Kenneth Baker San Francisco Chronicle Saturday, April 25, 2009

A touch of di Suvero: Mark di Suvero's recent works at Berggruen show him handling thick slabs of steel as confidently as if pastry dough were his medium.

He characteristically invites the viewer's touch by poising elements - some quite massive - so they will pivot or rock with just a light push. It takes that sort of hands-on engagement to offset the almost dematerializing effect of di Suvero's ease with his medium.

In "From Antarctica" (2008), he has inserted a thin shovel-like form, red on one side and mirrored on the other. Its shiny side presents distorted reflections of some of the work's details, seeming to comment on the formal instability di Suvero builds into his touch-responsive pieces.

In several works, such as the outstanding "7 star" (2009), the thickness of the steel and the ways he has cut and folded it can barely cohabit in the imagination.

Di Suvero seems to regard this unresolvable tension as definitive of sculpture as an art. That his work depends on industrial tools such as the plasma arc torch roots it in its time – an age of frightfully magnified human capabilities – without topical reference.

Such a time, he suggests, may require of us an enlarged capacity to accept the destructive powers and creative opportunities implicit in it. Only in constructed sculpture - maybe only in di Suvero's work – can we find an individual touch and industrial powers meeting in terms that reflect our historical situation back to us with exemplary lightness and openness to the future. With such an issue at stake, vagaries of taste matter little.