Welcome to World Sculpture News

Sculpture at the start of the 21st century has many beguiling faces. These seduce the artist to take up the three-dimensional challenge. It may turn out to be something that they will enjoy, but it is never-ending and tough, as in every artistic endeavor every artist dreams of making something so different that it changes the face of their art practice and that of others. A great part of the success of the eminent French sculptor and conceptual artist Bernar Venet is due, one suspects, to his knowing that to stray too far from one's deepest held ambitions and visions is to risk failure. Through his unique perspective on art-making and his creative flair Venet has sought to present conceptual narratives for our new era.

This is also true for the New Zealand artist Gill Gatfield. Gatfield's minimalist and conceptual abstract sculptures and site-specific works are powerful social and political statements heightened by her attention to her materials, which are often precious and unique. She recently created an epic work entitled *Glass Ceiling* (2019), "a monumental work of smashed glass, filling and virtually overflowing the base of a waterfront silo." Here smashed glass lends the work an extraorindary powerful visual quality that speaks to its site-specific nature with dramatic force. It is easy to read a wide range of private and public metaphors from Gatfield's sculpture and installations: "political 'glass ceiling,' a metaphoric barrier obstructing the advancement of women and minority groups in public life," is the most obvious.

While many artists turn to their community's immediate social and political concerns, others, such as the Mongolian painter and sculptor Munkhtsetseg Jalkhaajav (known as Mugi), mine ancient traditions to inform their art. Mugi, a deeply serious and engaging artist, speaks to her traditions in all her sculpture. Her sculptures bridge the surreal and the figurative that is often anthropomorphic. Her sculptures embrace personal and traditional narratives that address the struggles of women in a society that remains thoroughly connected to the past. Her art is a deeply human one.

Any land art biennale presents innumerable physical, material, and aesthetic challenges for even the most sophisticated artist. And so it was for the Singaporean performance artist and ceramicist Jason Lim, who was the only Asian artist to participate in the *2018 Kjerringøy Land Art Biennale*, at Nevelsfjord, northern Norway. He faced not only the aesthetic challenges but also those of the weather and the intense physical presence of mountains, dense forests, cold water, and a rocky shoreline, something so different from the landscape of tropical Singapore. But once he met the challenges head on, he discovered a place of great personal freedom, a place where he could be one with nature, a quite magical experience.

Sculpture, its physical range and aesthetic depth, never fails to impress me. While some works are still made to praise people and events uncritically, it now, more than ever, embraces all aspects of our turbulent and troubled world, even presenting some comic relief from the harsh realities of life. Such was the case at the art fairs during Hong Kong's recent *Art Week*.

Ian Findlay-Brown
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