

In an art world of endless possibilities, can we talk about only six possibilities for a sculpture? This exhibition presents the work of five artists who embrace sculpture as an active force rather than a static object.

The art critic Rosalind Krauss once asked: “How necessary is sculpture to producing the effects of sculpture?” Her essay ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’ (1979) examined the increasingly immaterial practices within the medium. Whilst she would later bemoan the breakdown of distinctions between media, her essay was an important milestone in what became known as the post-medium condition.

The artists included in this exhibition do not limit themselves to working in any one medium, yet they all engage with the practice of sculpture, of giving physical form to their ideas. They embrace the theatricality of sculpture – once maligned as its weakness – and choose to activate their forms in various ways, sometimes literally putting them on stage.

To greater or lesser extent, they are all engaged with questions of making, of process, even of craft. As Eva Grubinger and Jörg Heiser note in their introduction to *Sculpture Unlimited* (Sternberg Press, 2012), “an interest in the history of sculpture seems to be experiencing a revival, which includes a return to traditional techniques and production methods, and may even appear strangely radical and new in our age of the Internet and simulation.” What strikes me particularly about this return to traditional techniques in the works of the artists presented here is that it is combined with a conceptual savviness, a lightness of touch, and a generous helping of humour.

Whilst the exhibition is not designed to be about the building that hosts it, it would be disingenuous to ignore entirely the heavily laden symbolism of the space. A former Masonic lodge, it has the codes of Freemasonry ingrained in its very fabric. The works in the show flirt with the totemic presence of sculpture, with its potential as a ritualistic form. Nevertheless, any rituals that the works may evoke are purely artistic, and function within the realm of contemporary art, a space that allows for great freedom and great possibility.

**Jennifer Tee** presents three floor-based pieces, each knitted from hand-dyed wool. These flat pieces are far from two-dimensional. Their crystalline forms, tactile texture and the gradation of their colouring create the illusion of relief, drawing us into their decorative and beautiful surfaces. Independent works in their own right, they are also the stage and inspiration for a new piece of choreography, created by the artist for this exhibition and performed by a dancer at La Loge on May 25th. The shapes made by her body are guided by the shapes and interactions of the floor pieces, which find a fleeting new form of expression that lasts for just a few moments.

The latency or potential of objects is explored in **Emmanuelle Lainé's** work, even if very few actual objects are presented here. Educated as a sculptor, Lainé often creates works that reveal the traces of their making: shapes presented together with their moulds, or amorphous shapes surrounded by the powders, liquids, and fibres of their construction. Here she retains this very physical approach, but presents us with a photograph. After working for several weeks in La Loge to create a site-specific installation, Lainé invited photographer André Morin to document her work, before dismantling the installation. She plays with the trompe-l'oeil possibilities that photography affords, to present a work that is at once material and ethereal.

Operating, perhaps, at a counter-current to the other artists in the show, **Robert Orchardson** takes forms that were once onstage, and translates them into abstract sculptures in a gallery setting. Intrigued by the way in which materials in a stage set can take on multiple meanings within the context of a play, he revisits Isamu Noguchi's designs for a 1955 Royal Shakespeare Company production of King Lear. This avant-garde production – hailed at the time as a failure by theatre critics – becomes Orchardson's source material for a sequence of works that defy narrative and exhibit a mute eloquence. Adapted here to work with the theatricality of La Loge's architecture, they become prototypes, carriers of ideas in a way that might previously have been described as "formalist."

Over the past few years, **Hedwig Houben** has been exploring the possibilities afforded to her by sculpture: possibilities for a better understanding of her own creative process. Her video presented here is the conclusion to the series that gave this exhibition its name. It began as an artist's talk, in which she spoke of six shapes found in her studio, examining her own reactions to them. The script from this performance was reworked several times, adding – for example – sections sung by the artist, or moments in which the sculpture under discussion joined in the debate. In the fifth and final iteration of the piece, the sculpture has become the main narrator, who uses flashbacks to discuss its own evolution and Houben's artistic choices. With an underlying humour, Houben reveals the melancholy and doubt that she encounters while making art. These emotional states are again brought to the fore in the song she has created for this exhibition, presented upstairs, called Soundtrack for a Sculpture.

While **Caroline Achaintre's** sculptures do not actually speak, somehow one imagines they might. Her ceramics are anthropomorphic and have a certain formal viscosity, as if freezing a moment of transformation from one state (or one emotion) to another. Display is a very important aspect of her work and plinths, shelves and stands have become an integral but flexible part of her pieces. Her

wall-based woollen work appears to be a tapestry, but rather than being woven, it is made with a tufting gun. Chin Chin refers to primitive patterns, animal hides, the applied arts of early Modernism or the riotous combinations of shapes and colours of Postmodernism. It also has a shamanistic quality, or something of the carnivalesque about it. While remaining too beautiful and seductive to be considered abject or deviant, there is nevertheless a subversive potential contained within Achaintre's sculptures.

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