

Align	Leaned (incline)
Attracted/drawn to	Level
Buoyant – BARRY UNDERWOOD	Placed – PAUL O'KEEFFE
Balanced	Plumb – JEFF GRANT
Cantilever (to project/levitate)	Positioned (put in place) – PETER KREIDER
Collapsed – JEANNE SILVERTHORNE	Pulled
Compressed – DEWITT GODFREY	Propped (kept from falling)
Draped – ALEX SETON	Raised/lifted – STEPHEN SCHOFIELD
Dragged/tow	Rolled
Deposit (released) – ROXY PAINE	Sag – TONY FEHER
Drop – BILL ALBERTINI	Stacked – RUSSELL MALTZ
Equilibrium – BETH CAMPBELL	Stable (secure)
Entropied	Supported
Fallen (toppled)	Submerge (sink)
Flow/poured/spilled – CURTIS MITCHELL	Suspended – ROBERT GERO
Fixed/held down	Set into motion
Horizontal – BRIAN GAMAN	Vertical
Hung	Volume
Inert (heavy)	Warped/twisted
Insubstantial (lightweight) – SARAH KABOT	Weightless

GRAVITY OF SCULPTURE: PART II

BILL ALBERTINI, BETH CAMPBELL, TONY FEHER, BRIAN GAMAN, ROBERT GERO, JEFF GRANT, DEWITT GODFREY, SARAH KABOT, PETER KREIDER, RUSSELL MALTZ, CURTIS MITCHELL, ROXY PAINE, PAUL O'KEEFFE, ALEX SETON, STEPHEN SCHOFIELD, JEANNE SILVERTHORNE, AND BARRY UNDERWOOD

Curated by Saul Ostrow

May 5 – July 3, 2013

Opening reception: Sunday, May 5, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

It seems such a natural thing today, to go to a “sculpture” exhibition and find videos playing, photographs displayed, or installations of things—ready-made objects lying about, or piles of detritus. This is because the term “sculpture” by the late 1970s, had come to include all manner of events (actions and performances), materials (plastics, resins, rubbers, etc.), media (photography, film, video and electronics) and modes of presentation (site-specific installations, street works, documentation, etc.). “Sculpture” as a term had been transformed into the catchall and as a discipline it no longer had an identity of its own. The term served primarily as a way to link post-conceptual production and practices with the traditional art it was meant to displace.

“Sculpture” had not always been a dumping ground for the new. Even during the early 70s it continued to be defined by a series of frames which artists pushed up against, or sought to prove non-essential. Though there were artists—those associated with Fluxus, or the international avant-garde who sought to dismantle art all together—even they

needed art’s various forms and discourses to validate their own practices. Consequently, from the post-war period, till the end of Modernism in the 70s, “Sculpture” remained significantly focused on producing 3-dimensional “abstract” objects, though in some cases these had come to exist on a monumental or architectural scale.

Of course, early Mark di Suvero, Alan Kaprow, or such West Coast artists as Bruce Connor or Ed Kienholz can all be invoked to dismiss my premise, yet such artists were the exception to the rule. Their endeavor along with their European counterparts would eventually contribute to displacing the Modernist model in that they sought to escape the burden and confines of the transcendental essentialism, which had come to be idealized by the formalist reading of Abstract Expressionism (AbEx). Similar to the Nouveau Réaliste in France, Zero Group in Germany, and Gutai in Japan, these artists along with the Pop artist sought art’s redemption through the mundane and unexceptional. In form, content and materiality the work produced emphasized a fierce sense of the vulgar, the abject and the physicality of the everyday life.

Given the account of modernism constructed in the U.S. after World War II, much of the work by those artists who were deemed as non-modernist, non-mainstream came to be excluded. If they were included, their work was represented as the glitches that proved the rule. To

this day, these artists within that account continue to represent, what Gilles Deleuze refers to relative to Franz Kafka, as a minor history—one that exists outside of (or in opposition to) the narrowing, technical and conceptual confines of “the discipline.” So, initially my intention in organizing this exhibition was to rethink sculpture as a discreet object—as a concrete thing—something phenomenal, rather than textual (anecdotal) or pictorial.

What led me to this loose definition of sculpture as a discreet “object” was two-fold: First, I was interested in what terms might now be used to establish the identity of sculpture as a specific category of objects. The inspiration to re-explore this theme was my reflecting upon the work of Urs Fischer, whose project seems to entail employing indifferently all of sculpture’s established formats as if to map the field. My second goal was to offer up a history of sculpture’s engagement since the 50s, with certain concerns, issues, and strategies. The resulting exhibition was therefore meant to be a snapshot (a family portrait) of sculpture after it had climbed down off its pedestal, plinth, or base.

The moment that sculpture became a thing sharing our space was instigated by the trio of Brancusi, Picasso and Duchamp who initiated sculpture’s transition from image and effigy to object. I perhaps start with Picasso, whose cardboard constructions (in the form of guitars) would influence Tatlin’s counter reliefs, existing between the assemblage and the readymade and might be thought of as the precursor to the innovations of Brancusi and Duchamp—Brancusi because he introduces the assemblage, from which one cannot separate base from sculpture. Duchamp’s Readymades in turn, makes explicit that



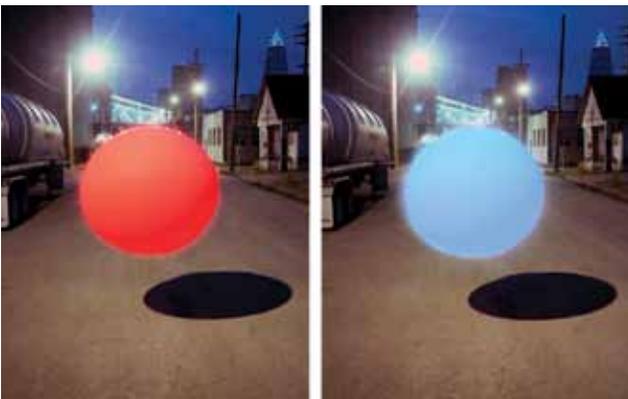
DeWitt Godfrey *Europos Study*, 2011



Jeanne Silverthorne *exit with fan*, 2005



Alex Seton *Half Full*, 2013



Barry Underwood *Merwin Avenue, The Flats*, 2012



Curtis Mitchell *Untitled (Tap Water)*, 1990



Roxy Paine *Scumak (red)* S2-P2-CR14, 2007

real world objects could be employed as signifiers and to be so, merely need to be in some way re-oriented.

The conversion of sculpture to object was not a cathartic or visceral experience, but primarily a cognitive one that looked at expression not as an indefensible release but a cerebral exercise. The constructed object, the ready-made, and the assemblage opened the door to the promised convergence of art and life. Reciprocally, by extending the idea that anything and everything could be used to make art, the parameters of art's formal and expressive media came to be re-defined, and this led to reformulation of artistic practice. Therefore, by the late 70s, all that stood between the art audience and a world full of potential sculptures was a historically defined conceptual, critical and institutional framework.

The objects put into the world in the name of sculpture that contributed to the discourse of "the Object", no matter how unintentional they may look, are about choices informed

by experience, rather than associations. These works involved a special mix of reasoning—understanding both the tools and methods of perception and cognition relative to reception, analysis and reconstruction within the context of various anti-histories (why) and theories (what). With the exception of the Constructivist and those artist associated with Arte Concrete (who themselves were historically marginalized) this model from the early 20th century came to be set aside for the most part through most of the mid-century (1920s - late 50s). It had been displaced by surrealism, and figural abstraction (expressionism) in the 30s and 40s, that had resulted in the near abandonment of sculpture. Then in the late 50s to early 60s, artists such as George Sugarman, Louise Bourgoise, Philippe Pavia, David Smith, and Mark di Suvero influenced by AbEx, finally shed sculpture's residual symbolic dimension, taking sculpture off its pedestal altogether so that the viewer and object occupy the same space.

Sculpture, as something no longer set apart, had come to be re-defined as a source of experience and reflection bound to material and spatial relationships. The consequence of this re-ordering allowed the terms and conditions of sculpture to be physically isolated and indexed—sculpture was to no longer be pictorial, or narrative. The acceptance of this led to the idea of sculpture as a self-referential object resulting in the works of artists such as John Chamberlain and Anthony Caro's, which rationalized sculpture by emphasizing the logic of its construction, its opticality, and material specificity. Ironically, this gave way to a reductive logic of the Minimalism and the schematization, and standardization of sculpture. This development also encouraged painters such as Frank Stella, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Mangold, and Anne Truitt to stress painting's objecthood, and sculptors (e.g. Michael Steiner, and Lyman Kipp) to push sculpture toward the pictorial to make explicit the shared qualities of these supposedly opposing forms.

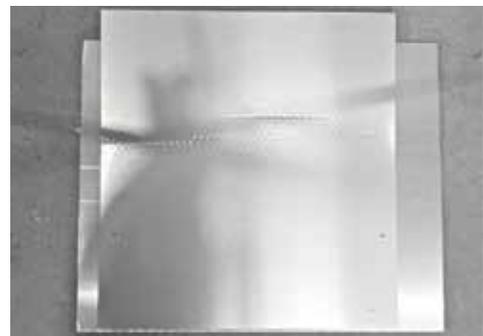
Though often thought to be antitheti-



Bill Albertini *(Hand) Cube Drop*, 1998-2013



Beth Campbell *There's no such thing as a good decision (fuzzy logic)*, 2011



Brian Gaman *Untitled (Afterlife of One and One)*, 2010



Tony Feher *Matrix 201a at the Berkeley Art Museum*, 2002

cal to one another—in actuality what differentiates the Minimalism from Formalism are their respective approaches to form—Minimalists used standard geometry, and reductive systems while the formalist intuited their works’ composition. Minimalists and Formalists had common approaches to materials (both groups used non-standard industrial materials), form (non-illusionistic structures) and industrial processes (having abandoned traditional crafts such as casting and carving). The Minimalist adapted abstract art to the systemic and performative logic of mass production while the Formalist continued to engage what might be thought of as the pictorial. Meanwhile, on the West Coast, Frosty Myers, John McCracken, Larry Bell, Ron Cooper, Mary Corse, among others, had developed their own form of minimalism—Finish Fetish—characterized by a propensity for new materials (plastics and resins) and high industrial finishes.

So in thinking about what an object is, I settled upon definition which identifies an object as something that is perceived as an entity, and referred to by a name—and is inanimate—as such it that can be thought of as a thing.

In this context I remembered that Tony Smith had made his steel cube, titled “Die” just big enough so the average viewer could not see its top—his reasoning was that if it were any bigger than it would become monumental, and as such no longer an object. Following this line of reasoning, I thought about what all objects might have in common—that is what is it that acts upon objects. Consequently, I decided on “gravity” as the thematic trope to pull together what for me is a field of things resulting from diverse practices and histories.

The term “gravity” also permits me to employ a pun—using two of gravity’s meanings to modify (act upon) the noun sculpture. The dual referents for the word gravity are *seriousness* (the enormity/importance of a situation), and force, the physical attraction



Peter Kreider *Tetraluna*, 2009



Jeff Grant *Red point*, 2011

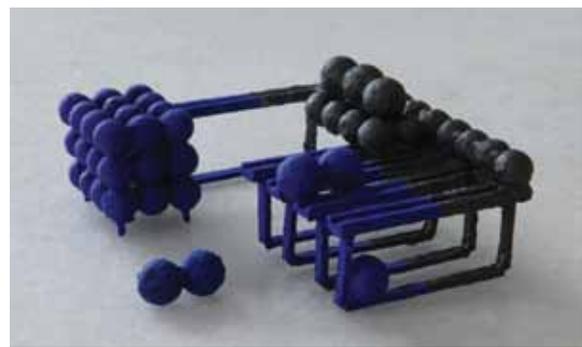
that one object exerts on another. Given my concerns, all of the works to be included in this exhibition in some manner either employ or exploit the latter as an organizing principle. The next step was to take up my trusty thesaurus and make a list of terms *a la* Richard Serra. Where his famous list was of processes, my list gave me a series of structural characteristics and categories:

plumb (vertical), level (horizontal), lean (at rest, or inclined), raised (lifted), etc. My original plan was to pair two artists to each term: one from the period 60-70s, the others from the 1990s to the present.

As you might note, I excluded the 80s. The reason for



Stephen Schofield *The Sexton and the Gentle Shade*, 2012



Paul O’Keeffe *Transblucency*, 2013



Sarah Kabot *Untitled (Openwork)*, 2013

this is that during that period the processes of signification and mechanical reproduction came to replace those concerns that had focused on the experience of process and duration, as such the art object again came to be understood as primarily a signifier, or a means of representation. This was due to a growing awareness of the impact of visual media on society and culture, which persuaded many artists in this period to seek to transform art into a tool responsive to the ideological, theoretical and rhetorical prejudices that define the cultural ecology of consumption and exchange. By re-formulating the questions as to the nature of the boundary between cultural (art) and the social (non-art/life) their works investigated differing systems of agency. Such an emphasis on recognizable subject matter, social context, and extra aesthetic explanations were a response to a desire on their part for more

cohesion, and comprehension which in the main produce a specificity of meaning. In keeping with this, the first wave of Post-Modernists—Jeff Koons, Haim Steinbach, Alan McCullom, Sherri Levine, etc.—made comment on art's commodification and our own ignominious (and often puerile) tastes, desires and subjectivity. Artists as stylistically and conceptually diverse as Maureen Connor, Robert Gober, Mike Kelly, Kiki Smith and Mathew Barney dealt with the representation of the body. In the main they sought to address its anaesthetized and objectified state.

While an emphasis on imagery and social contexts persist, the evolving definition of contemporary practices, stresses the fact that we have the freedom to research and investigate through art, what is known and what still might be known and that this might be manifested in virtually any manner. This has brought some artists back to the notion of phenomenally, rather than metaphorically establishing the limits and terms of identity of those things that they produce. *The Gravity of Sculpture* represents, a partial index of the types of 3-dimensional objects whose structures, processes, and appearances tend to be their most significant content. In plain-speak, this



Russell Maltz *Painted/Stacked Miami*, 2012



Robert Gober *Trespassing on Infinity*, 2013

means the works presented here regardless of their media, means, form, or historical references avoid theatricality, function procedurally, and exist as events, rather than as signs (representation). What they share is a commitment to drawing our attention to the complex interchange between objects, materiality and phenomena that informs the ways we come to know, understand and act.

Due to the limitations of resources, budget, and space, this exhibition—this text, and the few examples of 50s -70s work I've been able to include will have to serve to set the historical context for the works from the 90s through to the present that have been assembled. As can be seen from this small sampling of artists, Modernist, Minimalist, and post-Minimalism's Minimalist's strategies as well as conceptual, and materialist concerns are employed to assert the object's potential as a self-referential source of information or commentary. Rather than seeking to reveal the ambiguity of assigned meaning, these artists

even when using figural means focus on the concreteness and specificity of the object and its relationship to the perception and cognition of the viewer. In this the work might be thought to be about nothing but the articulation and exploration of their own limitations as material and aesthetic propositions. While this may make them sound to be formalists, they do not subscribe to a reductive formalism of inherent or essential structures but one of necessities dictated by conception, and affect. In this content dictates form. They do this by testing the limits of how material relationships are established, take on new forms, and potentialities are made sense of, or alternately, where and how these may fall apart and become senseless. In this context, the object as a signifier functions as a self-referential source of information and experience ("gravity" as attraction), while signifying the fractured narratives of origins, identity, relationships, discernment, and reception ("gravity" as importance). ■

— Saul Ostrow,
New York, 2013

BIOGRAPHY

Saul Ostrow is an independent critic, and curator, the Art Editor at Lodge for Bomb Magazine and the former Chair of Visual Arts and Technologies at The Cleveland Institute of Art (2002-2012.) In 1996 he terminated his studio practice, after having exhibited nationally and internationally for over 20 years. In 2011, he founded Critical Practices Inc. (www.21stprojects.org) to promote critical discourse. Its two core programs are: 21StPROJECTS, which sponsors viewings of artists' works, and La Table Ronde (initiated in 2012,) which organizes roundtable discussions on critical and theoretical cultural issues. Previously, Ostrow served as Co-Editor of Lusitania Press (1996-2004) and as the Editor of the book series Critical Voices in Art, Theory and Culture (1996- 2006) published by Routledge, London. As a curator he has organized over 70 exhibition in the US and abroad. His critical writings have appeared in art magazines, journals, catalogs, and books in the USA and Europe. He and the artist, Charles Tucker have since 2008 collaborated on a project in which they seek to construct a quantifiable "systems-network" by which to analyze the subject and content of art-works. In 2012, he with the artist Lidija Slavkovic began a series of collaborative projects titled "An Ambition" that focuses on the question of "how images signify?".

CHECKLIST

BILL ALBERTINI

(HAND) CUBE DROP, 1998-2013
LCD display hung vertically, looping video of cube drops (12 iterations), 18 Plexi cubes 12 in square positioned on the floor 1 x 40 in
Courtesy of the artist

BETH CAMPBELL

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A GOOD DECISION (FUZZY LOGIC), 2011
Painted steel wire
60 x 36 x 30 in
Courtesy of the artist

TONY FEHER

TBD - SITE SPECIFIC INSTALLATION, 2013
Yellow polyvinyl rope
Dimensions TBD
Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co. and the artist

BRIAN GAMAN

UNTITLED (AFTERLIFE OF ONE AND ONE), 2010
Aluminum
23 x 20 x 1 1/2 in
Courtesy of the artist

ROBERT GERO

TRESPASSING ON INFINITY, 2013
Wood, foam, steel, video
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

JEFF GRANT

RED POINT, 2011
BLUE POINT, 2011
Pin, clip, acetate, and computer print on paper
14 5/8 x 11 x 3/4 in
Courtesy of LMAK Projects

DEWITT GODFREY

"EUROPES STUDY, 2011
Galvanized steel and stainless steel machine screws
84 x 48 x 48 in
Courtesy of the artist

SARAH KABOT

UNTITLED (OPENWORK), 2013
Archival pigment print
25 x 90 x 5 in
Courtesy of the artist

PETER KREIDER

TETRALUNA, 2009
Acrylic, epoxy, paint
14 x 14 x 14 in
Courtesy of the artist

RUSSELL MALTZ

PAINTED/STACKED MIAMI, 2012
Day-Glo enamel on plywood and PVC pipes stacked against the wall
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of Minus Space and the artist

CURTIS MITCHELL

UNTITLED (TAP WATER), 1990
Water, paper, binder clips
107 x 107 in
Courtesy of the artist

ROXY PAINE

SCUMAK (RED)
S2-P2-CR14, 2007
Low density polyethylene
29 x 30 x 16 in
Courtesy of the artist

PAUL O'KEEFFE

TRANSBLUCENCY, 2013
Steel, hydrocal, ultracal, micaceous iron oxide, graphite, flashe paint
41 x 76 x 84 in approx.
Courtesy of the artist

ALEX SETON

HALF FULL, 2013
Statuario marble and glass
12.5 x 5 x 7.5 cm
Courtesy of Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney and the artist

STEPHEN SCHOFIELD

THE SEXTON AND THE GENTLE SHADE, 2012
Cloth, sugar, glue, ABS pipe
73 x 75 x 90 1/2 in
Courtesy of Joyce Yahouda Gallery, Montreal and the artist

JEANNE SILVERTHORNE

EXIT WITH FAN, 2005
Rubber and phosphorescent pigment
84 x 48 x 24 in
Courtesy of David McKee Gallery and the artist

BARRY UNDERWOOD

MERWIN AVENUE, THE FLATS, 2012
Archival pigment print
50 x 40 in panels (diptych)
Courtesy of the artist

Cover: **Saul Ostrow**, *Gravity Index: word list*, 2012

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Noah Dorsky for his dedication and patience in working with me, and David Dorsky, for his continued support over the years as well as the Dorsky Gallery Curatorial Programs for their interest and support in this exhibition. I am also grateful to the artists in the show for their responsiveness and generosity often on short notice in particular Tony Feher, Roxy Paine and Jeanne Silverthorne. I would also like to thank Susan Bowman without whose support much of what I do would not be possible. I would like to also acknowledge Juan Puentes, of White Box, NY for his input and support in developing this exhibition.



Like us on Facebook
Follow us on Twitter



This exhibition, publication, and related programming are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

D O R S K Y G A L L E R Y | Curatorial Programs

11-03 45th Ave., Long Island City, NY 11101 | T: 718 937 6317 | F: 718 937 7469 | E: info@dorsky.org | www.dorsky.org

A not-for-profit 501(c)(3) tax deductible organization.