

B. Wurtz (American b. 1948)

Kitchen Trees, 2018

Stainless steel, aluminum, plastic.

224 x 159 inches

Courtesy the artist; Metro Pictures, New York; Kate MacGarry, London; Maisterravalbuena Madrid/Lisboa; Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles. Commissioned by Public Art Fund, New York.

Website:

B. Wurtz is known for his idiosyncratic assemblages of found materials that evoke “food, clothing and shelter.” There is an existing subject matter that clings to the common objects he recycles from his daily life, from old socks and aluminum baking pans to cardboard and plastic bric-a-brac. Wurtz’s small, intimate sculptures of wood blocks and wavering wire feel like a children’s toy, or an inventor’s prototype for an unknown problem. When Wurtz frees these objects from their highly pre-scripted jobs, they become absurdly tender reminders of the fleeting nature of time and the frailty of human life.

Wurtz’s gesture—of bringing real world objects into the abstract realm of art—harkens back to Pablo Picasso’s (French, born Spain, 1881-1973) radical inclusion of “things” in his paintings—to break the picture plane and force us to confront the gap between art and real life. And like the profoundly influential French conceptual artist Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), Wurtz uses his found objects in baroque ways, fundamentally questioning what we consider to be art. Wurtz’s works thus live in an art lineage that broke with art’s lineage, with fun being a primary addition unique to Wurtz.

The work in Sculpture Milwaukee 2019 was commissioned by the Public Art Fund for City Hall Park in New York, and is Wurtz’s first foray into large-scale art. His series of five fantastical trees are like something from Dr. Seuss—a riotous set of shapes and colors that defy the serious adult landscape around them. Wurtz uses stainless steel colanders as his “trunk”, with plastic fruit dangling off wire branches. Wurtz, a committed environmentalist, is interested in the odd juxtaposition of a human-made tree of life against the highly manicured urban landscape. The work is sited by Milwaukee’s Betty Brinn Children’s Museum, meeting one of Wurtz’s audiences on the street where they play.

Richard Woods (British, b. 1966)

Holiday Home (Milwaukee), 2019

Wood, steel

168 x 185 x 145 inches

Courtesy the artist and Alan Cristea Gallery, London.

Website:

British artist Richard Woods has a funny take on the frenetic rise of DIY culture and the English tradition of caravan camping, while thinking about globally urgent issues like housing insecurity and population displacement.

His cheery houses, built on spec using commercial products and local labor with a paint job that matches a site's mood, history or light conditions, are everyday homes, scaled small to make them doll-like and intimate. The various positions they assume—floating on a barge in the middle of a lake, perched atop a parking lot battlement, tossed onto a sandy beach close to the high tide line—suggest a family in slight peril, up-ended by the dramatic economic and political forces shifting around them. A home is considered the pinnacle of middle-class success and stability, and was one of the most important markers of arrival in our post-war period. Yet residents of the United Kingdom are facing a dramatic shift in their global leadership with the Brexit vote, which is making residents nervous about their historical standing in the world.

Woods' cartoonish sculptures point to the bold Pop aesthetic and visual wit of British painter Patrick Caulfield. However, Woods' 2018 exhibition at Alan Cristea Gallery, titled *The Ideal Home Exhibition*, shows him indebted to British artist Richard Hambleton's famous collage *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?*, 1956, that defined Britain's post-war obsession with consumer culture. The graphic, modular nature of the work also recalls American painter Peter Halley's paintings of schematized systems, which are both architectural plans and nightmare mazes. Woods creates a range of objects that could fill and cover any home too, including paintings, flooring and furniture. The artist creates a portrait of contemporary Western society grappling with a new definition of "home".

Sculpture Milwaukee is partnering with the Great Lakes Community Conservation Corps [GLCCC] to fabricate Woods' house. GLCCC, based on the Work Progress Administration's Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s (which hired unemployed workers across the country during the Great Depression), provides job training skills to a range of students and young adults. This project is unique for the GLCCC team because of the arts focus. Sculpture Milwaukee and the GLCCC leadership will organize a range of learning opportunities for the students so they might see the arts as a possible industry for future employment. Woods has created dramatic architectural interventions, including transforming Cary Grant's former home in Hollywood for dealer Jeffrey Deitch, and designing a spectacular store interior for Comme des Garçons in Osaka, Japan. He has recently bedazzled DKUK, a hybrid hair salon / exhibition space run by artist Daniel Kelly that receives funds from the Arts Council England.

Arlene Shechet (American, b. 1951)

Titled Channel, 2018

Aluminum, cast iron, glazed firebrick, steel.

65 x 96 x 32 inches

Courtesy the artist and Pace Gallery, New York.

Website:

Arlene Shechet is known for creating ceramics that bypass the intimate, domestic and useful objects of the home, bringing the material into the wider world of sculpture. In recent residencies in Germany, at the world-renown Meissen porcelain factory, and at the John Michael Kohler Art Center's Artist Residency program in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, Shechet has scaled up her materials, adding muscle and might to her surreal objects that confound human and nature, abstraction and figuration, serious high art and playful children's toys.

Titled Channel is from a series of works, titled *Full Steam Ahead*, commissioned by Madison Square Park, New York. Rather than placing her work on the great lawn, she instead chose a more urban space—the concrete reflecting pool that is emptied every year from fall through late spring. Shechet was interested in creating works that would interrupt the visitor's daily hustle through the Park by designing works that double as furniture.

There is a sly animistic sense to *Titled Channel*. We see a decorative brick wall with what appears to be a bright yellow bird buried upside down in the bricks, one claw grasping, the other letting go. Or is that a human whose hands have morphed into a wrench and a file? The "hands" are actually a sprue, the tool used to help cast molten materials like porcelain. The surreal quality of this work is reminiscent of a fairy tale, where humans and animals morph into dreamy figures that frighten or engage.

The placement of Shechet's work for Sculpture Milwaukee provides *Titled Channel* with another chance to insert itself into a much-trafficked urban space. Indeed, every downtown is a tussle between the natural environment displaced by cars and buildings, roadways and sidewalks. The clean modernist lines of the white building backdrop highlights the more natural form of the yellow bird. *Titled Channel* becomes a monument to the birds and animals that have gathered around Lake Michigan and the Milwaukee River to take advantage of the region's natural abundance.

The series title *Full Steam Ahead* is based on a phrase by Union Admiral David Glasgow Farragut*—immortalized in a statue in Madison Square Park—when he ordered his naval troops to break the Confederate blockade at Mobile Bay. "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!", suggests going for broke, doing the right thing. Shechet's work goes for broke in terms of her materials, but she also has integrated an explicit political message as well.

With her first public works of the *Full Steam Ahead* series, Shechet sought to undermine the almost exclusive male-warrior monument that still populates the landscape by celebrating the other species that share our earth. Shechet is part of the artistic reconsideration of how, and who, we celebrate in public sculpture.

Sean Scully (Irish-American, b. 1945)

Black Stacked Frames, 2016

Formed steel, paint

180 x 132 x 132 inches

Courtesy the artist and Cheim & Read, New York.

Website:

Irish artist Sean Scully has been dedicated to his painting practice since the 1960s, focusing primarily on paint as a building block for dense architectural constructions. Scully's work is distinctly different from today's crop of painters, whose cool take on pop culture refuses to show the artist's hand—or heart. Scully's scumbled surfaces recall Hans Hoffman's influential abstraction, while evoking the texture and feel of a dusky fall evening on a moor.

Sean Scully, born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1945, came from a family working primarily in the mines, and moved to London with his family when he was four. His early work was figurative, but after a "hippie" conversion in Morocco in 1967, stripes became his exclusive subject and object. Scully moved to New York in the mid-1980s, making his paintings at a time when lower Manhattan was dominated by anti-material conceptual and Minimal art that avoided such a traditional art form. Yet conceptual painter Robert Ryman was an early Scully advocate, and once a generation of painters that included Julian Schnabel, David Salle, Susan Rothenberg and Eric Fischl, and the Neo-Geo painters like Peter Halley, showed new passion for painting, Scully's work gained traction in the art world. Scully experimented with sculpture in the early 1970s, and again in the early 1990s, he did not fully jump into the practice until the early part of the 21st century.

In his sculpture, Scully continues to explore landscape and abstraction. His monumental works recall farmer's stacked, un-mortared walls, and the serial constructions of Sol LeWitt. Scully's sculptures often refer to his paintings, but the heavy materials and scale evoke a completely different set of physical reactions and associations, given that the works live in the real world. *BLACK STACKED FRAMES*, 2017, Scully uses metals and paint of the urban world, rather than the stones of the natural world. Scully's stepped layers recall the compression found in geology, and a climbing wall for weekend warriors. Scully's looming, quasi-religious structure creates parallels between the natural and human-made world.

Carlos Rolón (American, b. 1970)

Gild the Lily (Caribbean Hybrid I, II, III), 2019

Vinyl, adhesive

516 x 540 x 504 inches

Courtesy the artist and Salon 94, New York.

Website:

Carlos Rolón is known for his socially-active practice that engages audiences in bright, expressive, multi-layered installations, paintings and sculpture that use gold leaf, mirrored glass, tile and iron. In addition to more traditional art forms however, he has also created playful nail designs in boutiques staged in galleries and at art fairs; decorated cars like the Latino Kustom Kulture tradition of the American south west; and most recently, decorated a basketball park with bright green palm fronds as a fundraiser for re-building basketball courts in Puerto Rico. Rolón's expressive works reach into pop culture, daily life and challenge the spare tradition of post-war Minimalism and Conceptual art.

Rolón is explicit about his own cultural in-betweenness. He is first generation Puerto Rican-American, and uses natural forms and social traditions as a way to explore overlapping political and cultural histories. He references the vernacular architecture and design of Puerto Rico, pointing to the island's history of immigration, colonization, sugarcane production, industrialization and tourism. In recent projects in Puerto Rico and New Orleans, Rolón used the decorative iron fences brought to Puerto Rico and the American south by African slaves, and the tiles, macramé and mirrors of tourist hotels and impoverished Caribbean homes to explore common human desire for beautiful spaces. Just as all landscapes hold their histories within them, Rolón embeds history through his use of luxe and common materials.

For Sculpture Milwaukee, Rolón will sheath the outside of the lobby cube of the Chase Bank building with a translucent diorama of tropical flowers, making the "bird cage" lobby the largest sculpture in the region. The choice of the Chase Bank lobby is specific. The modernist cube is emblematic of the urban renewal and revitalization schemes that took place across the country in the post-war period. The International style of architecture, redolent of the idealism of the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany, reminds us how post-war America salvaged the style as a marker of our own global power. As a resident of Chicago, Rolón grew up with the dreams and problems of urban life.

By turning the transparent lobby into a glowing jewel box Rolón's installation will be like a flame that attracts us to a key city intersection, where east meets west, north meets south, and where water meets street. Rolón's unexpected cube will connect to the summer sky, the blue water of the Milwaukee river and concrete that flows beneath and through the lobby space. Rolón's luminous beacon signals the reinvigorated vibrancy of our downtown.

Beverly Pepper (American, 1922-2020)*Curvae in Curvae*, 2013–2018

Corten steel

106 3/4 x 118 x 90 3/4 inches

Courtesy the artist and Marlborough Gallery, New York.

Website:

Beverly Pepper has had a long and extraordinary career. Like her contemporaries Louise Bourgeois and Louise Nevelson, Pepper forged a unique path as a mid-century feminist artist. She worked against the prevailing attitude towards women making big, physically demanding art that allowed her to mirror the processes of nature itself. Pepper learned to weld by working in actual factories, and there is increasing recognition that she is, indeed, the first American artist to work with Cor-ten steel. Pepper revels in both the built and rural environment, drawing energy and imagery that connects her work to the continuity of human life.

Pepper started her art training in painting and industrial design in New York before World War II. She moved to Paris after the war, and through her studies and travel, was exposed to the richness of the world's cultures. She abandoned painting by the 1960s, and was one of the pioneers of large-scale outdoor Earth works, art that escaped the clean spaces of museums, shaping our experience in and of the landscape. Pepper was also a leading artist in creating large-scale, muscular indoor and outdoor sculptures, using the materials of industry to evoke ancient totemic forms from ancient cultures from around the globe. Pepper moved permanently to Italy in the 1950s, first from her own artistic interests, but stayed because of the work she and her journalist husband embarked upon at a time of great change and promise on the continent. Pepper's work is infused with the colors and history of her Umbrian home, and while she is not as well-known as her American contemporaries due to her living and working abroad, her self-imposed isolation has allowed her to develop a distinctive vocabulary.

Pepper's goal is to dominate the materials of the earth—metal and stone—so that they take on a personality and texture that runs counter to the neutral face of modern architecture. She holds in tension the forms of culture using the materials of nature; she holds in tension the past while suggesting the future. *Curvae in Curvae* uses the Latin feminine word *curvae*, singular of *curvus*, or bent, curved. There is something languid about the work, like a tender shoot snaking out of the earth and curling back down into it. Pepper is able to balance the deep earthy tinge of the work's surface while suggesting the freshness of nature in the spring.

Roxy Paine (American, b. 1966)

Cleft, 2018

Stainless steel

444 x 550 x 480 inches

Courtesy the artist and Kasmin Gallery, New York.

Website:

Roxy Paine is recognized as one of his generation's most inventive conceptual artists, whose practice revolves around the impact of modern human technologies on nature, including human nature. He creates facsimiles of natural forms (trees, mushrooms), which allows us to ask about the deep connections we have to the other species of our planet.

Paine's earliest series of mechanical contraptions sought to automate painting and drawing, two activities we associate with the "lone genius" grinding away in a silent attic. Paine's efforts to invent machines to alleviate the pain and struggle of painting—from the mind, from the heart—leave us with oddly comical apparatus, like writer E.T.A. Hoffman's nineteenth century automatons. Paine looks to remove the physical and psychological trauma of creating inventive and unique art works, but his machines end up as slightly monstrous, since we humans equate our humanity with the cultural artifacts we leave behind. Perhaps Paine suggests that our modern obsession with science and engineering relies too heavily on the quantifiable, not enough of the quirks of the human mind that can invent new worlds.

Paine is most celebrated for his series of haunting silver trees, based on the branching, tree-like habits of cells. While nature is at the heart of the *Dendroid* series, by visualizing the invisible, Paine suggests the human figure. Each branching "tree" is wildly unique, some grasping for the sun's embrace, some, rooted stoically to a site that can no longer nourish them. Ultimately we see how the microcosm is repeated in the macrocosm, and how humans are truly part of nature.

Cleft is the latest in the artist's *Dendroid* series, and one of the only pieces the artist has created for himself (not for a specific commission). The tree is cleaved down the center, split by the actions of an arborist, cutting away at the tree's heart to accommodate power lines. As biologists reveal more about the complex network of communication and nutrient sharing that goes on underground between trees of one species, the more this brutalized tree evokes sympathy. Paine honors this mature member of a species, while suggesting the invisible damage we do to ourselves and each other.

Note on installation: While Paine's work appears clean and minimal, there is a complex network of support structures beneath the dirt that holds the tree upright—a massive concrete base, robust bolting mechanism, and rebar. The work is also grounded to avoid attracting lightning—as any tall deciduous tree might. Installation requires six people approximately five days to install, two human lifts, welding equipment, a water tank, and active security around the perimeter to protect the piece, the installation team and the public."

William J. O'Brien (American, b. 1975)

Sun & Moon Protector, 2016

Bronze

103 x 18 x 13 inches

Courtesy the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York and Aspen.

Website:

William J. O'Brien works across materials, from bronze and paint to felt and ceramic. His work looks like ancient Mississippian face jugs, self-taught artist blankets or talismans to ward off hexes or witches. His works speak of high Modernism and its deliberate material slippages, as well as of the works of everyday people, making do with the materials around them to create functional objects with aesthetic appeal.

O'Brien's influences are from widely divergent places, like the Bay Area experiments of funk ceramicist Robert Arneson, to the quilts made in the Amish community. The artist's sensitive borrowing of cultural histories reminds us how visual traditions are passed down and changed over time and place.

O'Brien grew up in a religious household in rural Ohio, and after being kicked out of school for rambunctious behavior he was home-schooled, which allowed for a more intimate experience of the world around him. He was initially drawn to mathematics at college, but was "...attracted to the sound of color and the music of form and material..." so he shifted towards making things instead.

O'Brien's work is deeply personal, influenced by self-reflection, his personal relationships and the world that touches him daily. He makes his work as accessible as possible, enjoying the thrift and commonness of craft materials. O'Brien keeps his hand visible in much of his work, and questions why certain materials are more acceptable as art.

Sun & Moon Protector, 2016, is part of O'Brien's first foray into that most rigid and "high" of art materials, bronze. *Sun & Moon Protector* has the intense lines of a religious object, assembled with passion. His totem-like figure is firmly planted on the ground, the filigree body suggesting an ancient Roman earring or West African beaded charm.

The Protector works are inspired by the Mahakala, a fierce, changeable protector deity from Tibetan Buddhism.* In O'Brien's version however, we find a more self-contained, inward-looking being, but like its' fierce cousin, still surrounded by decorative elements. O'Brien is "...humanizing the monument", for personal reflection and healing. We see wheels, spirals and hands, a complex twisting together of the inner and outer worlds, with dreams and reality combined.

Tony Matelli (American, b. 1971)

Hera (Half), 2018

Cast stone, steel, painted urethane

122 x 35 x 33 inches

Courtesy the artist and Marlborough, New York.

Website:

Tony Matelli's artistic practice juxtaposes the ancient and the topical, the classical and the common. Matelli describes his surreal garden statues as modern-day memento mori, a still life that suggests the transience of life, how the moment of perfection is the start of decay.

Hera (half), 2018, is one of the most monumental of Matelli's anti-monument sculptures. Hera was the Queen of the Greek Pantheon, and ruled over heaven and earth. She was the Goddess of marriage and birth, protector of women, the punisher of cheating husbands.* She stands the regal protector of the family of watermelons blooming around her, the halves and quarters of the fruit looking like the phases of the moon. *Hera (half)* suggests many things. She mocks our modest efforts to decorate our gardens with mirrored balls or small figurines nestling amongst the perennials. Matelli's memento mori shows the decaying human ideal against the tantalizing richness of the sweet fruit, culture versus nature as both decompose.

Hera (half) reflects on our obsession with ancient Greek, but Matelli deconstructs our expectations of classical art. His *Hera (half)* is cast in gritty, granular gray cement, not carved in classical white Carrara marble. Cement was used extensively throughout the Roman empire, but has become the material most representative of our post-industrial urban landscape. And despite the passage of time, we still hold onto the idea of Gods and Goddesses—but in our century, it is celebrities and athletes that we worship. Matelli chooses his ancient figures because they represent decline—of human strength, perhaps of empire. This work plays with our sense of history and the brevity of life, and the human drive to preserve and record the past. Matelli brings this ancient figure to the 21st century, asking us to reflect on the meanings of this juxtaposition in our contemporary language.

Red Grooms (American, b. 1937)

Hot Dog Vendor, 2005

Enamel on aluminum

129 x 180 x 156 inches

Courtesy the artist and Marlborough Gallery, New York.

Tango Dancers, 2005

Enamel on aluminum

109 x 96 x 38 inches

Courtesy the artist and Marlborough Gallery, New York.

Website:

Red Grooms could be described as Pop Art Maximalist, creating environments with bawdy and baroque visual actors that reflect the day's news.* He is a visual raconteur, scouring the streets for unique or daily events. His eclectic influences range from: carnivals, vaudeville and roadside attractions of 1930s and 40s America; Walt Disney, America's premier purveyor of Main Street kitsch; and theater producer and visual artist Robert Wilson, known for his visually complex meditations on time and human movement, among others. This mash-up evokes distinct reactions in the art world, which often demands serious work. Just as comedies never win best picture Oscar, works with a sly sense of humor and trenchant sense of human fallibility are perceived as being kitsch, or too populist. Yet Grooms' work is enormously popular and accessible; he is an "everyman's" artist, one who chronicles the ups and downs of life.

Grooms was part of New York's 1960s avant-garde. His early Happenings were inspired by his high school football career, and with fellow artists like Claes Oldenburg, Grooms helped launch performance as a legitimate art form. Grooms founded a short-lived gallery in order to support his fellow artists, showing Oldenburg and Alex Katz in his first New York exhibition. Grooms ranged widely to create dynamic connections between his world and the larger world around him.

Barry Flanagan (Irish-Welsh, 1941-2009)

Large Boxing Hare on Anvil, 1984

Bronze

86 1/2 x 48 3/4 x 18 1/2 inches

Courtesy the Estate of Barry Flanagan/Plubronze Ltd./ Wadding Custot and Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York.

Website:

As part of a 1960s generation reacting to the muscular, weld-forward geometric abstraction of Sir Anthony Caro, Flanagan and his fellow students at St. Martin's School of Art followed tutor John Latham in creating works that explored a post-war world. Flanagan's work of the 60s and 70s have been seen as Process Art, Arte Povera or Anti-Form, for the artist's use of immaterial material, full of visual and verbal puns, with witty allusions to the relativity of the material world. Flanagan's installations included light, natural and projected; sand; sticks; bags of rubble; and other non-precious, non-art materials.

So it was with a great deal of surprise when Flanagan, in 1978-79, created his first drawing of a hare, inspired by a live one but triggered by a dead one, an image that appeared in his very tangible sculpture for the next three decades.

Cultures from around the globe have ascribed conflicting attributes to the hare in their myths, literature and art: soulful and mischievous, pure and profligate. German artist Josef Beuys used a hare as a personal stand-in based on his near-death experience as a German pilot during World War II. British writer Lewis Carroll used the hare as Alice's guide in Wonderland. The Warner Brothers invented a cartoon bunny with an attitude, ushering in a sense of the absurd as America entered into a war that made them grow up. Flanagan's hare is a proxy for humans—but also for the unseen forces of the natural world.

In *Large Boxing Hare on Anvil*, just five years into Flanagan's focus on the hare, we see an awkwardly upright rabbit walking as if in a trance, its arms thrust outward towards a lost battle. The heavily worked metal of the figure, which reveals the hand of the artist, is contrasted against the solidity of the anvil. The hare too represents the fact and idea of a line in space, the animals' slender profile slipping in and out of focus as we circle the piece.

Animate, inanimate, human-made, natural, there are overt and subtle contrasts in this work that embody Flanagan's lifelong adventure in representing the world.

Max Ernst (German, 1891-1976)

Séraphine-chérubin, 1967

Bronze

79 x 30 x 31 inches

Courtesy the artist and Kasmin Gallery, New York.

Website:

Max Ernst is one of the most important members of the European Dada and Surrealist art movements of first half of the 20th century. Both are movements that continue to inspire and haunt global artistic practice for their reliance on the unconscious, the unknowable and the disjunctive beliefs that create great social schism. Both Dada and Surrealism focused on the illogic, free association, new theories of the mind through psychiatry, with new types of art forms to match.

Ernst served in World War I, returning to Cologne, Germany, to help found the Cologne branch of the nihilistic Dada movement with fellow artist Jean (Hans) Arp and others. Ernst produced collages that broke the illusion of the painted picture frame by including fragments of photographs and newsprint that shatter the myths of the day. Ernst is most known though for his association with the Surrealists, a literary and artistic movement between the wars, when he moved to Paris in 1922. After inventing several painting and collage techniques to exacerbate the visual illogic of his works, in the early 1930s Ernst turned increasingly to sculpture to test the same improvisational techniques.

The artist moved to the United States in 1941, joining his third wife, American collector and arts patron Peggy Guggenheim and his son, Jimmy Ernst. He lived in Sedona, Arizona for several years with fourth wife painter Dorothea Tanning, where he developed a visual vocabulary that reflected the ancient peoples of the Americas. Ernst became a naturalized US citizen in 1948, and although he escaped the devastation of World War II in the desert, he returned to Paris for the final chapter in his career.

Séraphine, a French name from the Hebrew, comes from seraph, meaning an angelic being associated with light, ardor and purity. Ernst's squatting cherubin (or cherub, those smiling, diapered rolly polly babies in 17th and 18th century paintings), on the other hand, is a hard-edged tough scrounging around a bad neighborhood, her tongue sticking out in mocking laughter. The blocky figure evokes ancient Egyptian or pre-Columbian statues of figures at rest, but with Ernst, there is a coiled tension in the form.

The series *Big Brother: Teaching Staff for a School of Murderers*, 1967, was inspired by George Orwell's post-war 1949 dystopian classic 1984, where critical, independent thinking is suppressed under a totalitarian regime, and independent thinking was replaced by "newspeak". Ernst perhaps felt that the French ideal—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—was shattered under the weight of two global wars. Late into his career, Ernst continued to produce works that were provocative, nightmarish and emotionally destabilizing.

Sam Durant (American, b. 1961)

We Are The Ones We've Been Waiting For & Empathy for Everyone, 2018

Electric sign, vinyl text

Each 69 x 56 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles.

Website:

Over the past three decades, Sam Durant has created photographs, installations, sculpture and light boxes that consider the political ramifications of the past and their impact on our lives today. He has taken as a starting point: a 19th century quote by a French commerce secretary to trace the reverberations on fiscal policy in today's world; political and self-help signs and slogans of the 1970s to understand the backlash against the 1960s generation; and explored the impact of European colonization in the Americas, among other historical events. Through all these complex and challenging topics, Durant explores both subtle and overtly contentious social structures that define 21st century America.

In his series of commercial sign boxes, Durant isolates phrases in protest signs from events over the past few years. He blows the phrases up and produces a vinyl to be slotted into a commercial grade sign, common to convenience stores and gas stations around the globe. While some of the signs are explicit, others are suggestive, transcending topical issues and considering patterns of human behavior. These two signs, installed in the windows at The Avenue, add to the crowded voices of this commercial corridor, reinforcing how we are barraged with messages every day. While the phrases can be read as song lyrics or protest chants, Durant highlights our common language to see if we might find common ground. *Empathy for Everyone* (large version) is based on an online image of a protest sign at the 2017 Women's March in Washington.

We Are The Ones We've Been Waiting For, 2018, is based on a sign at the March 24, 2018 March for Our Lives protest, a student-led demonstration in support of safer schools and communities through stronger gun legislation in response to the school shootings in Parkland, Florida. The four teens who founded the group are part of an international movement for youth leadership, where other change making projects are addressing global warming, girls' rights, reduction of poverty and broader access to food. This sign is a beacon from a better future, led by those most impacted by it.

Elmgreen (Danish, b. 1961) & Dragset (Norwegian, b. 1969)

A Greater Perspective, 2015

Bronze, steel, black patina, wax

145 3/4 x 147 1/2 x 72 3/4 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Perrotin, New York.

Website:

Michael Elmgreen & Ingar Dragset have been working together since 1995, integrating art, architecture, installation, public art and performance in tragic-comic ways. They create situations of farcical futility, whose light-hearted images—empty sinks, stranded starfish, refuse from rave night, an empty public pool—carry darker meanings that force us to confront the absurdity and beauty of everyday life.

Their works are described as cheeky and irreverent, poking at the institutions that regulate our lives. By virtually kidnapping objects and placing them in unexpected situations, the artists question how culture shapes and frames our environment. Their iconic *Prada Marfa* store, for example, sends up the austere Donald Judd compound in Marfa, Texas, by plopping a faux Prada store on a dusty road nearby. Judd's foundation has created a luxury arts getaway in the desert, and with exclusive experiences comes high end fashion, the artists seem to say. Elmgreen & Dragset eliminate the distance between inside and out, between artistic white cube and daily life.

Elmgreen & Dragset used the phrase “powerless structures” in their 2012 commission for the *Fourth Plinth* project in London's Trafalgar Square, and this phrase captures the regal uselessness of their giant bronze telescope *A Greater Perspective*, commission for the High Line in New York. The telescope is not accessible given its height, and anyway, it is solid bronze, meaning there is no vista to be enjoyed.

The artists' use this old-fashioned, romantic tool of discovery to suggests the perspective of the great explorers who shape history is too narrow to accommodate the wide world around us. For Sculpture Milwaukee, *A Greater Perspective* is sited on the edge of Wisconsin avenue, overlooking the lake. No telescope could reveal the traces that successive generations of visitors left on our shore. The sculpture feels lonely, bereft of its' purpose, a lingering monument to clouded vision, a call to knowing our own past.

Angela Bulloch (Canadian, b. 1966)

Heavy Metal Stack of Six: Trichrome Blue, 2016

Powder coated steel, paint

118 x 31 1/2 x 19 3/4 inches

Courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery, London and Hong Kong.

Website:

Berlin-based British artist Angela Bulloch creates elegant, quirky sculptures, installations and videos that are rooted in the minimalism of science and math but with a maximalist expression. She plays with the geometries of technology—lights, iPads, computer screens--and brings them alive in ways that suggest night club rather than math club. Her series of “drawing machines” used the grid as its baseline for creation, but the machines were triggered by the erratic behavior of humans. In her work Bulloch embraces this tension between the microcosm of nature and how it is manifest in the elegant, if irregular, beauty of everyday life.

Bulloch’s columns and totems refer to the work of early 20th century pioneering Romanian artist Constantin Brancusi (1876-1957), whose “endless column” freed sculpture from the confines of a pedestal. While Bulloch’s modular works reference 1960s Minimalist artists, like Sol LeWitt and Donald Judd, hers is a 21st century expression relevant to her generation of artists.

Bulloch’s exuberant palette and irregularly faceted diamond building blocks speak as much to children’s toys and DIY projects as it does the rigidity of Euclidean geometry. Hers is a more fluid integration of the world of science and its expression in the world of handmade objects.

Hass Brothers (American, b. 1984)

Handy Warhol, Handy Darling, 2019

Cast bronze, ceramic, metal, wire

105 x 23 x 18 inches

Courtesy the artists and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York and Aspen.

Website:

Niki (Nikolai) and Simon Hass work together to bedazzle the gray zone between craft and design. Their functional objects defy simple use, their art objects dare you to sit on them. Their works question our static definition of beauty; instead, they prioritize the playfulness of childhood's imaginary worlds while acknowledging adult demands for regular bedtimes.

While the Haas Brothers are active in the high-end art and design worlds, their roots lay in the more ancient tradition of artisans creating the artful objects that populate daily life. In the modern era, we can look at the Arts and Crafts Movement of the late 19th century Britain (which then spread across the globe), borne of a reaction to the impact of industrialization and hyper-segmentation of the labor force. Artists and critics extolled the value of hand-made objects against the tide of mass production and advertising-driven design. The fluid relationship between art and design continued in the Bauhaus, an architecture and design program that promoted decorative arts as legitimate expressions of modern ideas.

Simon Haas seeks out new ways to apply materials from the craft, art and industrial worlds to new uses. Niki Haas is the sculptor of the pair, creating anthropomorphic animals and things that are part portrait, part Dr. Seuss, part Maurice Sendak. Their shaggy monsters feel friendly, like Sesame Street characters, but they have the sharp horns of wild animals. The Brothers use humor as a way to connect to others, their objects functioning as a pun or joke that changes as we view their objects.

The Haas Brothers have experimented with hands in other parts of their oeuvre, from silverware that grabs you back, to seats that sport an unnatural number of fingers. Niki has mentioned the Italian-born, Mexico-based designer / artist Pedro Friedeberg as an influence in these works, but it is the unique combination of materials and imagery that has made the pair leaders in their field.

In Handy Warhol and Handy Darling, 2019, two vaguely creepy hands hold enoki mushroom-shaped solar-powered lights. The work suggests a napping monster will soon emerge from the flower bed, like a James Bond villain emerging from his underwater lair. The work integrates functional light on a fantastical creature, confounding what visitors will expect along Wisconsin Avenue.

The designers are engaged in creating projects across the globe—masks for Lady Gaga, resin shoes for Nicola Formichetti, gold-leafed furniture for Louis Vuitton stores, and an office re-design for Toby McGuire's Sony Pictures office.

John Baldessari (American, 1931-2020)

Penguin, 2018

Polyurethane, stainless steel, epoxy resin, acrylic paint

79 x 29 x 32 inches

Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

Website:

John Baldessari is one of the most important American artists of the post-war period. He spent his entire career on the West Coast, whose rich and radical openness to new ideas allowed Baldessari—as well as his fellow artists and students—freedom to invent works that challenged what were perceived art to be. Baldessari claims Marcel Duchamp as his source influence, using words to evoke images, and images to evoke ideas. Baldessari borrows post-modern theories of how language is formed, allowing him to play with the gaps, or missing information, that help form meaning. Baldessari fit in-between the LA Cool of the Fetish Finish and Pop artists of the West Coast, and like many of his peers, Baldessari “skipped” over New York to show his work in Europe, where appreciation for conceptual art was more robust. He is known primarily for shifting the use of photography as source and object, pioneering new ways to critique the ubiquity of photography and its impact on our contemporary social landscape.

Baldessari began painting in the 1950s, but in the 1960s he made simple text and image paintings that were sardonic commentary on the very nature of painting. One of his early works from the 1960s consisted of the words “Pure Beauty” painted onto a canvas—the artist wanted to give his neighbors in National City what they were looking for in art. In his 1971 show at the Rhode Island School Design, because the school had no funds for shipping art works, Baldessari instructed students at the school to write on the walls “I Will Not Make Any More Boring Work.” This generous gesture allowed students to be part of Baldessari’s work, while they were admonished not to make boring art.

Radcliffe Bailey (American, 1968-2023)

Pensive, 2013

Bronze, wood

59 x 39 1/4 x 45 1/4 inches

Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Website:

African American artist Radcliffe Bailey is part of a new generation of artists bringing the complex and often hidden realities of contemporary America to life. Bailey believes that making things very personal he can achieve a sense of human universality. He is deeply influenced by history, by family, by his community, and his work reflects an appreciation for the alternative voices that shape how we live.

Bailey first became known for a series of mixed media medicine cabinets, begun in 2003, inspired by Kongo minkisi, or power figure, objects that convey strong, symbolic spiritual resonance. Bailey uses as his muse the artists, poets, musicians, blacksmiths and artisans who came before him, weaving together images of conquest and resistance that reflect African American life today.

Actual Size Artworks (Aris Georgiades, American b. 1955 & Gail Simpson, American b. 1956)

Magical Thinking, 2019

Blackened cedar, fiberglass, foam, metal

139 x 42 x 46 inches

Website:

In his personal work, Aris Georgiades explores issues as diverse as male identity, labor economics and the landscape created in our post-industrial economy. Gail Simpson is focused on the conflict between the natural and built environment, using found or on-site materials for much of her work. Under the name Actual Size Artworks, they collaborate on a wide range of public art projects, creating human-scale sculptures that enhance and highlight the context for the works in public spaces such as libraries, a baseball stadium, an outdoor nature trail, a streetcar stop or a fire station. These social spaces allow the artists to touch a diverse range of residents and visitors, bringing complex artistic ideas to non-arts audiences.

There is a playful political dimension to most of the artist's projects. Wind socks in the shape of pointing fingers shift direction based on the invisible wind; a giant piggy bank built like the Trojan Horse suggests the perils of the banking system; giant signs in languages of the community create a visual cacophony while celebrating the diversity of our immigrant country. Their interactive works in particular allow for public interaction and prolonged contemplation, which creates a moment of calm in our frenetic modern world.