

# sculpture

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## NEW YORK

### Don Porcaro

#### Kouros Gallery

A longtime New Yorker, Don Porcaro has been active as a sculptor for more than three decades. His style is light-hearted and whimsical, but not only that—beyond the grace, there is something else, something not easily defined. One hesitates to say that Porcaro's work possesses a darkness that underlines and even defines the reach of his stone and metal pieces, which are brightly painted and seem entirely innocent. Yet, for all their awkward, avuncular charm, his sculptures emanate an aura that is not entirely guilt-free; it is as if they were about to reveal a dark charm through the idiosyncrasy of their forms. When the works are taken on an adult level, the distortion of their shapes, with loops and impossible curves, suggests a hardly benign presence. After study, on both a conscious and subconscious level, the forms seem disturbingly human, as if an alien species had made its way into the studio.

As a mature sculptor, Porcaro maintains total control over the shaping of his art. The pieces are constructed from metal or concrete and stone, or aqua resin and stone, and then painted. Humor is part of the viewing experience: his ungainly presences look like they have stepped out of an animated film. Each piece is a one-off, yet collectively they have a family resemblance. The conversation engendered by this careful installation adds something new to Porcaro's work, fashioning a dialogue across the similarities and differences that viewers pick up among the sculptures. Seen in collective fashion, they perform their existence much as individual musicians contribute to a larger ensemble. These relations between an individual and communal reality thus offer a more complex vision than appears at first. In fact, the rawness of the pieces is mannerist

in its effect. Porcaro sets up comparisons that remind us of a bluntly allegorical satire.

Each piece is a small world of its own. *Childhood's End #8* (2008) can clearly be seen as a personage of some sort. Its base is made of a smooth round of slate-blue, painted stone; stacked on top, cylindrical elements rise into ever-narrower, spiraling tubes, from which a simple coil hangs. The individual components are painted yellow, orange, and purple as the sculpture ascends. Porcaro rejects the notion that his work is surreal, preferring to recognize the inspired nonsense of Dada as an influence. And we remember that the title of the series refers to the loss of innocence rather

than its survival. In *Childhood's End #3* (2008), the figure is much closer to the ground. Its six tubular feet, painted a sickly green, support a purple concrete shape; on top of the concrete, a red ball hangs from a yellow metal tube. Porcaro's craftsmanship, in the shaping of the stone and the fabrication of the metal, is impeccable. The "Avatar" series consists of small, waggish works such as *Avatar #55* (2008), which looks like an unnamed crawler taken from the deep sea. Here, true to form, humor and strangeness join up and bring forth both monstrosity and child-like delight.

—Jonathan Goodman

