

# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Rebekah Kirkman, "Finding substance in the minimalist Gedi Sibony sculpture 'All Her Teeth Are Made of Slate'," *City Paper*, March 27, 2015

## **CITY PAPER**

### Finding substance in the minimalist Gedi Sibony sculpture 'All Her Teeth Are Made of Slate'



A photo of Gedi Sibony's sculpture 'All Her Teeth Are Made of Slate' from the Baltimore Museum of Art's Contemporary Wing has been the background picture on my phone for about a year. Every time I visit the museum, I make sure to look

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at this piece, scrutinizing its complex minimalism, the way it takes as much consideration for its negative space as it does its positive space.

In a 2009 [interview with the Sculpture Center](#), Sibony talked about how he doesn't want his work to be "scrutinized" or "to take up space in your visual field. I want them to expand... I want them to inhabit and create... I don't want it to sit, I don't want it to have weight." But his intent doesn't actually matter; he is (probably) never going to be there when I go on my weekly-ish visits to this museum. And why make anything at all if you don't want it to be scrutinized?

Sibony can wish all he wants, but 'All Her Teeth' is a singular piece of his that the BMA has acquired, and it is on display in this space along with minimalist sculptures by Anne Truitt and Robert Gober, a drawing by Richard Artschwager, and a few others. This room, with the more rough-hewn, handworked pieces by Sibony and his neighbors, is an interesting foil to another room in this wing that houses an architectural, industrial, and precise wooden Donald Judd sculpture, a shiny yellow John McCracken piece, and one of Ellsworth Kelly's shape paintings. All of these artists work in various pockets of minimalism, and the way these groups are organized shows us how broad the genre can be.

Minimalism is primarily about paring down. In a few frustratingly obtuse interviews and stories on Sibony, he describes his studio practice as simply moving objects around, [adjusting the lights and the partitions](#). In the Sculpture Center interview, however, he talks about sustainability: "I have eight years, or 10 years now, of materials and I'm not willing to throw anything away because I can't fathom the thought of more junk being buried in the earth." He goes on to talk about "a pathetic attempt to build a shelf" to store all this junk, and how

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things get knocked over in the process, and how that, somehow, results in his sculptures. It does look like parts of 'All Her Teeth' could have been woodshop scraps that found their way together, like he swept up a corner of his studio and used these pieces to make it.

The scraps of wood are cut so thin and so carefully arranged that the whole sculpture looks like it would collapse if a kid ran past it to go through the nearby Felix Gonzalez-Torres bead curtain. The two wooden panels seem to be hinged on the right sides, opening slightly, like a greeting card. One panel is mostly cut out in the middle, acting like a window into the other panel behind it, which is cut into an awkward grid—broken, tilting, and snapped in places. About a dozen various small wood scraps, cut at different angles, hang down from the inside of the top part of this front window "frame." The most uniform, precise elements of this sculpture are the door-like (or tongue-like, as the wall text describes it) shapes that appear in almost every square of the gridded panel. Swipes of white paint look like they were applied incidentally and add to the nervous feeling this sculpture exudes.

Those shapes, the haphazard paint, and the attenuated structure help give it this weirdly human element, despite it being an abstract sculpture. The rigid, almost too-perfect door-like shapes, contrasted with the broken and wobbly and uneven edges, also balance it and make it a little more approachable or relatable. It doesn't really matter what the artist says about his studio practice, that it was almost a matter of chance that this piece exists—that tenuousness and uncertainty come together naturally, and still somehow make this piece more substantive.