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Houston Press

Tony Feher Works His Magic at Hiram Butler Gallery

By [Meredith Deliso](#) Tue., Oct. 16 2012 at 11:00 AM



Tony Feher is having a bit of a moment right now in Houston. The New York sculptor just opened a 20-year survey of his work at the Blaffer Art Museum. It's the first attempt at a comprehensive study of his career and comes with a fully illustrated monograph. To top that, his show also christens the new Blaffer Art Museum, open once again after undergoing a \$2.25 million renovation.

The Blaffer opening may be getting all of the attention right now, and rightfully so, but a much more modest show of the artist's work is also noteworthy. *A Work in Four Parts*, currently up at Hiram Butler Gallery, is quintessential Feher -- the use of ordinary objects to make highly deliberate art -- and feels very much like an intimate conversation with the artist.

Feher

Feher doesn't often name his pieces, but he gives this work multiple identities. *A Work in Four Parts* refers to four shelves placed at different levels that support glass and plastic objects. Feher sensed a lyrical quality to this arrangement and further named each of the four shelves -- *Adagio*, *Allegro*, *Animato* and *Appassionato*.



Borrowing the names of these movements helps inform each shelf. *Adagio* means at ease, and the shape and progression of the bottles do seem calm and low-key. *Allegro*, on the other hand, means lively, and this shelf is a bit busier and has more variety among the materials. And so on with the cognates *Animato* and *Appassionato*. You can read these pieces as you would a piece of sheet music. There are even recurring notes or chords, as it were, as the same materials repeat themselves across the four parts.

"Allegro" by Tony Feher

It's easy to forget what you're looking at when you study Feher's work. They're just plastic and glass bottles -- junk, really -- that are filled with even more junk -- feathers, glitter, food coloring, cornstarch, packing peanuts. But Feher manages to make them worth looking upon. The red, orange and blue of his dyed water is vibrant. The packing peanuts stick to the side of the glass jar as if in a state of suspended animation. A red ball rests at the top of a bottle, everything perfectly in tune with the rest. Feher gives us clues as to how to read his piece, and in the process we are looking at and considering these materials as if for the very first time. That's some magic.

"Tony Feher: A Work in Four Parts" at Hiram Butler Gallery, 4520 Blossom Street, runs now through November 7. For more information, call 713-863-7097 or visit www.hirambutler.com.