

# The New York Times

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**Russell Sharon** (Hal Bromm Gallery, 90 West Broadway, at Chambers Street): In this exhibition of Russell Sharon's recent painting and sculpture, the artist has not so much worked with wood as revealed in it. He painted on it, applied strips of wood to the surface of paintings and used them to represent such antiwood elements as fire and water. He also assembled "pets" with it and used a chainsaw to awaken nude figures from the trunks of doomed trees.

The "pets" could be from the same family of birds as the San Diego chicken. They are tall, beaky creatures, assembled from thin chunks of wood that seem like crate scraps or kindling. The birds turn one room into their own cage, pecking, squawking, cooing and striding in a array of gestures that also grow out of the history of modern sculpture, from Brancusi to Giacometti. No less modernist is the assemblage technique and the strange combination of exuberance and fragility that makes these beasts so engaging.

Equally rooted in the history of sculpture are the chainsaw people Sharon salvaged from trees afflicted with Dutch elm disease on his Minnesota farm. The figures are not only standing around in positions that suggest sculptures from Michelangelo to Rodin, but they are also about to do cartwheels or stand on their heads. Each figure and its base is one piece, cut out of one tree, so that the acrobatic gestures can make these sculptures, too, seem both spontaneous and precarious — as if any pressure against them would lead to a fall.

By MICHAEL BRENSON

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