

■ The Object Sculpture

The Henry Moore Institute Leeds
June 8 to September 1

■ Joëlle Tuerlinckx

South London Gallery London May 21 to July 7

Anniversaries can be a time to reflect on the present as well as the past. To mark its 20 years of age, the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds has attempted to confront the urgent question which this centre for the study of sculpture faces today: what is sculpture now? In an odd curatorial move, director Penelope Curtis decided to invite three contemporary artists, Joëlle Tuerlinckx, Keith Wilson and Tobias Rehberger, to select a group of artists whose works might seem to answer this question. The result is 'The Object Sculpture', a curious but disappointing mix of 25 or so works, whose main effect is to reflect the subjective tastes of the three selectors. While past shows such as 'At One Remove', 1997, and 'Here and Now', 1993-1999, have already done much to show the Institute's definition of contemporary sculpture in a wider sense to include photographs, videos, paintings and language-based works, the selectors of 'The Object Sculpture' have not even attempted to find a general theme which would justify their choices.

More relevant than defining the status of sculpture now seems to have been the selectors' desire, stated in the forthcoming catalogue, to show works which 'whatever their date' would 'be contemporary in the sense that they had not yet been totally absorbed'. This accounts for the inclusion of little-known works from the mid 60s

such as Jef Geys's pastel-coloured, free-standing, wood and enamel stylised doll, *Lila*, 1965, or Paul Thek's *L-Column*, 1966, a kitsch yellow Plexiglas geometric structure whose shiny metal core is segmented at one point to reveal a square section of a wax anatomy model. A desire for newness may also have prompted the inclusion of a relatively large number of Belgian, German and Dutch artists who may be better known on the Continent than in Britain, and of two major Brazilian artists, Lygia Clark and Ana Maria Maiolino. The fashionable artworks of Liam Gillick, Jorge Pardo or Philippe Parreno have not yet had time to be 'totally absorbed'.

As the installation of the show is fragmented in space and the works isolated from each other in a conservative display, the connections between the artists remain more conceptual than physical. A dramatically-lit baroque bronze sculpture by the sculptor Medardo Rosso (1858-1928) is the main focus of a room decorated with a black velvet garland by Thomas Schütte. Like Schütte's, many works in the exhibition merge seamlessly with the two-dimensional surface of the gallery walls. Blinky Palermo's 1970 silhouette of a staircase or Gillick's recent lobby signage exist between painting and advertising, while Mel Bochner's historical conceptual work, the 1969 *Measurement: Perimeter*, runs right across the middle of all the walls, stating their individual lengths in a much less discrete manner than in the original hand-drawn versions of the piece. Pardo is represented by a book posing as a sculpture on the floor; Jimmie Durham by a book in a glass case in the corner of the entrance hall. The sound of someone misplaying Bach which accompanies a photographic work of Jonathan Horowitz leads us down a staircase to watch *The Blob*, 2001, by

Gert Verhoeven, an entertaining film of a giant pumpkin competition with an obscure philosophical commentary.

The most obvious formal contrast in the exhibition appears between Urs Fischer's delicate construction made of half a pear and half an apple dangling from a nylon string near Reinhard Mucha's *Preren*, 1984, a large, dark-painted, box-like shape balanced on a small stool on the floor. Mike Kelley's objects hidden under a knitted blanket on the floor and Maiolino's *More than a Thousand*, 1995/2002, an accumulation of identical clay snake-like shapes made on site and stacked against a wall, slowly drying and hardening during the duration of the exhibition, demonstrate how some of the best recent sculpture successfully explores the horizontal space of the floor. This horizontality carries with it evocations of childhood which take on a more playful dimension in Matt Mullican's colourful wooden elements evoking both molecules and billiard balls, and Lygia Clark's hinged metal sculpture which is supposed to be physically manipulated by viewers.

These object-like three-dimensional works emerge, however, as exceptions in an exhibition which explores the limits of visibility of artworks, whether in Ann Veronica Janssens' humorous invitation to create our own 'coloured, sparkling geometric patterns' by pressing our fingers on our eyeballs, or Olafur Eliasson's transformation of a reading room in the Institute's library by bathing it in an eerie orange sodium light. Although the status of the artwork as an object is a concern for all three selecting artists, I think the precarious border between visibility and invisibility has been most successfully explored by Joëlle Tuerlinckx in her work exhibited at the South London Gallery.

Tuerlinckx herself works at the crossroads of conceptual art and sculpture, making the possibilities of the exhibition space the very subject of her installation. Appearing at first glance as a random and messy arrangement of objects, her current exhibition 'In Real Time' is a careful composition of additions and subtractions to the architecture of the large and somewhat daunting white room that comprises the gallery. Objects posing as planks of wood of varying sizes and colours lean casually against the walls, revealing themselves on closer inspection to be made out of colour photocopies stuck on cardboard. Holes have been drilled in the walls between the main room and the adjacent toilets; a door has simultaneously been highlighted in fluorescent pink paint and definitively condemned with the word 'closed' hastily written on it in black. Another door has been removed from the ladies' toilets and used to carve out a pink disk which reappears, placed against the wall in the main room, accompanied by other circular records of different colours which mirror the circular shapes which are part of the room's architecture. The key to the installation is contained in a half-hidden display case on the floor which discreetly points to Tuerlinckx's unique DIY working process.

By defining sculpture as simple but effective interventions in the space of a gallery, pointing to the boundaries between inside and outside, hidden and visible, Tuerlinckx's work provides a far better answer to the question posed by 'The Object Sculpture' than any work in the exhibition. ■

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