

artnet\*

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## John Newman CHAMBERED NAUTILUS by Charlie Finch

*The shadow of the dome of pleasure floated midway on the waves.*

-- Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Oceanographers constantly remind us that 90 percent of the ocean remains unexplored, especially the deepest sections in which the most exotic marine life prospers at pressures which would crush a human in a millisecond.

If such a place produced seashells they would definitely resemble John Newman's dazzling tabletop sculptures, just opened at Tibor de Nagy Gallery on Fifth Avenue, which suggest, if you put your ear to them and recite one of Newman's trippy titles, such as *Yellow Lightly over Morning Stars*, you might hear the music of the spheres. With so much abstract art today drifting into preciousness, it falls to the veteran artist Newman to produce an equation in which hand-sized balance equals brilliant color. *Yellow Lightly*, for example, proffers its bright yellow buds off the anchor of two prickly brown balls.

*Ask the Fact for the Form (Throughline)* is a nautical question, posed by a pulsing eye in the midst of an ivory crustacean, while *Green and White Hanging On* is a bit of seaweed (actually cast bronze from eucalyptus bark) clinging to an alabaster arch. "*We'd Rather Have the Iceberg than the Ship, although It Meant the End of Travel*," the most pretentious title in the show, is redeemed in the simplicity of a poetic sail, which, when turned over, might be a pair of brass knuckles.

I grabbed the seashell conceit to hold onto Newman's bright, shining toys, but you can make your own associations (musical instruments, pets from Mars). These pieces are too complexly structured to be editioned, but Tibor de Nagy should definitely consider a plastic boxed set of the works, to be assembled for use at the beach. They would brighten every child's life, even the old ones such as me.

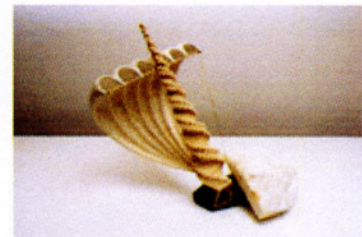
John Newman, "New Work," Mar. 15-Apr. 21, 2012, at Tibor de Nagy Gallery, 724 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019.



John Newman, *Ask the Fact for the Form (Indigo and of Itself)*, 2011, Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York



John Newman, *Yellow Lightly over Morning Stars*, 2011, Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York



John Newman, *"We'd Rather Have the Iceberg than the Ship, although It Meant the End of Travel"*, 2011, Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York