

View of Ted Victoria's exhibition "Live!," 2006-07, with the full-scale Live Bait in foreground; at Schroeder Romero.



Ted Victoria at Schroeder Romero

Mounted on the gallery walls at more or less eye level, Ted Victoria's works somewhat resembled lightboxes, but no photographic transparencies are involved. The images were moving, but these are not video projections, either. The work of a modern-day tenebrist, these 26-by-20-inch boxes, 5 inches deep, are fitted with a simple lens and light system to project an image of what's inside the box. The internal workings are made accessible by means of hinged panels. A series recalling the paintings of Georges de la Tour is based on the central illusion of flickering flames. They appear to burn, arising from what look like bundles of sage or straw contained in common receptacles, miniature oil barrels or galvanized buckets. But the fire does not consume the objects. Visitors were drawn by such mechanical illusions as those that produce the painterly box of Crab Boil (2004), where small scraps of printed words are projected in fragments, reading "increased pay" and "better

housing." Here, Victoria created the semblance of clapboard siding around the window of a house. Below, a fragment of crab's claw slowly moves, like a barely perceptible tapping finger. With the box opened, the mechanism, driven by a simple motor, looks more like the mise-en-scene of Alberto Giacometti's The Palace at 4 a.m. (1932). Two related works (both 2005) are testament to Victoria's ability to select small objects that remain familiar even in the context of his esoteric work. In Moon Litter, an aluminum flip-top discarded from a beverage can hovers above the kind of powdery surface suggested by its title. Fool's Gold features a glittering chunk of iron pyrite mysteriously floating above what seems to be its own shadow, like a cinematic special effect.

Also shown were the study and full-scale realization of Live Bait (both 2006). The study is a 21-by-17-by-5-inch veneer-faced box containing a small black wire cage activated by projections of a resident population of minuscule brine shrimp, marketed (especially to children) under the brand

name Sea Monkeys. At 33 by 46 by 40 inches, the full-in the center of the gallery, it consists of a finely carpentered base studded with small, illuminated aquariums, supporting a large black-wire cage fitted with walls of translucent Plexiglas that serve as projection screens alive with the shadows of the shrimp. Victoria, trained as a painter and printmaker, by the '70s had worked his way through various photographic techniques to concentrate on projection. Based in New York, he is a professor of fine arts at Kean University in New Jersey and has exhibited at Galerie Bonnier in Geneva, Fortuny Museum in Venice, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Musée D'Orsay in Paris and the International Museum of Photography in Rochester. In his first exhibition at Schroeder Romero, Victoria revealed the wonder at the heart of his singular pursuits.

—Edward Leffingwell