

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Gioni, Masimiliano, "New York Cut Up: Art Fragments from the Big Apple: Look Back in Anger", Flash Art, May-June 2002

New York Cut Up

ART FRAGMENTS FROM THE BIG APPLE

Massimiliano Gioni

LOOK BACK IN ANGER

Mexican artist **Damian Ortega** — showing in April at **D'Amelio Terras** — works with ordinary materials such as cement, plexi-glass, earth and bricks, which get reassembled into intricate perspectives and architectural models. Because he tries to find an ephemeral and delicate equilibrium for his sculptures, Ortega might seem to be looking closely at Gabriel Orozco's humble poetry. But Ortega's imagination appears more scientific and systematic: Orozco is a flaneur, while Ortega is an engineer of the absurd who builds models for a life suspended between a future imperfect and a primitive past.

The tradition of modernist architecture — completely distorted and transformed — returns in **Simon Starling's** objects and installations. For his show at **Casey Kaplan**, Starling has created two

small replicas of a housing project developed in the '60s by Austrian architect Simon Schmiderer for a residential area in Puerto Rico. Inspired by the rigorous dogma of rational architecture, Schmiderer's houses were meant to carry out a dialogue with their surroundings, opening directly onto the landscape through large windows, terraces and patios. During the '70s and the '80s though, Schmiderer's dreams confronted a dramatic increase in local criminality: fences and gates were erected in front of the houses — their inhabitants transformed into voluntary prisoners of architecture. Simon Starling has taken this image literally and has transformed his models into caged birdhouses: in the center of the gallery, two small models of Schmiderer's villas are flipped upside down and mysteriously pressed against the ceiling by two tree trunks, which have grown right out of the pavement. Two colorful parrots live trapped in these fortified nests, physically and metaphorically suspended between utopia and its failure.

Massimiliano Gioni is US Editor of Flash Art.