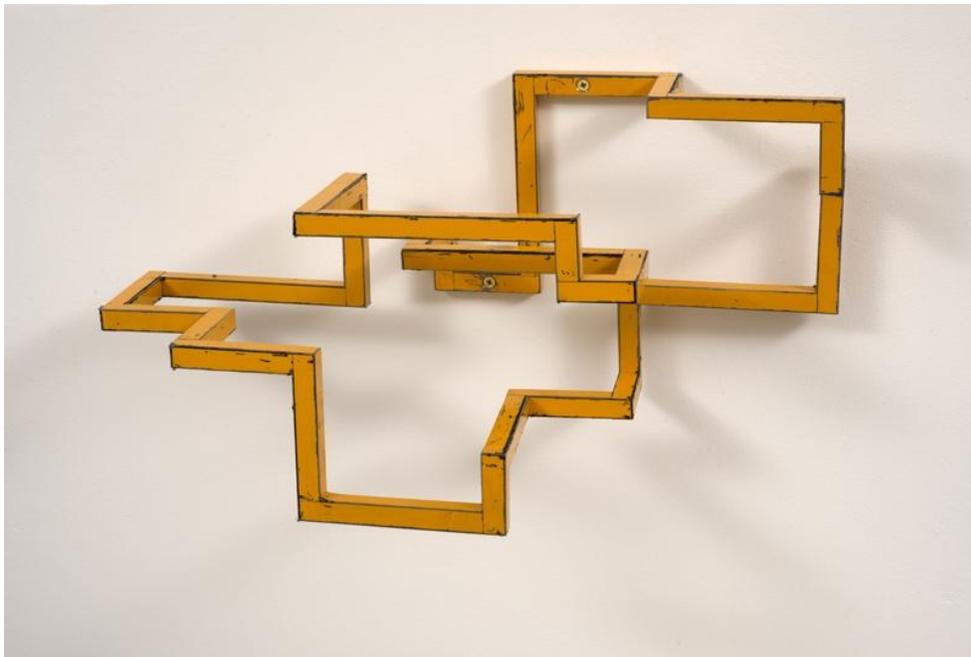




## Ted Larsen at McMurtrey

**Lin Wang**

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Sometimes a piece of artwork can be so strong that even after days or weeks it still remains foremost your memory, with the residual stimulus from that first look. The most recent case happened in [Ted Larson's End of Line exhibition at Houston's McMurtrey Gallery.](#)



Out of Hood, Ted Larsen at McMutrey Gallery

Re-purposing and re-contextualizing industrial materials are nothing new. Many works in this vein have the appearance of trying too hard, as if complexity and large scale are the only way to triumph. Larsen's works are different. His minimal sculpture does utilize atypical material such as salvaged metal from automobiles. But they are often on a smaller scale, modest, even frugal in the use of space and material. The grids and geometric forms, stripped of any thematic or narrative angles, look intimate and ultimately modern.

Debra Barrera, the assistant director, pointed out that only the sheet metal from 50's and 60's automobiles was suitable. The lack of lead in newer cars makes metal too garish. Although I am wondering how many cars made in 50's are still around, there is no denying the beauty from the surface of the metal (wrapped around rubber). The scratches, subtle and spontaneous, speak of a painterly elegance. It could be that the ultimate beauty in art is playing the fool, elusive of anyone's full grasp. What James Whistler strived to achieve, in his ephemeral proof, may not in the end surpass letting nature at material sitting in a scrap yard.

My favorite of all is *School Bus Line*. It is, as the title suggests, pure yellow. The structure is airy and dynamic. It tells just as much about the space it does not occupy as about the space it does. Hanging on the wall, it captures more negative space than the sculpture itself physically occupies.

Much of the negative space around it is activated by the shadows. The dark shadows (kudos to the installation) command our eyes. Inevitable, even though I would like to focus on the yellow grids themselves, the crisp outline of deep blackness of the shadows competes for attention.

Quietly, the sculpture suspends in the air, as if everything falls into its own. Despite its non-organic form, the piece seems to possess a detached wholeness and deny the hand of its creator. But beyond its minimal appearance, it feels intense to observe what has been eschewed from all that possibility with the materials and forms, and what has been conveyed in a non-sensible, but sensual way.

The exhibition closed two weeks ago at McMurtrey Gallery in Houston. Luckily, [Conduit Gallery](#) in Dallas is hosting a group show “Longitude/Latitude Part 1”, in which early and current works by Ted Larsen will be displayed. The opening reception is June 28, 2014.