

## REVIEWS

## Athanasios Argianas

ON STELLAR RAYS

In his sophomore exhibition at this gallery, “Swimmer’s Arms Are Oars,” the Athens-born Athanasios Argianas continued to explore “the space between the senses” in an elegant group of sculptures, photographs, and works on paper that jibe with his dual roles of visual artist and electroacoustic-pop composer. Argianas’s practice combines a fascination with the resonance of fragmented language—the shards of text that he incorporates (often almost invisibly) into his objects evoke snatches of overheard conversation—with a sensitivity to physical proportion and the interaction of built objects with the environments in which they find themselves. And while the works exude an aura of quiet reflection, references to music abound in their forms and titles.

In the center of the room were three entries from Argianas’s “Song Machine” series (all works 2015). Made from slender rods of patinated and lacquered steel, these fragile-looking sculptures mimic the designs of modernist furniture, their human scale inviting us to relate to them in a straightforwardly physical way. Each open framework is adorned with a ribbon of brass that appears to hang loosely from it, like a necklace. On each of these is inscribed one of the aforementioned texts: *Song Machine (A Chair for Your Memory) No. 3* features the lines IN THE AUTUMN THE and YOUR WRIST IN THE, while No. 5 and No. 4 declare YOUR PALMS ARE OVAL and reproduce the exhibition’s title. These cut-up jottings are rendered in an affectless sans-serif font that lends them an almost informational feel.

Accompanying these three sculptures was a fourth, *(Mute) Pause Series No. 1*, which follows the visual blueprint of the “Song Machine” works but is made of polished brass, and which instead of an inscribed metal ribbon is studded with two pink gold-plated bronze casts of wads of chewing gum—mute stand-ins, perhaps, for the spoken word. Like that of the texts—the minute scale of which ensures they often elude the viewer’s gaze—the function of these outwardly modest elements feels consciously ambiguous. While not going so far as to undermine the formal authority of the larger structures to which they are appended, they carry out a significant destabilization thereof, enacting a quasi-narrative twist that points to a complex interplay of action and thought.

In the exhibition’s two other works, this allusive quality is brought explicitly into the realm of music as Argianas shifts the conversation between form and language toward a parallel exchange between object or image and the potentialities of organized sound. *Reading Machine No. 4 (the colour of your wrist, in the autumn)* veers close to the sculptures in also featuring texts etched into brass, though here the metal takes the form of finger cymbals slotted button-like into slits in two framed sheets of thick gray recycled paper. In *Branching Music (Score Sheet 1–29)*, a grid of thirty black-and-white photographs of tree branches doubles as a graphic score: In fact, the images were “played” on a theremin during a 2013 performance at the gallery.

Finally, then, “Swimmers Arms Are Oars” was almost too subtle. The appeal of Argianas’s avowedly introspective sensibility, steeped in wonder at the little mysteries of life, depends to a large extent on the viewer’s indulgence; this is art that doesn’t set out to convince, or even to argue, but assumes that we are already on its side. For the predisposed, this exhibition will have been a typically refined, charming experience.

—Michael Wilson

View of “Athanasios Argianas,” 2015.  
From left: *Song Machine (A Chair for Your Memory) No. 3*, 2015; *(Mute) Pause Series No. 1*, 2015; *Song Machine (A Chair for Your Memory) No. 4*, 2015.

