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## SUSPENDED ANIMATIONS IN BROOKLYN

Arthur Mednick exhibits soft curves that result in gorgeous sculptures

By Melissa Stern

Whenever I visit Williamsburg I feel transported to a different time and place—a rough-and-tumble college town somewhere in America about 10 years ago. Sometimes annoying, often refreshing, it's always a relief from Manhattan. The same is true for the gallery scene. The artwork runs the gamut from the silly and insignificant to the occasional diamond in the rough. On Friday afternoon I discovered a real jewel.



Ch'I Gallery, an elegant space on Grand Street is hosting two solo exhibitions. A drawing show by Kevin Bourgeois in the front of the gallery is interesting but not a mind blower. Yet, peeping around the partition wall, I saw the welded steel sculptures of Arthur Mednick. A quiet surprise, these works are simultaneously contemplative and exciting. Mednick's biomorphic sculptures are both referential and abstract, a tough act to pull off. The soft curves of "Unnamed #1," for example, could either be the intersection of legs to body on a young woman, or simply an exploration of form and curve.

Not understanding how this unusually fluid metal work was actually fabricated—the gallery could offer a little more background on both the artist and his technique—I did a little research and, indeed, acquired knowledge of Mednick's process that adds the extra punch. He laminates multiple sheets of steel to form large, solid blocks that are then carved in a seemingly effortless gesture into soft animated forms. If that weren't enough, he then puts the sculptures into a kiln and fires them so that the sheets of steel de-laminate slightly along the edges. The deep, shimmery black surfaces are fixed with a clear gloss that enriches the color and gives the pieces an elegant finish. At the end of the process, it's hard to believe that the work is metal. An extremely challenging and arguably nutty process, it results in absolutely gorgeous sculptures.

Not everyone hits the mark. "Groove," a commentary on Mondrian, seems earthbound compared with the exuberance of "Splort #2" and "Splort #3." "Bound Up" feels very different and seems like it may be from a different body of work. But for the most part, Mednick's work resonates with a deep, flowing and unabashed beauty. Old-fashioned in concept, there's not a trace of irony or cynicism in this work, and that, like the best of Williamsburg, is refreshing indeed.

Through March 10. Ch'I Gallery 293 Grand St. (betw. Roebling & Havemeyer Sts.), B'klyn, 718-218-8939; [www.chicontemporaryfineart.com](http://www.chicontemporaryfineart.com)