

KENDALL KOPPE

NICK EVANS

Ghost Sculptures

22 April – 20 May 2023

Out of Time

Enduring cultural practices are sustained by mutability. Traditions shaped by competing perspectives morph gradually to resemble and reshape the world they, in turn, are shaped by. This endurance can be mistaken for stasis, whilst a desire for stasis often denies the necessity of change that ensures endurance.

Nick Evans' sculptures deflect narrative prescription, they are positioned out of time, mindful of the countless ways the conventions of this tradition have been reconfigured. Formally reminiscent of modernist sculpture from early 20th century Europe, this body of work is deliberately ambiguous in its historicity. Metallic figures abstracted by geometry are redolent of an imagined future formulated a century ago, born of an era of accelerated technological advancement and violent struggle between competing visions of worlds to come. It is this future we now live in, bearing little resemblance to the hypothetical imaginary the artists and writers of the time envisioned. The resemblance is not nostalgic; the work does not represent a hunger for a time more in touch with utopian spirit. Nor is it conservatively yearning for an imagined past that exists richer in Evans' mind than the now. Instead it demonstrates an understanding of sculpture as a tradition that endures despite historical flux, performing an archetypal function so established it has long since negated the need for explanation.

Throughout his practice the methods and problems we understand to constitute sculpture are all in play, the plinth; the tension between figuration, abstraction and symbolism; material illusions rendered in plaster, clay, wood and stone. The conflation of carving, casting and carpentry merge in his hands and mind the same way they have at the command of countless others throughout history. Birthing objects steered by a meeting of intuition, faith, material limitations and the desire to stretch the potential of each; against the backdrop of a world which the artist describes as well as it could hope to be described. No matter what allusions a sculptor may harbour in an idea of a future or a past, imagined or otherwise, the material constrictions with which they contend persist. The mechanisms they have at their disposal endure irrespective of time or geography. Evans has as much of an awareness of his position in this regard as any artist could hope. His works are shaped by an understanding of the point where the boundaries of convention give way to a freedom that only those who submit to tradition are afforded. It is not an enterprise concerned with maintaining orthodoxy but one that understands that we must know where we are from if we are to go anywhere new. The resulting sculptures are the product of an artist who strives to imbue his works with autonomy, existing beyond himself, materially static in a world he knows will change around them. As he gives shape to these works they in turn shape him and his potential as an artist; making space for successors of the tradition in a world he has marginally shaped. Evans cannot describe the future or the past or this moment with any accuracy. He knows he is but a small part of an expansive endeavour to describe an ever changing world according to a tradition that dispenses with the limitations of language in the embrace of the material. To know this is to know the self as part of a great mystery in motion.

Michael White, 2023

Kendall Koppe is delighted to present *Ghost Sculptures* by Nick Evans. This is Evans' first solo exhibition at the gallery in its current iteration. In 2009 he showed at Washington Garcia- an artist run

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space, co-created by Kendall Koppe. This new body of work will feature in Evans' forthcoming book, *Ghost Sculptures*, which will be released later this year.

Nick Evans (born 1976 in Mufulira, Zambia) graduated from the Environmental Art course at The Glasgow School of Art in 2000, spending a year of this study at the Royal College of Fine Arts in Stockholm. In 2021 Evans gained his PhD from Northumbria University. Selected exhibitions have included: 'Ur Phenomenon', Northern Gallery of Contemporary Art, Sunderland (with Lorna McIntyre), /prospekt/ Funktion / Disfunktion – Neues Museum, Nuremberg (2013); *Solar Eyes*, Tramway, Glasgow (2013); *Primary School*, Inverleith House, Edinburgh (2008); and *Abstract Machines*, Tate St Ives, Cornwall (2006). In 2011 he was awarded the National Galleries of Scotland inaugural Artists' Fellowship Award. He lives and works in Glasgow.

Michael White is a Scottish artist who has run Céline Gallery from his home since 2015. Once upon a time, White was Nick Evans' studio assistant, one of the happiest and most enriching experiences of his artistic life; he still feels an intimate connection to Evans and his work. White's work diverges substantially from the concerns of the sculptor but he continues to be shaped by the time they spent together.

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