

Reviews: New York  
*Barry Le Va*

By Robert Ayers

Danese's new Chelsea gallery is a gorgeous, light-filled top-floor space. Designed by Mark DuBois of Ohlhausen DuBois Architects, the melding of bold original structure with sleek new elements creates an exciting and elegant backdrop for contemporary art.

The installation of Barry Le Va's deep black multipart sculpture *9g-Wagner: Variation II* (2005), which was exhibited along with a number of working drawings for the piece, provided the perfect inaugural show.



Barry Le Va  
*9g-Wagner: Variation II*  
2005  
polyester resin- and rubber-coated fiberboard  
installation view  
Danese

The sculpture's first formulation was included in Le Va's 2005 retrospective at Philadelphia's Institute of Contemporary Art, but there was nothing shopworn about this work. Indeed, there was something genuinely exciting about its accumulation of sculptural elements, which at once evoked architectural models, minimalist furniture, outsize refrigerator magnets, and some sort of alien language. They spread across the floor and scaled the walls way above head height, suggesting that the viewer might follow their lead.

The elements are constructed from fiberboard coated in polyester resin or rubber, but the over-all impression was of pieces that had been punched out of plates of heavy steel. Associations with Richard Serra are obvious and appropriate, though it demeans neither artist to note that there is a playfulness here that is entirely absent from Serra's work. Despite their substance, Le Va is able to charge these pieces with a charming lightness, so their placement feels like a kind of choreography. And despite their industrial black coatings, they achieve loveliness.

At the same time, the artist manages to revivify the old cliché that would have us see sculpture as drawing in space. The accompanying drawings showed that there is a whole string of other possible variations for *9g-Wagner*, highlighting this arrangement's balance of assurance, elegance, and spontaneity.

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