

GROUP EXHIBITION

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**PERPETUAL BLISS - FORM, SYMBOL AND MATERIAL IN CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE**

PARIS DEBELLEYME

09 Oct 2003 - 08 Nov 2003

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Is it truly possible to define sculpture today? Throughout the XXth century sculpture has never ceased to call its own foundations into question; in this respect it is symptomatic of artistic revolutions and their renewal.

From the questioning of its own basis – see, for example, Rodin's "The Burghers of Calais" – that, from this period, was to accompany the abandon of allegory and realism as far as the rejection of noble materials, sculpture has undergone such transformation that any attempt to define its contours is a challenge.

Barnett Newmann stated that "sculpture is what you bump into when you back up to see a painting". Beyond this provocative statement – sculpture as something that is not – it is necessary to understand the difficulty of getting to grips with an art form that following a series of surrenders – of subject, of narration, of its own durability through the use of organic and unstable materials – is seeking its destiny.

The major figures in contemporary art are represented here: from Balkenhol to Tony Cragg, from Not Vital to Sylvie Fleury. This exhibition does not aim to be exhaustive, but rather to be a panorama of contemporary sculpture, this language within space.

That the sculptures of Balkenhol – figurative subjects shaped directly from wood – and those of Tom Sachs – reproduction of a space shuttle on a diverse scale using foam – have little in common is an understatement. Nevertheless, their destiny does: it is truly in this confrontation, in this "body to body" of a 3 dimensional object and of ourselves that this object exists as a sculpture.

It is certainly possible to connect certain sculptures to, shall we say, a more figurative tradition: from Gormley who uses his own body as a model for his metallic sculptures to Donald Baechler with his bouquet of flowers in bronze or Liza Lou with her sculptures covered in pearls. Whereas Rockenschaub with his inflatable sculptures interrogates the very matter of a work of art. The "Word Pieces" of Jack Pierson are made up of an assembly of sign lettering: is this really sculpture or, rather, painting? These sculptures are related to signs as may be seen in the neon work by Sylvie Fleury, "Perpetual Bliss". You could call it a language. They make up nothing less than that which we may still call Sculpture.

It can be seen: the vast panorama that this exceptional exhibition offers us is in the image of the adventure that sculpture is still undertaking: a definition to come, in the making.