

Something old, something new

Exhibitions

By SUSAN TSANG

CATALAN sculptor Enric Pladevall has been described as a "hot minimalist", though he would describe his art as just "Pladevall"

Hot minimalism, however, isn't a bad place to start when looking at the sculptor's works. "It's simple," says Pladevall of his art, "but not cold." Indeed, pieces are characterised by clean lines, but the starkness of these lines are shot through by sensuous ripples and a smoothness that tempts the viewer to touch them.

One can't help but think how fitting it is that the nett proceeds of Pladevall's exhibition are going to the Singapore Dance Theatre Endowment Fund. After all, the sculptor's clean lines and sensuousness seem quite near-allied to many of the pieces put up by the Dance Theatre.

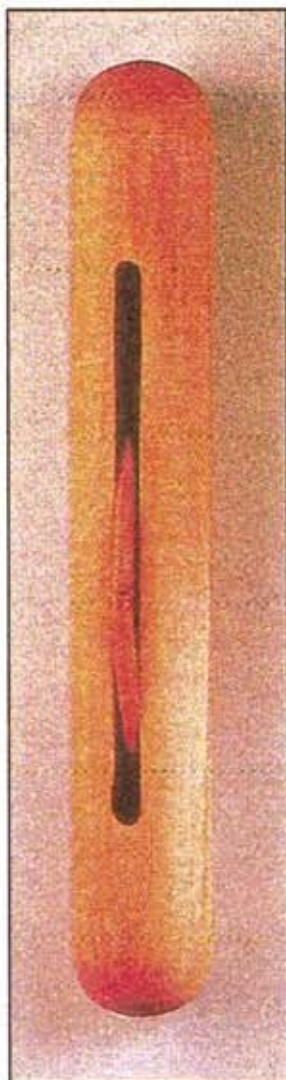
Much of the warmth of Pladevall's art comes from the artist's affinity for organic materials. Pladevall loves working with wood, and uses any type that comes to hand, be it from Africa or anywhere else. However, the familiar organic materials are given a modern feel — either by staining them a bright colour, or often by combining the wood with non-organic materials like aluminum, copper or lead.

A piece like *Dimoni* (\$5,292), for example, has a sleek shape with clean curved outlines. The modern feel of the work is accentuated by the stark 90 degree edges cut in at each end of the piece, and by staining the wood bright red. Copper studs have been driven into the piece at uniform distances. The sleek, modern symmetry is broken by the three curvaceous lines towards the top, which rise up randomly from the smooth surface, as if the wood was rumped. This, and the welcoming smoothness of the wood, form a beguiling mix of contemporary cool and traditional richness.

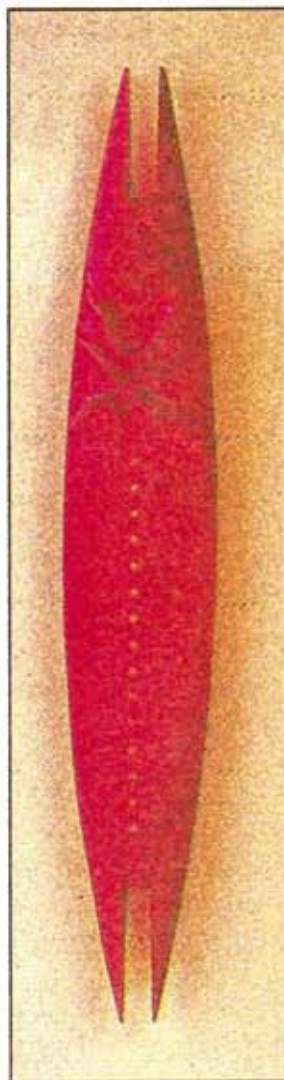
The same effects can be seen in the *Untitled* wood and copper creation (\$5,292) where the wood is stained bright blue, with the concise circular outlines encircling more irregular lines that again rise up from the work's smooth, tactile surface.

Many of the pieces on display are untitled. The artist explains: "I don't believe in titles; I never think in titles before the work, it comes after." If at all. As Pladevall likes to work in the abstract, and to be free to surprise himself, he lets the materials lead him along. "Every material changes the kind of work you make. The material always speaks about something."

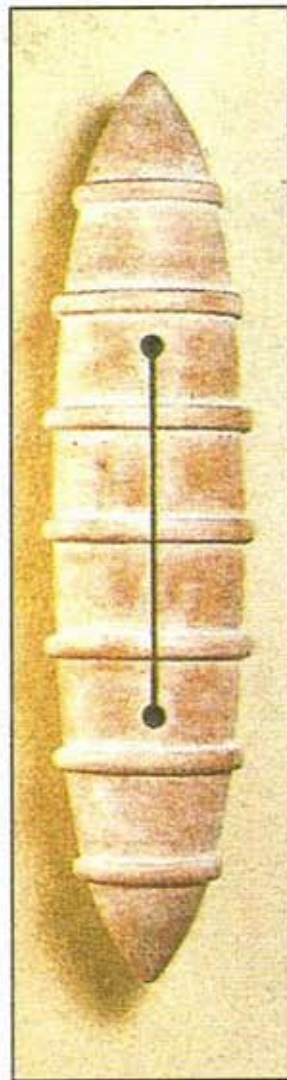
In fact, Pladevall has mastered quite a variety of ways to speak, as he works with metals as easily as with organic materials. He casts in bronze, brings a blowtorch to copper to achieve meticulous rough edges, and even works with leather on occasion.



Romanique, 1994
wood, 12 x 77 x 10cm



Dimoni, 1994, wood,
copper, 12 x 97 x 10cm



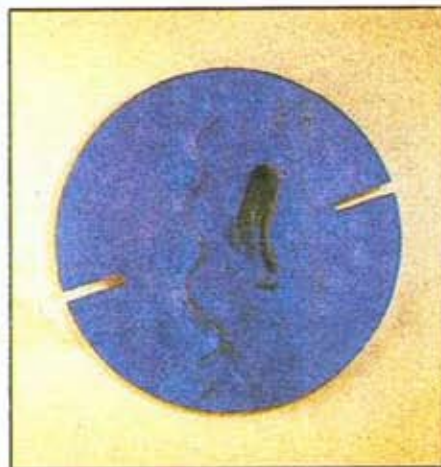
Oriental, 1994
wood, 20 x 80 x 20cm

If what the material expresses is abstract enough not to warrant a title, so be it. Of course, "sometimes I like to have some references to real life," admits the sculptor, "but not too many."

One item with reference to real life is *Romanique* (\$5,292), a cylindrical piece of wood with a slot down its middle. Inside all that symmetry, in the slot, is a stick, unworked and natural. As the title indicates, this cylindrical, modern work was inspired by the narrow windows of Romanesque churches.

So if you want to look at something old, something new, and even something blue, it might be worth viewing Pladevall's contemporary Catalan sculpture.

● The Gallery
Fort Canning Centre
Cox Terrace
Until Nov 17



Untitled, 1994, wood, copper,
48 x 48 x 10cm