a blue and white vase, has multiple handles, like ribbon candy, marching up its sides and would make a wacky umbrella stand. In this piece and others, Cooper parodies sedate ceramic tradition by slapping on decorative glaze in his trademark expressionistic style of wild loops and circles.

Clues to Cooper's influences can be found in photographs taken in India.

These were tucked among the paintings and drawings on the gallery walls. Showing burlap and bamboo scaffolding, sacred banyan trees hung with fertility offerings, and village women in brilliantly hued saris, they bring context to Cooper's own generous, freewheeling, color-doused esthetic.

—Ann Wilson Lloyd