

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

“Robert Therrien”

The sculptor invites viewers to reconsider physical space with objects much larger and smaller than normal

Caitlin Greenwood



No title (folding tables and chairs)

For audiences retreating from Austin’s scorching outside temperatures, don’t let the perceived silence of “Robert Therrien” fool you. Just beneath the surface, there’s a frenzy of conceptual activity to explore. The Chicago-born artist has a legacy peppered with work that manipulates commercial objects and assigns them new perspectives, often done through magnification. While much of his historical work includes these notable large-scale sculptures, Therrien’s more recent studies explore almost theatrical renditions of physical spaces, namely rooms, which bear personal significance. The Contemporary Austin’s exhibition combines work from both eras of Therrien’s career to offer a holistic look at the artist and hone the detail, execution, and conceptually laden work that have come to embody Therrien at large.

Audiences who have flocked to the Contemporary for its hands-on programming will find another exhibition that truly draws visitors in. Much like Do Ho Suh’s *Apartment* series shown at the Jones Center last fall, Therrien’s work demands participation. In the upstairs gallery, his *No title (folding tables and chairs)* piece, comprised of four larger-than-life executions of a simple card table and accompanying seating, draws viewers to move through the giant sculpture’s metal legs while studying Therrien’s subtle, minute details. Downstairs, the artist’s meticulously constructed rooms incorporate surrealist, strange, and occasionally wild influences into confined spaces. These still portraits of a crazed existence raise questions about materialism, attachment, and the ever-persistent notion of how one defines “home.”

Therrien’s work expertly weaves together both humorous and imaginative dialogues while offering a contemporary slant on sculpture. While bombastic, it sets a quiet tone and somewhat

effortlessly embraces the Contemporary's discreet gallery space. Therrien's contemplative exhibition invites visitors to immerse themselves fully into a dynamic sensory experience, while asking pertinent questions about personhood and the physical spaces that define us.