

PAULA COOPER GALLERY

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EIGHT SCULPTORS

PAULA COOPER GALLERY
521 W. 21st Street
November 10 – December 22, 2012

NEW YORK – The Paula Cooper Gallery is pleased to present *Eight Sculptors*, a group exhibition of works by eight artists reflecting the variety and dynamism of contemporary sculpture. The show will include pieces by Sanford Biggers, Sam Durant, Matias Faldbakken, Liz Glynn, Justin Matherly, Matt Sheridan Smith, Molly Smith and Rudolf Stingel. It will be on view from November 10 through December 22, 2012.

Sanford Biggers's work investigates themes of identity, spirituality and the African American experience. His artistic production includes sculpture, video, installations and performance. His most recent body of work involves painting and embroidery on reappropriated patchwork quilts, which were said to have been used along the Underground Railroad as secret indications of safe houses for escaped slaves. Using cosmic imagery and constellation maps painted directly onto the quilts, Biggers makes reference to the slaves' journey to freedom under the cover of night, and to larger themes of transcendence and continuity.

Calcium Carbonate (la storia di ogni giorno) extends Sam Durant's examination of the Italian Anarchist movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Using marble from Carrara, Italy, and working with local craftsmen, Durant created busts of key figures of the movement, as well as bags of calcium carbonate, a by-product from marble extraction used for explosives and other industrial purposes. The inscribed quote on the bag translates to "the history of the everyday" and is taken from a manifesto written by followers of Luigi Galleani, a seminal turn-of-the-century Anarchist.

Matias Faldbakken develops a visual language of anarchic rejection and subversion through gestures of negation, often in the form of excessive repetition – in the artist's words, "three million ways to say no." His recent series *Squared* consists of unpainted iron squares whose different sizes are dictated by seemingly arbitrary dimensions (such as the height of an acquaintance). *Squared* nods to the formal language of Minimalism while surreptitiously critiquing its premise of a rational, disembodied system.

Inspired by the 2011 Arab spring, Liz Glynn's *Anonymous Needs and Desires (Gaza/Giza)* draws parallels between the trade routes of colonial-era Egypt and contemporary conduits for trafficking both art objects and daily staples. Consisting of a large wooden cabinet whose drawers are color-coded by the items they contain (yellow for food, white for fuel, turquoise for clothing, red for illicit substances, etc.) the piece is intended as an archive of objects smuggled across the Egypt–Palestine border, as reported in journalistic accounts since 2007. The cast lead, tactile objects can be removed from their assigned drawers and carried around the gallery space. A second

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piece, *Tunnel (Gaza/Giza)*, alludes to the underground network used for smuggling goods across the border.

Justin Matherly creates sculptures made of concrete and reconfigured medical equipment (walkers, crutches, chairs) that often recall contorted bodies, derelict monuments or otherwise abject, abstracted forms. As is often the case with Matherly's works, the title of this piece is a quote, here from Jean Genet's *The Balcony*. Matherly's art "aligns itself [...] with the anti- in Robert Smithson's anti-monuments, establishing its own forms of what Smithson called 'ruins in reverse,' evoking the contingent nature of [...] power relations, armed conflict, political economies, the body politic, notions of free movement and free speech."¹

The three related works by Matt Sheridan Smith suggest a concerted exploration of form and formlessness through disparate materials. Drawn to materials that "push back" from any attempt at sculpting, Sheridan Smith presents a suite composed of a Kraft paper painting, a baked and silver-plated bread loaf, and a silk scarf as the formally unpredictable outcomes of his interventions. As a suite, the works explore the connections between absence, fragility and decay.

Molly Smith uses found and handmade materials to construct evocative sculptures and drawings in response to her surroundings. Her work exists in tenuous arrangements and improbable compositions that emphasize the transient and ephemeral. *Peel* is made of two sheets of paper wrapped around wire webbing, discarded materials that Smith has repurposed into a trunk-like shape. Smith has said of her work, "the images waver between coming together in their specificity and falling apart in ambiguity. I explore this transition from image to abstraction, whole to part."

In the early 1990s Rudolf Stingel created a series of radiator sculptures made of cast resin in which orange paint was poured during the casting process. Installed like ordinary radiators, the works nevertheless disallow their identification to a purely utilitarian object through their startling, marbled ember-like glow. Streaked with thick skeins of acrylic paint caught in mid-flow within the translucent resin, the works blur the distinction between painting and sculpture, between the deadpan nature of the readymade and the chance expressiveness of their combined materials.

¹ Bob Nickas, "Openings: Justin Matherly," *Artforum*, October 2012, p. 251.