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## Changing perceptions: Peter Millett's sculptures need to be circled to be seen

By Michael Upchurch  
Seattle Times arts writer

There's a sort of utilitarian whimsy to the sculpture of Seattle artist Peter Millett in "Skyscrapers," his new show at Greg Kucera Gallery.

That's especially true of the bigger pieces, which are industrial in heft, yet fanciful in form. The way their surfaces play with light is a constant, shape-shifting surprise. In Millett's own words, he is "putting things together that were never meant to be together. Mixing matrix. Making squares from triangular elements, enjoying the irregular rhythms."

Take "Silver Girl," on the gallery's outside deck. It's a torqued stack of galvanized-steel pyramids and triangles. Its facets are abraded yet light-reflective, endowed with both a gleam and decay. From certain vantage points, it looks firmly rooted in its spot. But when the light catches its lowest pyramid at just the right angle, the metal looks more like empty space than solid plane and the sculpture appears almost to float on the tips of two downward-pointing triangles.

"Big Cake," also out on the deck, is similarly changeable. Its six tiers of galvanized steel brighten and dim in a kaleidoscopic manner as you circle the piece. Go on a changeable day of cloud and sun, and you don't even have to move for the transformations.

Millett lends "Big Cake" and "Silver Girl" figurative qualities to otherwise abstract pieces with the titles he gives them. That's also true of "Spring" — a painted-cedar wall fixture of bright, intersecting yellows — and



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"Hot Seat," a pointy affair that, from a furniture point of view, looks uncomfortable at best and in violation of the Geneva Conventions at worst. Plus, it's ventilated, so you could actually light a fire inside it, if you wanted to torture anyone foolish enough to sit there.

In three other pieces — "Leverage," "Open Square" and "Double," all of welded steel — the titles put an emphasis on shape for shape's sake. All three are monumental in scale. And all three change startlingly as you round them.

From one angle, "Leverage" looks as though it's a two-dimensional plane of rust-colored metal. Step to the left and it becomes the prow of a narrow boat rising from the "waves" of the gallery's hardwood floor. Position yourself directly behind it, and it becomes a thin, rusty blade angled toward the sky.

"Double" likewise seems to offer various versions of itself as you walk around it, while the "openness" of "Open Square" is sometimes clearly evident and sometimes not, depending on your point of view.

These free-standing pieces are generally more involving than Millett's wall fixtures, if only because there's more you can do with them, perception-wise. But the wall-affixed, galvanized-steel "Twisted Triangle," "Twisted Square" and "Twisted Pentagon" are eye-catching — appearing to be in motion while perfectly still. And "Feast Bowl," in painted wood, is downright sumptuous, thanks to the way Millett brings out the wood's grain in the angular, excavated core of the piece.

"Skyscrapers," overall, is meditative in mood: a quietly rewarding exploration of shape, reflectivity and intersection in a deliberately limited range of materials.

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#### EXHIBITION REVIEW 'Skyscrapers'

Sculptures by Peter Millett, 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.  
Tuesdays-Saturdays through Aug. 14, Greg Kucera  
Gallery, 212 Third Ave. S., Seattle (206-624-0770 or  
[www.gregkucera.com](http://www.gregkucera.com)).