

ART IN REVIEW

Gregory Perkel

*O.K. Harris Gallery
383 West Broadway, near Broome
Street
SoHo
Through tomorrow*

This show, Gregory Perkel's fourth at O.K. Harris, closes tomorrow. But its enormous centerpiece, "The Pyramid", will stay in place for the summer. An awesome tribute to the artist's obsessed sense of precision, it covers an entire wall with tiny oblong tiles of corrugated cardboard cut from dozens of boxes printed with black graphics and logos.

The tiles that have bits of printing on them have been arranged in a flickering, Anselm Kieferesque pyramid at the center of the appropriately sand-colored field. A rectangle of especially black tiles indicates a door to the pyramid's inner sanctum. This work is extraordinary, but its craft is overly evident. It inhabits an ambiguous area between art and design, not unlike the collages of Ivan Chermayeff, the work of Alexander Liberman or, on a higher level, Saul Steinberg's sculptures.

Mr. Perkel, who was born in Ukraine in 1939, studied art in Moscow and moved to the United States in 1977, may be aware of this quality. The show's remaining works are tiny and grouped under titles like "Advertisings", "Web Sites" and "Coupons". Amazingly, Mr. Perkel does nothing but cut and paste; all the colors, marks and images are pre-existing. He also gives each work a title and a wry explanation. The combination suggests an artist who is almost as deft, and as driven, when manipulating words as he is when working with his hands.

ROBERTA SMITH

GALLERY STATEMENT

Never before in art history has an artist transformed supermarket cartons into a creative medium the way Gregory Perkel has - disassembling the design elements of cardboard boxes, creating new patterns, new relationships, new meanings - transforming them into unique works of art. Experiencing his creations can be like traveling through time.

Move very close to them and all you can see are the bits and pieces of today's marketplace economy in which our lives are embedded. Step back for a broader perspective: it is as if you are viewing our society from a future vantage point, a thousand years from now, studying the serene, exquisite relics of our vanished civilization.