

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Vogel, Carol, "Obelisk Mobility In Central Park", New York Times, 18 May 2007

Obelisk Mobility In Central Park

A 21st-century obelisk rising 20 feet has emerged in the middle of Doris C. Freedman Plaza at 60th Street and Fifth Avenue, near the southeast entrance to Central Park. The work of the Mexican-born artist Damián Ortega, "Obelisco Transportable" is fashioned from cast fiberglass and plywood, has a pyramid-shaped top and rests on a grassy platform on wheels. (Although the piece appears mobile, the obelisk is actually screwed into the ground with steel rods.)

Mr. Ortega, 39, began his career as a political cartoonist, but he now creates Conceptual artworks using everyday materials to make artistic comments on culture and world affairs. Four years ago, for the 50th Venice Biennale, he dissected a 1983 Volkswagen Beetle. "Cosmic Thing," one of a trilogy of works based on the Beetle, was an artistic reminder of 20-year-old design, with its car parts hanging from the ceiling on dozens of thin metal cords like delicate sculptures.

Now Mr. Ortega is playing with the notion of the obelisk, a visual landmark since ancient times in cities all over the world. The piece, on view through Oct. 28, is what he calls "a mobile landmark," a visual reference to today's rootless society.

"Obelisco Transportable," made in an edition of three plus two artist's proofs, was on view last year at the 2006 Taipei Biennial and in 2005 at Arco in Madrid. "It has never been seen in this country," said Rochelle Steiner, director of the Public Art Fund, a nonprofit organization that presents contemporary art in public places.

Ms. Steiner, who organized the project, said she particularly liked "Obelisco Transportable" because "it plays with the relationship between the traditional monument and portability, a comment on global politics where nothing is permanent."