



Mark di Suvero,
'Sandwich 1'
(2007).

PAULA COOPER GALLERY

A Close Focus On the Aimless

By **STEPHEN MAINE**

Balance, both physical and visual, has been key for veteran New York sculptor Mark di Suvero since his career launched in the late 1950s. In those days, Mr. di Suvero's rambunctious constructions of industrial debris included tethered and cantilevered components suggesting playful, tumbling movement. Rubber tires or wood beams dangle in space and prompt the viewer to give them a nudge, just to see what happens. Five decades later, this artist is not done with the idea of aimless interactivity. A sweet little show now on view at Paula Cooper's 23rd Street gallery features new, small-scale sculptures in various combinations of steel, stainless steel, and titanium that invite touching for its own sake. Each one is a delight.

In "Morvan" and "Brokof," a twisting, undulating configuration in cut, bent, welded, and burnished metal is delicately but securely balanced upon a central post that emanates from a slab-like footing. The pieces seem top-heavy, like an overloaded fruit tree, until you play with them and watch their canopies slowly spin. Mr. di Suvero has produced objects of this general type at least since the mid-1980s. This new crop suggests organic forms without specific figurative references — imagine a dancing chicken and you'll have an idea of their winningly gawky, willful ungainliness.

Because Mr. di Suvero is known for monumental outdoor works, it is irresistible to imagine these comparatively intimate pieces as scale models for projects many stories tall. Resting on an expansive, table-like pedestal, "Sand-

MARK DI SUVERO

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wich 1" is especially conducive to this fanciful reading. At 3 feet high, it is the largest work in the show; a couple of chunks of rusty I-beam, sliced on the bias and connected by a thicket of steel bands, it seems from some angles about to topple. It is in the antic spirit of his early work, from before the artist adopt-

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ed a lilting, soaring, guardedly anthropomorphic vocabulary typified by the 70-foot-high "Joie de Vivre" that now graces lower Manhattan's Zuccotti Park.

Of the three rapid-fire, gestural brush-and-ink drawings on view, "Untitled" (2004) looks the least "sculptural," and is paradoxically most in sympathy with the unfettered calligraphic exuberance of three-dimensional works. Typifying the show's generous spirit is "Mandragora." Cobbled together of ribbons and zigzags of steel, reminiscent in its proportions of some ancient Chinese bronzes, it stands in the gallery's window — a lantern, a vessel, a bell.

Until November 17 (465 W. 23rd St., between Ninth and Tenth avenues, 212-255-1105).