

WORLD
SCULPTURE NEWS

HK\$55/US\$7/
CAN\$7/£3.50/€6

VOLUME 19 NUMBER 1 WINTER 2013



P. GNANA



Christy Gast * Erwin Wurm * Six
Israeli Sculptors * Hong Kong Int'l
Sculpture Symposium * Reviews

AUSTRALIA

Sydney

Kirsteen Pieterse
at Martin Browne
Contemporary

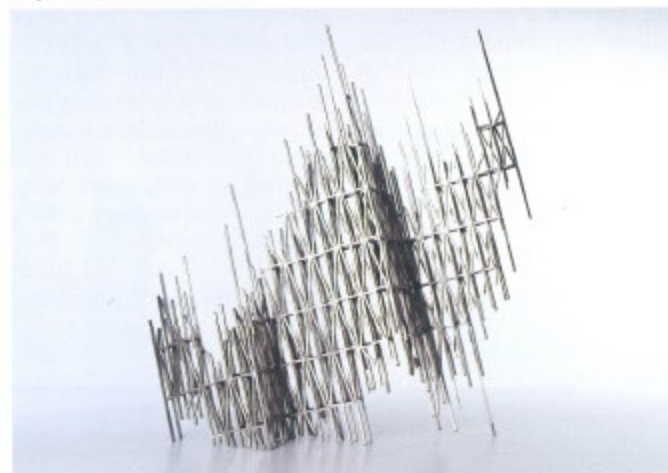
Holding unknowns, Kirsteen Pieterse's fourth solo exhibition with Martin Browne Contemporary, and first in their new Paddington space, was a stunning signature show. Her recent move to Hong Kong, which is a city known for its dramatic vertical skyline, in turn has impacted her work's dense geometric constructions. The results are outstanding.

Pieterse's sculptures have largely been 'built environments,' echoes of an urban-scape suffering under the slippage of aesthetic anarchy. Exquisitely constructed from marine-grade stainless steel and acrylic rods, she has fused these disparate materials for the first time. It was not simply an exercise in materiality. These new constructions are blatantly anchored in the realm of poetic narrative, a curious spin on geometric abstraction.

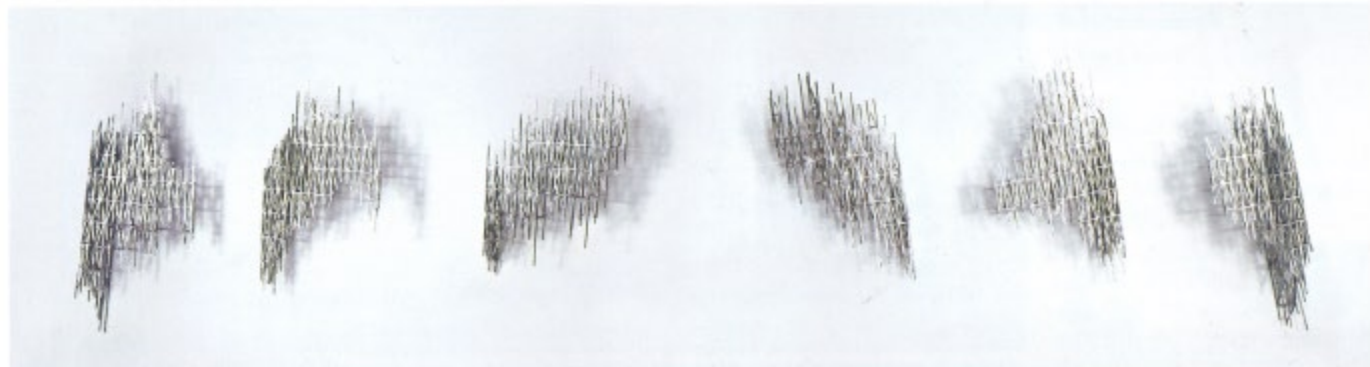
Pieterse has called them "cloud studies ... the moment of intersection when the uncontainable form of the cloud meets the hard, uncompromising lines of the architecture." Visually we can read this as the sequential passage of clustered acrylic rods from left to right across a mirrored stainless steel form, superbly illustrated through the series of six pedestal-based sculptures *Strata Nimbus* (2012), or the more abridged version, *Low Cloud* (2012).



Kirsteen Pieterse, *Strata Nimbus 6*, 2012, mirrored stainless steel and acrylic rod, 86 x 60 x 25 cm.



Kirsteen Pieterse, *Coast*, 2013, marine-grade stainless steel, 80 x 75 x 35 cm.



Kirsteen Pieterse, *Journey*, 2013, marine-grade stainless steel, 120 x 500 x 38 cm. Images: courtesy the artist and Martin Browne Contemporary.

As structures they teeter, defying the principles of construction. It is, however, not collapse with which these new works flirt: They seem to be wind-swept or lean stoically into the elements. It is an illusion, or implied motion, that instills excitement when viewing.

It is fleshed out through the animated cast of shadows as one moves around the gallery space. The acrylic rods take on the metaphor of clouds; masses that move across an architectural landscape momentarily rendering it invisible or vertically dissected. Hong Kong's shifting skyline has become the progenitor for action, not the structure itself.

When the works are cast against the gallery's white walls, one is drawn into Pieterse's visual theatrics. Sadly, an impact wall, painted blue, while making the sculptures pop as a group, swallowed the shadows of *Strata Nimbus* containing the objects to their pedestals.

Mirroring the *Strata Nimbus* series was a second series of six constructions of like-scale that protruded precariously off the gallery wall, and sat in direct contrast to the pedestal-based works. The distinctive L-shaped forms of the series, *Journey* (2013), both scooped volume into the object and yet rendered it void.

The artist cited their inspiration as Ap Lei Chau (also known as Aberdeen Island) jutting out at right angles. Such an articulated angle has created deep shadows that give the object a broader presence, but one that feels muddled, ill-defined due to their distance from the wall. They seemed to lack the finesse of form the other



Lindy Lee, *One Billion Worlds*, installation view at Roslyn, Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, 2012. Image: Courtesy of the Artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery.

sculptures in the show possess.

What was conclusive across all works was their drawn aspect. The subtlety of the stroke has long been key to the visualization of Pieterse's sculptures, drawings articulated in the hard line of steel or the light ethereal gestures of acrylic, their paired shadows in conversation or completing with the tangible stroke. The genesis of understanding this drawn weight was illustrated through *Holding Unknowns*, a series of small ink-on-paper works, ghosts of erased lines against determined strokes echoing the physical form of the adjacent sculptures.

Kirsteen Pieterse has not opted for spectacle; she has left that to the clouds that have inspired this exhibition. There was honesty to this work that was strangely palpable. The truth rests with Pieterse's technical capability. Looking at her work over the years I see that it remains consistently flawless and with an impact equal to sculpture's heavy metal giants.

Gina Fairley



Lindy Lee at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery

While much has been made of Lindy Lee's Australian-Chinese heritage, explored during her early career through appropriated and duplicated portraits,

her devout practice of Zen Buddhism has obliterated such need for definition of the self, finding liveness through abstraction.

Her use of the elements fire and water as drawing tools emancipated Lee's *oeuvre* moving beyond identity-based frames and challenging conventions. Fire, for Lee, is less about spectacle, something we are familiar with in the work of Cai Guoqiang and Australian painter Tim Storrier. Rather Lee fuses its Eastern attributes of dynamism, strength, and persistence with a Western vernacular of abstraction.

Extending that idea, last year she turned to metal for the first time, and this exhibition, entitled *One Billion Worlds*, fused the energy of fire with metal. One would imagine an exhibition of works made from thrown molten bronze and a soldering iron would hardly

evoke tranquility, but at the risk of sounding clichéd, it was enlightening.

Comprised of three quite different bodies of work it sat in exquisite harmony: verticals balanced horizontals, light faced darkness, voids gave weight to form, and bronzes were defined, in parts, floating with uncharacteristic lightness.

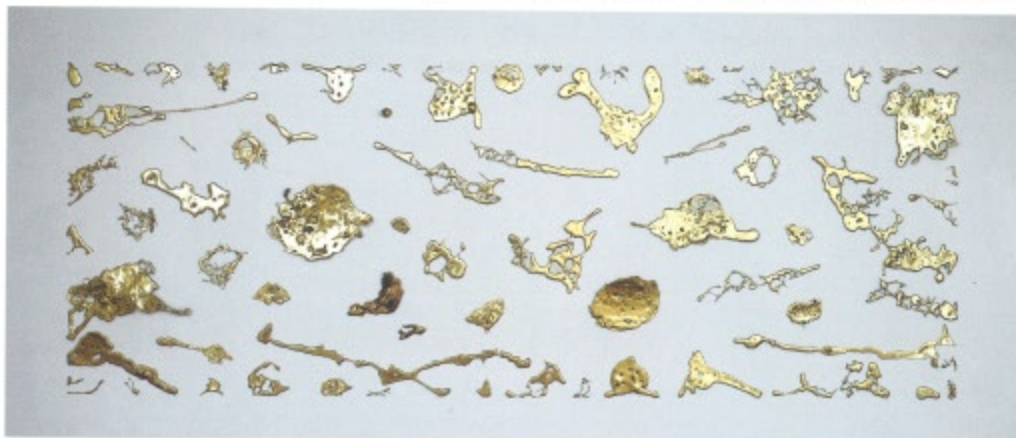
The impact wall commanded a horizontal work measuring 450 cm, *The Life of Form: One Billion Worlds* (2012), its organically formed fragments held its form in an uncanny play of order. The random aesthetic of thrown liquid metal had a fabulous energy internally, one's eye moving from trailing blots to spidery tendrils, their rips and splatters both pitted and smooth. Lee relinquished all control.

It mirrored, in technique, a circular thrown bronze, *Forming Like a Single Dewdrop*

(2012), placed at the polar end of the gallery. What was more apparent in this example was the way the internal space, its voids, held the form. Space allowed these works to breathe, not unlike a constellation in a night sky or, as its title suggested, the lightness and ephemerality of a dewdrop.

These thrown bronzes cupped and spooned the light; their golden glow in the softly lit gallery had a shrine-like presence. Was it 'real' or were we as viewers carried by their Zen framing? Regardless, nothing stifled their elegant animation of space, lightly held in place with bronze nails.

While it is easy to be wowed by Lee's mastery of this thrown technique, her bronzes were offset by a suite of five scroll-like panels in mild steel, technically raw in comparison. Again Lee turned to fire to transform the properties of



Lindy Lee, *The Life of Form: One Billion Worlds*, 2012, bronze, 170 x 450 cm. Image: Courtesy of the Artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery.