

Paul Cocksedge Reinterprets Form and Function at Friedman Benda



© Mark Cocksedge Photography

Capture, the object that serves as the centerpiece of the current **Paul Cocksedge** solo show at **Friedman Benda**, might first strike viewers as something immaterial; fixed to the ceiling, it appears to be nothing more than a calm, white, perfectly circular hole, possibly a puncture in its all-black gallery wall letting in light from outside. Upon closer inspection, it is in fact a lamp, encased within a mammoth dome of black spun-aluminum that's barely visible against its like-colored backdrop. Stick your hand up to touch it (it's okay, you're invited to), it then appears to be a luminous hollow volume and nothing more. Where's the bulb? Is this made of magic?

Not quite. It's a series of illusions that the British designer aimed to uphold for just a second before letting **ARTINFO** in on the secret: there are LEDs hidden in the lip of Capture's opening that, diffused against its concave interior, create a spatially disorienting white void. The effect is something we've felt before — that Ganzveldian

confusion of being unable to discern between the two- and three-dimensional, of seeing a flat surface, reaching one's hand out to touch it, finding nothing there, and being completely thrown off course. During the show's opening, a few gallery-goers were overheard making comparisons to **James Turrell**. While it's the highest of compliments, Cocksedge would likely disagree.

This isn't art. Capture is sculptural, beautiful, and borderline magical, but art is made solely to behold, and Cocksedge knows the difference. To dispel the confusion, he installed a second and third edition of Capture in an adjacent white, well-lit gallery where it can more clearly be seen for what it is: a functional household object (albeit one made from a five-foot-diameter hollow hemisphere of metal) that hangs from a cord.

Walking further through the exhibition space, what viewers would assume to be a skylight turns out to be White Lights, a mosaic of colored LEDs on the ceiling. As another seemingly magical feat of science, they've been arranged formulaically so that the sum of their lightwaves emits a full spectrum of white. They seem to breathe, ebbing and flowing in saturation while their steady light never waivers. To further demystify the two pieces, architectural models by Cocksedge's studio even demonstrate these practical lights' use in grander scale, as entire ceilings that shower full-spectrum light on the tiny plastic people below. "Imagine a building with a roof like this," Cocksedge said of a Capture-like dome hoisted on pillars.

In the gallery beyond, where half-ton cantilevered swaths of rusted steel turn the show 180 degrees from its immaterial starting point, reductive viewers uttered **Richard Serra** at the sight of Cocksedge's Poised series of gravity-defying tables. The resemblance is obvious, but this isn't art either. Cocksedge curled the ends of oxidized orange strips of metal so that they would stand upright, and placed them on narrow platforms to illustrate the slightness of their footprints. While Serra makes monumental but delicately balanced forms, Cocksedge's tables are built to a separate scale — a human one, so that the tables could live alongside them. They also have a bit of bounce.

We know this because we've been invited to jump on top of them, a normally unthinkable act within the hallowed ground of a gallery. "Climb onto it," Cocksedge told ARTINFO, in reference to one of the works. "We could put five of you on this."

Or we could use it to do our homework, or chop an onion. Although it would appear otherwise, it's a table, not a sculpture. Design is a beautifully functional thing.



(l) Poised by Paul Cocksedge. © Mark Cocksedge Photography

(r) An Instagram of Richard Serra's spring exhibit at David Zwirner. Photo by Janelle Zara

“Paul Cocksedge: Capture” is on view at Friedman Benda through October 12, 2013.