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October 4, 2013

## Sculptures Made of Jars, Crates, Coins and Rope Fill the Bronx Museum

*By Patrick Wall*



CONCOURSE — The artist Tony Feher calls his East Village apartment a landfill. He has been filling it for the past three decades with bottles, bags, jars, marbles, crates, coins and anything else he can find in local stores or on the street. But unlike most packrats, he transforms his clutter into art. “It’s about accumulating materials until the point that you have a critical mass,” Feher explained, “that then allows an idea to snap into focus.”

About 60 of those ideas will be on display from Oct. 6 to Feb. 9 at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, which is presenting the city’s first museum retrospective of Feher’s minimalist sculptures, spanning from 1987 to the present.

Feher considers himself a landscape artist and, though he was born in New Mexico in 1956 and raised in Texas, the landscape where he has lived and worked since 1980 is downtown New York. So one work from 1991-92 includes a tiny crack-cocaine vile, corked with a green-plastic top, the likes of which once littered the sidewalks around Feher's apartment "like confetti." Another, from 1999, is made of stacked plastic milk crates, which he found strewn in his neighborhood "like seashells on the beach."

Long ago, Feher replaced the art-supply store with Key Food — or, since he started working in a Mott Haven studio eight years ago, Western Beef.

In "Take It Up With Tut" (2008), empty mayonnaise and soy-sauce jars hold water tinted with the same food coloring his mother once used for holiday cookies. In other works, the glowing liquid is radiator fluid, soap, Windex.

Feher never went to art school — instead, he studied business and later architecture — and his work seems to draw as much from ancient monuments and geometry as it does from art history. "Enjoy" (2001), a six-foot tower made of 350 red-plastic pallets each with the words "Enjoy Coca-Cola" scratched off, calls to mind both a medieval fort and a stack of Legos. Feher's work is also occasionally personal, and even personally political.

"Penny Piece" (1995-) consists of a glass jar and a row of 56 pennies — one from each year of his life — which brighten from dull brown to shiny copper as they approach the present. (Feher hasn't yet mailed the museum that owns the work a penny minted in 2013).

That piece was partly inspired by the early AIDS epidemic, Feher said, and how society then valued — or not — the lives of people with the disease.

Another piece from that time, "Le Roi de Bâton" (1991), is a shrine to the self, jars with intimate objects — hospital items, toy animals, bodily fluids — that Feher collected and preserved. "We all leave a slime trail of debris behind us," Feher said, standing beside the homemade reliquary. "I just sweep it up and keep it."

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1 of 6

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## Rope Fill the Bronx Museum



### Tony Feher Exhibit

“Le Roi de Bâton” (1991) is a sort of shrine comprised of personal objects from Feher’s life encased in glass jars.

*Photo Credit: DNAinfo/Patrick Wall*

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### Tony Feher Exhibit

The artist Tony Feher next to his sculpture, “Enjoy” (2001).

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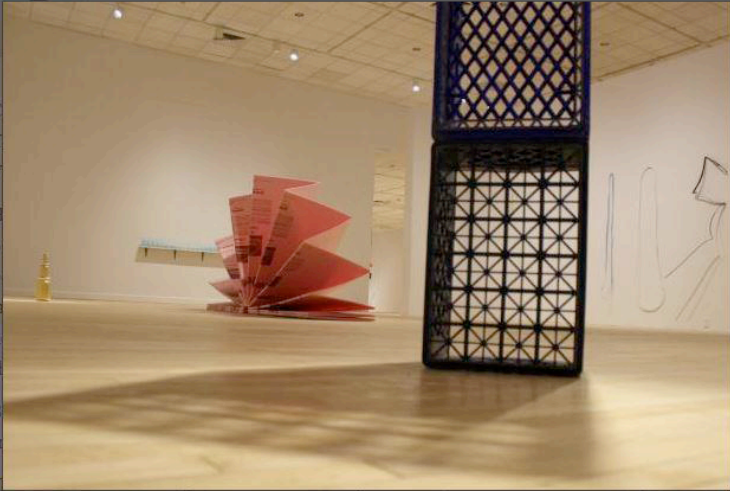
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3 of 6

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### Tony Feher Exhibit

"Untitled" (1999) casts shadows with plastic milk crates.

*Photo Credit: DNaInfo/Patrick Wall*

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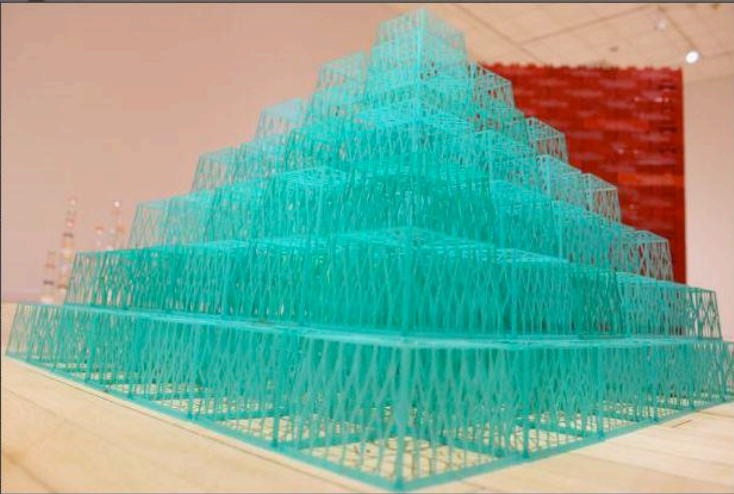
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4 of 6

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### Tony Feher Exhibit

"Untitled" (2012) calls to mind an ancient monument.


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### Tony Feher Exhibit

"Just So" (2002) creates a wave out of glass bottles filled with water and food dye.

*Photo Credit: DNAinfo/Patrick Wall*

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### Tony Feher Exhibit

"Untitled" (1991-92) includes many objects found on the New York City streets laid out in front of glass bottles.

*Photo Credit: DNAinfo/Patrick Wall*

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