

The exhibition “Being Here & Being Thus. Sculpture, Object & Stage” presents nine contemporary artists from Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, and the US, whose work is concerned with various aspects of sculpture. The artists combine familiar processes, such as montage, the manipulation of scale, and installation. They process and arrange things, objects, and materials as a means of either enhancing or negating their aesthetic and narrative qualities. Each element used in the process conveys meaning and is thus relevant both in terms of its specific form and its potential to be formed. A number of the works on view have been produced specifically for the exhibition.

In recent years a “material turn” has been announced in the cultural and social sciences. With the increasing digitalization of our daily lives, the material aspects of knowledge generation, social practices processes and aesthetic production are becoming more important. This new status of the materiality of things has also taken hold in the field of sculpture: Today many exciting ways of working have developed that span the once clearly defined poles of sculptures displayed on pedestals and context-based installations. Posited between “sculpture,” “object,” and “stage,” these contemporary propositions present new challenges to the functional view of material things. Some of the works of the exhibition will appear as physical correspondences or as life-like counterparts to the viewer. Others will be composed from objects, of which the original purpose can still be identified. A third group takes the form of spatial arrangements that viewers can enter and engage with as a central component of the work. All exhibited works have character, expressiveness, and immense presence, referring thereby to nothing beyond themselves. Through their physical presence they naturally assert their being and way of being, their “being thus.”

The sculptures of Simon Rübésamen demonstrate the potential of material to be formed. Recalling both serially manufactured products as well as modern sculptures, the works take on an independence, which allows one to see them as the intended creations of their maker only to a limited extent. The sculptures of Peter Buggenhout are often constructed from old building and waste materials, which are worked to the point of assuming a certain degree of abstraction. Described by Buggenhout himself as “abject things,” the works both encourage and reject any identification, thus becoming being-like counterparts to the viewer in a spatial situation. In contrast, Sofia Hultén breaks down everyday objects, such as clumps of building debris, into their basic individual components through extended, hands-on processes, only to then reconfigure them in a similar form.

The objects and arrangements of Michael E. Smith create close bonds between practical, everyday objects such as articles of clothing or tools by compressing, compacting or fastening them together. Through this kind of forced proximity Smith creates uncomfortable relationships between things

that attract and repel one another and take over the exhibition space through their unconventional presentation—inserted in niches or behind radiators. Maria Anisimowa creates three-dimensional collages and abstract portraits through the use of gathered fabric, wooden constructions as well as spotlights and mirrors. Cleverly playing on the dimensions of a given space and creating a choreography of gazes and associations between objects, these constellations are distilled into compositions that are striking in terms of both their narrative context and formal aesthetic. Sabine Kuehnle is interested in the transformation of materials through art and the shifting of an everyday object into a symbolically or mythically charged entity. In her works she thus condenses a range of materials into three-dimensional images that entail a potential surrealistic narrative.

The sculptures of Sandra Havlicek convey the potential flexibility and mobility of static objects. The sculptural works that she creates are given an added dynamism through folds and creases, painted and specially patterned surfaces. Formally recalling suitcases, transport crates, or paravants, these objects seem to be invested with a will to define alternate spaces within the exhibition space. With her stage-like installations Andrea Winkler probes the specific possibilities of exhibition spaces, scattering barriers, and directional props across a surface to break down and structure a space. It is then left to the viewer to either follow the prescribed path or break out and go a different way. Created especially for the exhibition, the “Trouble Stand Sculpture” (2014) by Thomas Moecker suggests the illusory realm of the stage through its model-like character and the mimicking of materials. The sculpture gives rise to associations with giant industrial machines or monuments and raises questions as to the proper use of proportion as well as the context and basis of making sculpture.

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