

Artists to Watch

Artists Take Center Stage at the Opera
 Bronzino: Sketches of a Perfectionist
 Mafia Canary Sings about Caravaggio



Sopheap Pich

Tyler Rollins Fine Art

Cambodian artist Sopheap Pich made his solo debut in New York with a group of refreshingly low-tech, hand-made sculptures. Pich, who was born in 1971 and fled his native country with his parents in 1979 just as the Khmer Rouge fell, went to art school in the United States but returned to Cambodia in 2002.

His style, which recalls certain works by Martin Puryear,

can be seen as part art and part homage to craft.

Rattan, bamboo, and wire, with the occasional addition of burlap and industrial discards, all plentiful and cheap in Cambodia, are the artist's materials of choice. The bamboo and rattan strips are held in place by thin lashings of metal wire, with the open weave suggesting basketry. These seven delicate, buoyant floor and wall pieces, more space than solid, were mostly based on body parts—heart, lungs, stomach, kidneys, intestines. In these works, Pich equates the human body with the body politic and commemorates the Khmer Rouge's desecration of both.

Caged Heart (2009), a heart-shaped form trimmed with distressed red burlap and set in a basket, was a poignant reminder of war. *Junk Nutrients* (2009), consisting of burlap-covered intestine-like shapes disgorging small plastic objects, rubber tubing, and electrical wires, evokes the clash between tradition and modernity. The showpiece of the installation was *Raft* (2009), measuring approximately 7½ by 15 by 4 feet. In it stacked cages that resemble a miniature high-rise building rest atop two open-weave pontoons—are they also projectiles?—that seem to hover magically, appearing both innocuous and ominous. Memorials to a complex, ruptured past, Pich's constructions cast their spell unassumingly but with irresistible grace. —Lilly Wei



Sopheap Pich, *Caged Heart*, 2009, wood, bamboo, rattan, burlap, wire, dye, metal farm tools, 51" x 46" x 47". Tyler Rollins Fine Art.