

Erwin Wurm (Austrian, b. 1954)

Half Big Suit, 2016

Lacquered aluminum

118 1/4 x 84 3/4 x 31 1/2 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong | © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / Bildrecht, Vienna.

Website:

Austrian artist Erwin Wurm works between the art world categories of sculpture and performance, fine art photography and documentation, between comedy and tragedy. He is best known for his *One Minute Sculptures*, begun in 1996, a set of objects (clothing, furniture, fruit) with simple instructions for audience interaction. While the actions themselves are more absurd than transformative, it is that gap—between meaningful gesture and futile act—that is at the heart of Wurm’s work. There is a melancholy to his familiar and hopeful objects, the artist encouraging us to still find value in the play of the everyday. Wurm also transforms real-world objects into monuments for the 21st century. In *Half Big Suit*, Wurm presents the ubiquitous business suit of the modern global economy—softened by pale pink pastel paint. This work shows cut-throat business culture transformed by the diversity of the work force and a new embrace of a work-life balance characterized by a relaxed environment. Wurm’s *Half Big Suit* up-ends the traditional subjects of monuments—kings and generals—and instead celebrates everyone who shapes and populates our community.

Bernar Venet (French, b. 1941)

97.5° Arc x 9, 2007

Corten steel

229 1/4 x 95 x 71 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Kasmin Gallery, New York | © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

Website:

French artist Bernar Venet produces sculpture, painting, drawings, music, theater sets, poetry, film, furniture and stained-glass windows. While he worked as a conceptual artist in the 1970s, not relying on the materiality of product to create his work, his constant insistence on lines—straight, curved, broken or indeterminate—is a common thread throughout his fifty-year career. Venet is a “systems” artist—he uses self-generated systems to drive the shape of his lines and arcs. Like many of the Minimalists of the 1960s and 1970s, Venet relinquished authority over his creations, yet the clarity of his vision is what links the works together.

97.5° Arc x 9, 2007, is exactly as described: the 9 lines at 97.5 degree arc bend in a permanent wind, the metal lines seeming pliant against the invisible forces of nature. While using mathematical systems to generate forms might suggest the removal of the human hand, ultimately math is rooted in nature, the artist unable to escape the very environment in which his works live. His architectural-scaled arcs and lines resist the rigidity of building geometry; his works are more like slumped building infrastructure. Venet makes something hard look soft.

Hank Willis Thomas (American, b. 1976)

Liberty, 2015

Painted bronze

114 x 29 x 29 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Shainman Gallery, New York.

Website:

New York-based artist Hank Willis Thomas explores how identity and ideas of race are shaped by the media and popular culture. Through photography, sculpture, film, installations and public art works, Thomas appropriates recognizable imagery to critique how advertisements brand us. He works through popular clichés to expose the ways they shape how we see ourselves and each other.

Sculpture Milwaukee presents *Liberty*, 2015, originally presented in New York by the Public Art Fund, which described *Liberty* as "...a life-size, candy-coated bronze sculpture derived from a 1986 found photograph of a Harlem Globetrotter. He spins a basketball on his finger, in the likeness of the *Statue of Liberty*, which is featured in the background of the image. In a digital era where electronic devices mediate our viewing experiences, the three-dimensional arm, appropriated from the photograph, invites the viewer to consider the framing and context of the images that surround us."

Bosco Sodi (Mexican, b. 1970)

Untitled, 2007

Clay

88 1/4 x 22 x 22 inches.

Courtesy of the artist and Kasmin Gallery, New York.

Website:

Mexican artist Bosco Sodi creates paintings and sculptures using materials from the earth. He has been deeply influenced by the Japanese interest in the beauty of imperfection, seeing aesthetic value in the disarray of everyday life. Throughout his work the artist juxtaposes the natural against the cultural, resisting our need to impose order on nature.

Over the past several years, Sodi has been making stacks of cubes made from the earth. These elemental building blocks, which have built cities around the globe throughout human history, take on new meaning at this scale. Out of the clay the artist coaxes a shifting palette of earth tones, which shift on each side of the cubes. These works suggest the ancient ambitions of civilization, and how our modern world dwarfs those worlds.

By placing Sodi's cubes on Milwaukee's main street, the juxtaposition of nature versus culture, modern versus ancient becomes apparent, and asks questions about the shifting urban landscapes that we create today.

Kiki Smith (German-American, b. 1954)

Seer (Alice II), 2005

Painted bronze

63 1/2 x 72 x 41 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Pace Gallery, New York.

Website:

Kiki Smith is one of her generation's most influential and richly generative artists. She was part of the New York artist collective CoLab [Collaborative Projects], whose radical reimagining of the role artists can play in shaping culture and social environments is a model for many artists working today. CoLab helped revitalize the neglected former industrial spaces of lower Manhattan, working with residents left behind by the tumultuous years of New York's near bankruptcy and the AIDS health crisis. CoLab advocated for new forms of artistic work while advocating for a broad multi-cultural arts community.

Smith is also a second wave feminist artist, alongside Barbara Kruger, Laurie Simmons, Kara Walker and Cindy Sherman. She used her own body to comment on social issues, and in the mid-1980s, studied to be an emergency medical technician to know the body's mechanics better. Smith's body works, sometimes called "abject", have an unflinching poignancy and veracity that grapples with decay and mortality. These works suggest the pathology of the body points to the pathology of our culture.

In the mid-1990s, Smith turned from the base physicality of the aging body towards fairy tales and myths, using historical female characters as alter egos of transcendence and transgression. *Alice (Seer II)*, 2005, is part of a broad body of work in sculpture, painting, drawing and prints based on Lewis Carroll's book of drawings that accompanied *Alice's Adventures Underground* (otherwise known as *Alice in Wonderland*, published 1865). In it, the hierarchy of humans and nature, adults and children is up-ended, the scale of the characters changing to suggest their role in the story. Like Alice in Carroll's story, Smith's Alice is enormous for a little girl, perched next to her imaginary pool of tears. Her figure seems otherworldly, haunted by the burden of being.

Ana Prvački (Romanian-Serbian, b. 1976)

Stealing Shadows, Michelangelo, 2007

Paint

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and 1301PE, Los Angeles.

Website:

Ana Prvački finds our daily world an unparalleled stage for artistic interventions. She resists our obsession with material things, and she applies a playful touch to her critical thinking on how we allow objects to dominate our lives. Prvački has focused on different social norms regarding personal space; on the tangible influence of ephemeral music; and has invented all kinds of contraptions that celebrate the human capacity for invention of useless things.

Sculpture Milwaukee presents Prvački's *Stealing Shadow: Michelangelo's David*. This world-renowned monument, created between 1501-1504 by Italian artist, poet and architect Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, comes from an Old Testament story about the shepherd boy David who defeats Goliath of the Philistines with a simple sling and rock. While Michelangelo elevates a commoner to the status of victor, David's face is also wrinkled with concern. By presenting *David's* shadow on the street, Prvački brings to us a monument of comfort and faith in the way we face the challenges of our own daily lives. Prvački's provocative appropriation also pokes at the long shadow this monument plays in establishing standards of public art. Artists adapt and change with every generation, and Prvački's ephemeral "monument" points to the new genres of public art that exist in our world.

Mel Kendrick (American, b. 1949)

Marker #2, 2009

Cast concrete

132 1/2 x 50 1/2 x 49 inches

Courtesy of the artist and David Nolan Gallery, New York.

Website:

Since the early 1970s, American artist Mel Kendrick has been cutting into, slicing off and boring through pieces of wood to create roughly elegant sculptures. While known primarily for his charming, fragmented wood sculptures, Kendrick has used drawing and printmaking to explore the interactions of negative and positive space. In the 1980s Kendrick began making bronze casts from existing carved or deconstructed works to continue his experimentation with ways to take apart and re-create space.

In his *Marker* series, his first large-scale works in concrete begun in 2009, Kendrick uses concrete to build architectural monuments. While the emphatic black and white banding seems decorative for the artist, in fact the striations follow a long tradition of architectural marking that dates back to the Roman era, was used in medieval Italian church architecture and erupts again in the post-modern work of architects such as Mario Botta.

It is in the *Marker* series where we see Kendrick's interest in architecture and the built environment most clearly. The scale of these works hover between body and building, between heavy and light, between horizontal and vertical. The banding anchors the works to the street, with the perforations and apertures allow us to see the sky through the work. Like a giant Rubik's cube, *Marker #2* encourages us to twist the shapes in our minds, rotating them around their central core, sliding the parts back into place. Kendrick evokes our experience of walking through the city, where each layer of building façade, billboard and signage stacks upon one another, making and unmaking the visual environment through which we move.

Robert Indiana (American, 1928-2018)

The American LOVE, 1966

Polychrome aluminum

96 x 96 x 48 inches

Collection Milwaukee Art Museum, Anonymous gift through the Greater Milwaukee Foundation (acquired from Sculpture Milwaukee 2018) © 2018 Morgan Art Foundation Ltd / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.

Website:

As part of the 1960s Pop Art generation, inspired by American post-war prosperity and the rise of modern advertising, Robert Indiana helped provide an important visual backdrop to the cultural upheaval of his time. His paintings and assemblages incorporated words and letters that evoked Madison Avenue and Main Street, providing subtle commentary on changing social relations in the country.

Like fellow Pop artists Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein and Claes Oldenburg, Indiana mined popular (or “pop”) culture for its personal and political meanings. Indiana was always noted for his deep sincerity, however, as opposed to the tongue-in-cheek work of his New York and Los Angeles-based peers, a trait which gives the work a different kind of richness.

Indiana’s *LOVE* series is iconic, with endless meanings and implications. The bold graphic style of the lettering is part of the artist’s appropriation of advertising, giving this particular work a flavorful punch. This emotionally generous and accessible body of work requires us to live up to its simple message of love. The word “love” first appeared in Indiana’s painting *Four Star Love* from 1961, and the artist used the phrase in all manner of fine art and commercial products. Indiana’s *LOVE* works went viral, but because he did not copyright it under the existing 1909 law, the artist’s brand was profoundly undermined. Indiana moved to Maine in the late 1970s, where he recently passed away.

Jessica Jackson Hutchins (American, b. 1971)

Reason To Be, 2019

Decommissioned bus shelter, stained glass, plywood

94 x 107 x 58 inches

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

Website:

Jessica Jackson Hutchins is known for her paintings and ceramic sculptures, but in the last several years has begun to create architectural insertions using fused glass. Made from cut and carved pieces of glass melted together in a kiln, this process allows the artist flexibility in creating quasi-narrative panels that mix shapes and words drawn from contemporary culture.

In her repurposed bus shelter, Jackson Hutchins replaces the functional glass walls with baroque decorative panels, some with phrases and words that recall the advertising function of these public shelters. The artist has replaced the bench with a hammock, taking participants away from the fast pace of downtown's business environment and giving works a place to rest, and perhaps to dream. Her work embraces issues of public citizenship and personal spirituality.

Gary Hume (British, b. 1962)

Bud, 2016

Bronze

75 x 11 3/4 x 11 3/4 inches

Courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery, New York and Los Angeles, and Sprüth Magers © 2018 Gary Hume / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London.

Website:

British artist Gary Hume is known for his cheerful, candy-colored paintings made with household paint, and more recently, oversized sculptures that recall the flora and fauna around us. In each distinct body of work, Hume abstracts the forms of recognizable objects, creating elegant symbols of his world.

The scale of Hume's *Bud (bronze)* is playful, standing as tall as any adult. The plant is both wondrous, the miracle of life that returns after a long Wisconsin winter, and monstrous, in its size. The piece comes off its pedestal and roots directly to the ground, its natural material appearing unnatural in the landscape.

Liz Glynn (American, b. 1981)

Untitled (Burgher with extended arm), 2014

Bronze

70 x 26 x 23 1/4 inches

Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

Website:

Through her installations, performances and sculptures, Los Angeles-based artist Liz Glynn conducts historical research that links our current world to our past. Everything is contemporary at one point in time, and Glynn reimagines how individuals might help shape future outcomes through engagement and imagination.

Untitled (Burgher with extended arm), 2014, comes from a series of performances focused on monumental sculptures in the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Glynn and her crew cast molds from 19th century French artist Auguste Rodin's work *The Burghers of Calais*, 1884-89, using Rodin's own studio practice of fragmentation and recombination to create unsettling versions of an already disquieting tableau. (Rodin depicts the moment when the Calais leaders surrender to the conquering British forces who besieged Calais from 1346-47.) While Rodin's work is monumental, its heroism of self-sacrifice veers sharply from traditional public sculptures that celebrate history's winners.

Glynn reinforces the social fragmentation of Rodin's time—the upheavals of industrialization, the jarring new forms of art pioneered by Rodin and his contemporaries—through this attenuated body. This disjointed figure speaks to the social and technological upheavals of our time, each personal pulled in different directions by our constantly changing social and economic climate.

Tom Friedman (American, b. 1965)

Hazmat Love, 2017

Stainless steel

59 1/4 x 46 1/2 x 42 1/4 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York.

Website:

Tom Friedman is one of his generation's best tinkerers. He is both a minimalist, using common materials simply, and a maximalist, creating exuberant and improbable art works from Styrofoam, spaghetti, eraser shavings, garbage bags, toothpicks, bubble gum, dust, soap and yarn. A tiny self-portrait bust the size of an aspirin is carved from soap; a box of cooked spaghetti is joined end-to-end to create a tangled ball of twine. Friedman applies painstaking processes to create surprising yet charming works that speak of the joys and frustrations of everyday life.

Since 2007, Friedman has been creating sculpture and sculptural environments made of aluminum foil, roasting pans and baking tins. The supple yet durable materials are easily shaped and keep their edges and fingerprint divots when cast into the high gloss modern material of stainless steel.

In *Hazmat Love* we see two men in protective gear wrestling—are they trying to save themselves, or each other? We can draw some paradoxical meanings from this work. Hazmat suits are specialized gear designed to protect humans from our own disasters—in the environment, perhaps in the kitchen. In the labor-intensive work, the artist shows the paradoxes of the life we humans create.

Richard Deacon (British, b. 1949)

Big Time, 2016

Paint and lacquered stainless steel

46 x 74 x 25.5 inches

Courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

Website:

Richard Deacon is part of the post-war generation of British artists reacting to the now-classic works of Henry Moore, Sir Anthony Caro and Barbara Hepworth. Deacon, who calls himself a “fabricator,” is known for experimenting with a range of traditional and non-traditional fine art materials, from laminated wood, stainless steel, corrugated iron and polycarbonate to marble, clay, vinyl, foam and leather. Deacon embraces the material quirks of each to drive the form.

In *Big Time* we can trace Deacon’s interest in juxtapositions: flat versus round, manufactured versus hand-applied. Gravity and time are Deacon’s partner in this piece, the blotches of purple paint dripping from each bulbous end and meeting in the middle of the lozenge-like forms. His forms are often playful, reminiscent of real objects in the world, but through scale and material, shifting how our bodies and minds respond to them.

Yoan Capote (Cuban, b. 1977)

Nostalgia, 2013

Bronze, bricks, concrete block

36 1/2 x 28 1/4 x 24 inches

Exhibition

Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Website:

Cuban artist Yoan Capote balances a broadly conceptual, experimental artistic practice with the realities and histories of his native Cuba. He uses different materials to express different ideas, searching for intellectual, and perhaps physical, freedom from a culture isolated by the sea. He is part of a new generation of artists testing the limits of the changing political atmosphere of Cuba and of the changing attitudes towards Cuba in the world.

For *Nostalgia*, 2013, the artist used his luggage while traveling from Havana to New York. The interior space of his suitcase, as an allegory of a window, is closed with the bricks of Manhattan. It is a piece that embodies, in a poetic manner, the situation of travel for immigrants. Our bags can contain memories and bare necessities, as well as loss and longing for what was left behind. While many of look at travel as providing life-changing adventures, for many, the suitcase may carry the weight of a lost pass.

Shana McCaw (American, b. 1974) & Brent Budsberg (American, b. 1976)

Skew, 2018

White pine, mixed media

165 x 120 x 150 inches

Courtesy of the artists.

Website:

Collaborators Shana McCaw and Brent Budsberg have been exploring the different forms of American architecture built by European immigrants, such as the artists' own families. They have staged costumed performances captured in film and photography, their lonely alter egos wandering in an open landscape or creating unknown concoctions out of the weeds and twigs of their new, unfamiliar landscape. The artists look for the ripple effects of those perilous migrations, their work traces those remnants in our current landscape. Their newest work, *Skew*, points to the skirmishes of past and present in our collectively shaped landscape, where even our buildings become stand-ins for the conflict of their makers.

Over the past few years, McCaw and Budsberg have noted the improbable shapes adopted by disused barns scattered across the Wisconsin landscape. These barns started with the well-made lines of functional buildings, but slowly, they sink into the natural forms of the land from whence they came. The buildings slump and shift under the weight of time and weather. *Skew* brings this unique rural geometry into the 21st century.

The artists have taken lumber from a white pine from a tree that fell on Budsberg's family's property in northern Wisconsin to create their modern-day "barn". Budsberg, a master craftsman, together with a small crew of skilled woodworkers, is timber-framing *Skew*, relying on modern computer tools to calculate the geometries for the shape while using the hand tools of his pioneer ancestors to frame the barn. *Skew* brings the history and scale of 19th century architecture to the state's busiest place of growth, and the stark difference between the hand-crafted and the high modern measures how rapidly our region has evolved over the past 100 years.

Sanford Biggers (American, b. 1970)

BAM (Seated Warrior), 2017

Polished bronze

78 x 24 x 24 inches

Gift of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation to America's Black Holocaust Museum 2019 (acquired from Sculpture Milwaukee 2018).

Website:

Sanford Biggers uses sculpture, painting, photography, textiles, film, installation and performance to create multi-faceted works that collaborate with the past to help us understand our present. For example, Biggers was interested in the signs and symbols of the quilts purportedly used to help slaves escape north along the Underground Railroad. Biggers has been adapting the quilt form for today, adding his own set of abstract codes that invest new meaning in the form.

Biggers is also inspired by cultures from around the globe, from Rastafarianism and Zen Buddhism to ancient Egypt and 19th and 20th-century African sculpture. In *BAM (Seated Warrior)*, 2017, Biggers casts his life-size Warrior by marking and mutilating a small wooden "power" figure, then casting it in bronze, expanding its size to both hide and exaggerate the violence done to the original. Biggers refers to the history of killings of unarmed civilians in America, the serene pose of Warrior contrasts the violence done to its body; this jarring juxtaposition is at the heart of Biggers's work. The artist sees himself as a collaborator to the African and African American artists and artisans who came before him, borrowing, enhancing and memorializing their work and struggles through his own object-making.

Ghada Amer (Egyptian- American, b. 1963)

Blue Bra Girls, 2012

Cast, polished stainless steel

73 x 60 x 54 inches

Courtesy of the artist Cheim & Read, New York © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

Website:

Egyptian artist Ghada Amer is well known for brightly-colored, embroidered “paintings” in which depictions of women, often appropriated from soft-porn magazines, are carefully stitched and sewn on the canvas. Extra thread is left to hang from the images’ contours like drips and splashes of paint, abstracting and obscuring the figures. Amer slyly pokes at the clothing restrictions imposed on women in Islamic countries, suggesting the ways in which women covertly look find ways to integrate fashion into their lives in order to express their own personal style.

Amer began her gestural paintings in art school in France to counter what she perceived as the machismo of the abstract expressionism and tachisme* of her teachers. By using the traditionally feminine, domestic activity of embroidery in a gestural manner to both decorate and obscure her figures, Amer confronts cultural objectification of the female form. Amer also refers to the fashion magazines of the Middle East, where Western fashion is modified in accordance to the more modest social mores of the region.

From the Tate on-line: tachisme is used to describe the non-geometric abstract art that developed in Europe in the 1940s and 1950s characterized by spontaneous brushwork, drips and scribble-type marks.

Magdalena Abakanowicz (Polish, 1930-2017)

The Group of Five, 2014

Bronze

70 x 90 x 48 inches

Courtesy of Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago.

Website:

Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz is one of the most important artists to come out of Poland in the post-World War II period. The artist was nine when the war broke out, and she witnessed violence both against her own family and against her fellow countrymen as a nurse's aid. Abakanowicz studied art when Socialist Realism was the only approved style, so she sought ways in which she could create work that addressed her contemporary world without censorship. She used easily accessible fabrics and soft materials, creating large constructions that could be shields, or shelter, earning her international praise.

Abakanowicz began making figurative works with fiber and burlap, the rough, tactile surfaces suggesting physical or psychological scarring earned through life. Her sitting and standing figures recall ancient Egyptian monoliths as well as mummies, a typology so universal as to be immediately recognizable wherever shown. She delved into mythical stories, such as King Arthur's Court, and the natural world, but it is her crowds of hunched backs or walking crowds that are most familiar to viewers.

Not until the late 1980s did the artist start to make her statues, pods, and animals in metal. The artist was able to maintain a sense of vulnerability of her early works while suggesting that humans can be heroic and barbaric at the same time. Abakanowicz's headless bodies suggest the loss of individuality in the crowd, the transformation from unique human to mob, a transformation that has renewed presence in our contemporary polarized world.