

Research Paper/Presentation Proposal to the 4th International Conference on Artistic and Arts-based Research, School of Arts, Design and Architecture, Aalto University, Helsinki Finland.

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Title of Paper/Presentation: Reading Artistic Models and Cultural Codes in Contemporary Sculpture

Key Words: Modernism, Avant-garde, Cultural Codes, Artistic Models, Contemporary Art

ABSTRACT:

More than any other art form sculpture deserves the historical distinction of being the most adaptive and experimental of artistic disciplines. If sculpture at the present time seems set on redefining itself again it is in keeping with long standing traditions. Of late it appears artists are doing so in the context of many key formal and stylistic tropes of European-centered Modernism. That early-mid Modernist avant-garde art experiments were inflected by the cultural appropriation of non-Western art and cultural forms and expression is to rightly acknowledge their cultural subordination to 'modernist totalization' [Enwezor]; but it is also to recognize the enduring significance of how these forms, that is to say how alternative ways of working and ways of thinking promoted pluralization of mainstream Modern art. And now in the 21st century contemporary art is 'restless', has 'unfixed boundaries', 'multiplicities', is in the state of 'permanent transition', and the way '[...] it is practiced and communicated, contemporary art tends to be much more resistant to global totalization.' [Enwezor]

My paper and illustrated presentation topic will examine contemporary sculpture through a lens of reference to artistic models and cultural codes in the context of research, and in the production and reception of art. I will specifically focus on the work of three contemporary artists: Valérie Blass (Montreal); Katherine Pickering (Kelowna); and Dora Economou (Athens). Through the work of these artists and other examples my presentation will address a renewed interest in Modernist sculptural traditions adapted to contemporary artistic practice within broader conditions of relationality, differentiation, and co-implication in cultural content, their references and art historical models.

Illustrations are found on the following pages.

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Dora Economou, A Modern Hug, 2013, Studio Installation, various media



Katherine Pickering, 2016, Untitled, (echo - red) acrylic on canvas, 28x28x12 inches.



Valérie Blass, *High-Up, dignitary, panjandrum, high muckamuck*, 2015, Styrofoam, foamcoat, gouache, steel, rubber, inkjet print on cotton, metal hanging structure. 101 X 121 X 62 inches.