

Art in America

EXHIBITION REVIEWS

KEN PRICE

MATTHEW MARKS

The 12 new abstract sculptures that Ken Price recently installed at Matthew Marks's 22nd Street space felt like an extended family, with three large-scale pieces in painted bronze composite displayed on low-lying platforms at the front of the gallery and smaller pieces on pedestals beyond. The works (all but one 2009) ranged in form from unitary and simple to convoluted and complex, and in spirit from playful and humorous (as reflected in titles like *Lying Around*, *Fung* and *Weezie*) to serious and unsettling.

Price fires most of his ceramics before adding painted colors in multiple layers (sometimes as many as 30), which, when sanded, form an iridescent skin that becomes each work's distinctive exterior personality. Since the 1990s, Price has favored the biomorphic; his output, including a steady stream of

With his colorful hand-built cups, mounds and eggs of the late 1950s and early '60s, Price was one of the pioneers who transformed the utilitarian past of ceramics into a sculptural future. His approach to polychromy continues to evolve with impressive finesse. In the recent show, the piece titled *Maureen*, in which sausage-shaped components balance amoebic blobs, was characteristic of the sheer visual beauty and rambunctious playfulness of the recent work. Like kindred

View of Ken Price's exhibition, showing (foreground) *Maureen*, 2009, fired and painted clay, 20 by 18 by 17 inches; at Matthew Marks.



pieces *Eskimo LA* and *Hello Isaac*, *Maureen* stands out as a feat of sculptural choreography: eccentric forms improvised in space, pliant and graceful, with a touch of understated drama.

If works like *Zoot* and *The Loop* project buoyant confidence, *Eeezo* (fired and painted clay, 1995-2009), which was sequestered in its own room, feels prickly and aggressive, a wayward sibling.