

## Sergio Prego at Lehmann Maupin

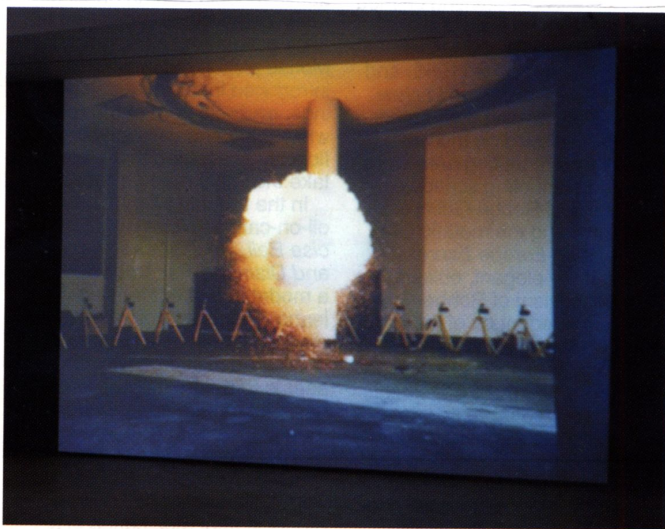
A postindustrial sensibility united the diverse video projections and large-scale three-dimensional pieces in this exhibition (all work 2006). Sergio Prego's sculptural materials and the images he captures with time-based mediums have the feel of discarded, accidental or whimsical fragments, only loosely connected to specific landscapes or art-historical referents and refreshingly unresolved in their intent. Globalization is a theme addressed impressionistically by this Spanish artist, whose points of departure include the streets of Tokyo, his own studio in New York and Bruce Nauman.

The most recent piece, made for this installation, was simply a freestanding aluminum wall. One side of the dully reflective sheet of metal had a long, diagonal scar, which seemed to result from damage by a careless art handler. The "back" of the wall, which formed a corridor leading to the video installations, was propped up by supports as if it were a temporary stage set. This untitled structure was identified as an autonomous

work, though it was hard to imagine as anything but a set for the mechanical neon piece placed before it. Titled *Sunoid*, this "sculpture" (if the term applies) comprises two neon arms that slowly fold together and rotate in vaguely anthropomorphic maneuvers. A self-conscious homage to Nauman, *Sunoid* incorporates many motifs that Nauman has engaged over the last 40 years, including banal, robotic motion and absurd abstractions

of the human body, a careful awareness of space and audience, and, of course, neon, used for its space-transforming luminosity and status as signage. With its damaged aluminum accompaniment, this choreographed neon machinery echoed Minimalist installations of the 1960s, but with an aimlessness and imprecision that seemed to reflect a deliberate misunderstanding.

The two projections in the second room were worlds apart from the three-dimensional works. *10 to 0 Degrees* is a video shot from a car wending its way along freeways and through tunnels in Tokyo, the concrete expanses and billboards suggesting a never-ending postindustrial landscape. The concept and perspectives are hardly novel, and the viewer is left with a sense of having seen this before, many times. By contrast, *Black Monday* demonstrates an inventive approach to imaging in



Sergio Prego: *Black Monday*, 2006, single-channel video, approx. 3½ minutes; at Lehmann Maupin.

which time-based projection takes on sculptural presence. Explosions of gunpowder and fireworks in an abandoned factory in Bilbao were ringed by cameras that captured sequential still images of these ephemeral phenomena in the round. When projected in rapid progression, the plumes of smoke gain a surreal clarity and solidity. Robert Smithson once wrote that works by Sol LeWitt and Robert Morris "neutralize the myth of progress" and disclose a "backward-looking future"—concepts of time and history brought to mind by Prego's experiments as well.

—Kirsten Swenson