

## JASON MIDDLEBROOK

Time Out New York

November 8 -15, 2001



### Jason Middlebrook, "Visible Entropy"

Sara Meltzer Gallery, through Sat 10  
(see Chelsea).

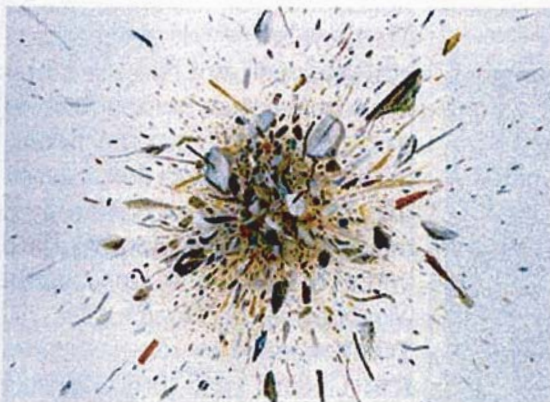
If there's such a thing as "boy art" today to complement the "girl art" of Anna Gaskell and others, then a special space is reserved in the hearts of its practitioners for Robert Smithson (see below)—the 1960s guru of entropy, who created sculptures that combined conceptual high-mindedness with mini-

malist simplicity to demonstrate how Earth and its industry seemed to be winding down. Jason Middlebrook, for one, has obviously caught the Smithson bug big-time: In the show "Visible Entropy," he delivers a difficult humor, imagining the fate of contemporary architectural icons in some distant time and speaking of the future with a hushed yet acidic tongue.

Atop clunky pedestals Middlebrook places the miniature models he's constructed of Frank Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Getty Museum in L.A. and the Tate Modern in London. All of them seem to have been worn down by eons of entropy. The gleaming contours of Gehry's flashy mecca are here a grim, gray industrial ruin, marred by graffiti; the building's sleek curves have come undone (a felled

Serra in the museum's outdoor sculpture park underlines how the mighty have fallen). The pessimistic outlook is accentuated by Middlebrook's low-tech fabrication; he uses pieces of wood that are screwed together roughly. SFMoMA appears in similar style as a stack of corrugated cardboard, and the Getty is a neolithic mud-brick maze in which any Minotaur would feel at home. Middlebrook goes over the top when he depicts the Tate Modern as merely a monolith consumed by geologic strata.

In one drawing, titled *Humpty Dumpty*, Middlebrook seems to have taken a page from fellow artist E.V. Day's recent interest in explosive realism (and maybe also from the movie *Zabriskie Point*), depicting the contents of an art museum—bits of paintings, blasted architectural fragments—blown out into smithereens across the paper. Made all the more powerful by the timing of its display, the drawing clearly spells out the effects of entropy and, as Smithson once did, makes the future seem not so very far away.—Robert Mahoney



Jason Middlebrook, *Humpty Dumpty*, 2001.