One thing seems clear: Dustin Yellin has refused to grow up. He continually rejects the conventions of adult life. He also protects and steadfastly supports the many artists and collaborators working in his studio and at Pioneer Works, his ever-expanding art, science, and education project.

Like all good sculptors, Yellin is comfortable moving through space. I have been with him driving; he possesses the road without having to overthink it. Perhaps this is because the thing sculptors are preoccupied with day and night, night and day, is what volume is, where its edges are, where it touches something else, and what the empty space looks like.

In Yellin’s sculptures, empty space becomes the actual volume. But it is material itself which has betrayed him in the past. Sculptors, more so than artists working in two dimensions, are forced to deal with all the qualities of a material — its mass and feel and volume, its limits, the point at which it melts, and what it does with light. But despite the solutions to all these problems, the danger of working with some materials questions the validity of the sculptural enterprise. Yellin’s actual body began to reject resin, the material at the center of his early work. So he switched to glass and everything changed, the whole temporal and affective orientation of the work.

His early resin objects recall life preserved by an act of nature — bugs trapped in amber, trees caught in a sticky gum. His new works in glass — The Triptych and Psycho-geographies, the caves, slides, and rooms — appear not as accidents of nature, but as products of a mad scientist seeking to examine the chaos of images by disciplining them, by attempting to make them known. Not the romantic glass of houses, this is glass in service of control. The manipulative scenes of department store windows, the one-way panes of interrogation rooms, or the death pallets of iridescent beetles pinned to specimen trays.

As Pioneer Works transitions into a more mature phase of its existence, eager spectators see Yellin confronted with issues familiar to all institutions: how to grow up without seeming to grow old, how to continue to work in unexpected ways to avoid formality, and how to stave off seriousness while building from the lessons of experience. So far, the auguries look good. After all, there’s still an occasional pigeon in the rafters.