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Mailbox: Don Porcaro's shape of play

9:11 AM Sharon Butler

I get a slew of exhibition catalogs in the mail, so I've decided to feature some of the more interesting ones in a column called "Mailbox." This week I was delighted to receive "[Shape of Play: Sculpture by Don Porcaro](#)," a catalog that accompanied a recent exhibition at the [Visual Arts Center of New Jersey](#), featuring a fine essay from independent critic and curator [Karen Wilkin](#).

Playful and lyrically complex, Porcaro's human-scale sculpture, like much of [the sculpture](#) featured on the second floor in "[Greater New York](#)" at MoMA PS 1 explores the nature of human interaction with the physical world. A longtime faculty member at Parsons School of Design, Porcaro has been exhibited nationally and internationally, and his work has been reviewed in *The New York Times*, *Sculpture Magazine*, *Art in America*, *Artnews*, *BOMB* and *Newsday*, among others. Porcaro received his MFA in Sculpture from Columbia University.



[Image at top: Don Porcaro's installation on the grounds of the Visual Arts Center of New Jersey.]



Don Porcaro, *Sentinel 2*, 2011, concrete, stone, metal, paint, 36 x 16 x 15 inches.

Here's an excerpt from Wilkin' essay:

Porcaro's earlier polychromed pieces combining stone, metal, concrete and paint were unabashed fusions of the grotesque and the toy-like, confluences, as the artist has said, of "the monster and the child;" confronted by these sculptures, whether "life-size," knee-high, or scaled to the hand, we began to wonder whether we had stumbled into Hieronymus Bosch's world of sinister hybrid creatures or a particularly sophisticated aisle in F.A.O. Schwartz. Porcaro's emphasis on stone in his recent work has expanded his vocabulary of allusions, to some extent because of the character of his chosen materials. The exuberant polychromy of his earlier sculpture not only helped bring his inventions to life, but it unified disparate materials and the variety of textures allowed us to read his complex composites as singular, albeit multi-colored, vivacious objects. Yet we also remained aware of color as an addition. Porcaro began to concentrate on the chromatic and textural possibilities of a palette of stone in 2011 when he was working on a project in Slovenia investigating the range of hues available in Croatian marble. He liked the way the variations of delicately colored stone allowed him to seamlessly integrate chroma, texture, and mass. At the same time he created substantial vertical forms by stacking slices of limestone and marble that permitted him to create volume with an additive, improvisatory approach

similar to that of his earlier mixed-media constructions.

While no less animated than his “Boschian” mixed-media creatures, Porcaro’s recent stone sculptures seem, at least initially, to be slightly more solemn in their associations, while retaining the sense of multiple readings that has traditionally been characteristic of his work.



Don Porcaro, *Sentinel 15*, 2011, concrete, stone, metal, paint, 41 x 13 x 24 inches.



Don Porcaro, *Cabinet of Nomads*, 2013-1025, mixed media installation.