

January 23 – April 19, 2009

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Its Origins Justify its Oranges, 2008
 Wood and colored lights, 85 x 64 x 11 inches.
 Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali Gallery, New York.

humor and playfulness achieve a nonchalant awkwardness, a proud nudity, and an overall implausibility that echo American artist Bruce Nauman, and both artists are convinced that the small and simple can contain big and mystical truths. This is art about standing up, not falling down. But in the spirit of Buster Keaton, it's aware of how close one might be to the other.

Gedi Sibony's work is about the experience of living in the world, and as an artist, he steers his viewers towards the hidden but omnipresent harmonies that exist around us. Open just days after a new Presidency is inaugurated, against a national backdrop of renewal, rebirth, and "Yes, we can," *My Arms Are Tied Behind My Other Arms* voices a declaration of faith in those harmonies, a belief in the perseverance of the almost-broken, and a confirmation that now more than ever, we need to find the balance that will hold the world together.

GEDI SIBONY

(Born, lives, and works in New York, New York.)

Over the past few years, Sibony's work has become increasingly visible in prominent group exhibitions in New York such as *Greater New York 2005* at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, the 2006 *Whitney Biennial*, and the New Museum's inaugural exhibition, *Unmonumental*. Other recent one person exhibitions include Frac Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France (2008); Kunsthalle St. Gallen, St. Gallen, Switzerland (2007); Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis (2007); and gallery exhibitions at Galerie Neu, Berlin (2008); Greene Naftali, New York (2008), Zero..., Milan (2008); and Art : Concept, Paris (2007). The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis is the first to recognize Sibony in a significant one-person museum exhibition.

Cover image (left to right):
For the First and Last Day, 2008
Partly Me Manners, 2008

Exhibition view. Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali Gallery, New York



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1 — Main Galleries

Gedi Sibony

My Arms Are Tied Behind
My Other Arms

Born in 1973, Gedi Sibony is one of the most compelling young artists in the country. For his first one-person museum exhibition, he presents a site-specific installation of new and recent works. In the past few years, foreshadowing the current economic climate, several major contemporary art museums have mounted exhibitions highlighting the “lessness” or the “unmonumental” in art-making today, and Sibony has emerged as a leading and particularly relevant artistic voice.

As an urbanite born and raised in New York City, Sibony takes part in the always-changing landscape by gathering up its leftovers. In conceiving an exhibition, he is inspired by that which has been cast away and uses those objects as his set of essentials, propelling

them back into circulation. More than an inventor of new worlds, Sibony is a witness to what already exists, and he chooses materials that have also witnessed the world. With them, he weaves together stories about the nature of art, space, magic, and experience, but also metaphysical and political stories about efficiency, transparency, re-use, and the power and beauty of bare essentials.

Rather than focusing on his objects as artworks, Sibony sees the gallery itself as his sculpture and chips away at its empty spaces to create moments of density and emptiness, light and darkness, action and reaction. Like a musician who uses notes to write a symphony, he arranges objects to compose his space, making slight changes in placement and shape so that the gallery acquires not only a formal eloquence but an air of playfulness and happy accidents that welcomes viewers to enter and explore. The appearance of a new shadow or a small change in perspective allows one impression to slip towards another, forcing interpretations to stay loose and continually re-adjust. Objects

almost levitate, and what initially seems fragile becomes mystical; what looks autonomous quietly echoes a pattern or a texture at the opposite end of the room. Often balanced on thin edges, his artworks stay airborne, never quite familiar, and remain distinct from the safe territory of traditional sculpture. What emerges is the effortless magic of the mundane.

Sibony’s materials are appropriate to the spirit of his project. Only minimally obstructing the viewer, they prefer to recede and not become too prominent or too self-important. They are salvaged industrial remnants, recovered carpeting, cardboard, vertical blinds, plastic sheets, plywood, hollow core doors, and metal pipes—saved by Sibony from extinction before they become waste. Far from being neutral or raw, these materials are already-used, and contain the traces of their own passage through time. Sibony tries to leave his materials as he finds them, respecting them as they are, so what is already in the world stays in the world.

This exhibition arrives at a potent historical moment, when our

way of life approaches the brink of collapse, and when an existing world order is held together by little more than a thread. Although at first glance the mood of Sibony’s sculptures seems somber and destitute, these works contain expressive surfaces and intuitive engineering, strung together in space with elegance, grace, and human touch. His careful balancing acts are small victories against gravity, and by privileging the almost-forgotten and showing us how well it can succeed, Sibony aims to reassure, not to disappear. Made of just a door and folded paper, *Partly Me Manners* (2008) might resemble a head wearing a wig, staring blankly. An assembly of related materials, *Probably Eight or Half of Each* (2007) could be a portrait of the artist, his partner, and their two children. *(XXXX)* (2005) is kissing carpets. The ambiguous proximity his sculpture shares with *actual* leftovers dissolves with the rigorous precision of his formal compositions and the humanity of his gestures.

Even if these sculptures seem wise and jewel-like, laughter is never too far away. Sibony’s



Installation views, Greene Naftali Gallery, New York
top: *Where Go*, 2008 (left); *Where Now*, 2008 (right); bottom: *And even this will disappear*, 2007.
All courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali Gallery, New York.