

ARTPULSE

ARTPULSE NO. 21 | VOL. 6 | 2015
WWW.ARTPULSEMAGAZINE.COM

Kendall Buster

Enrique Marty

Craig Drennen

Jorge Perianes

Angel Abreu on
Tim Rollins and K.O.S.

**Artists as Educators:
The Legacy of 1950's
Bay Area Figurative Painters**

**Art Fairs and
Thought-Space**

arte_FIST FOUNDATION

**Building:
Misbehaving the City**

**The Critic As Artist:
Peter Schjeldahl on Oscar Wilde**



HELIDON XHIXHA: SCULPTING LIGHT

Galerie Lausberg - Düsseldorf, Germany

By Jill Thayer



Helidon Xhixha, *Reflections*, 2013, mirror polished stainless steel, and *Oblong*, 2013, corten steel, 98 1/2" x 23 2/3" x 6" each. Installation view at Galerie Lausberg's garden, November 2014. Courtesy of Galerie Lausberg, Düsseldorf.

The way we see things reflects our perception of the world, as the cultural confluence of social and environmental forces inform it. John Berger writes, “We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are.”

Albanian sculptor Helidon Xhixha incites the power of visual perception through his vast oeuvre of monumental installations and smaller-scale, stainless-steel works. The surfaces reflect and refract an ever-changing environment and act as a transformative conductor of light and energy. The enigmatic properties of this phenomenon react to the degree of light exposure and function as a mirror revealing altered landscapes for the viewer to consider.

Xhixha’s inherited his artistic influences from his father Sale, and his studies at Kingston University in London and Accademia di Belle Arte di Brera in Milan forged an early ascent into the

realms of contemporary sculpture. His work draws upon formal constructs and experimental investigations that reveal a new language of abstract and non-figurative forms. The artist’s penchant for innovative processes and deft treatments in bas-relief are mechanisms in his complex methodology.

“Helidon Xhixha: Sculpting Light” at Galerie Lausberg presents approximately 10 steel works that capture and rearticulate light in its luminescent qualities. Opaque and high polished finishes intensify the brightness of the steel, as the twisted folds and dents of each piece create narratives of highlights and shadows. At first glance, the wall reliefs appear similar with surface undulation, but a unique aesthetic emerges upon the viewer’s gaze.

In Energia Attraverso Il Nero (2013), the satin black polish enveloping the piece casts a subtle sheen. A graceful articulation gives the impression of a wrinkled black tie after a formal affair. There is elegance to its mass and a refinement to its edges.



Helidon Xhixha, *I Tre Monoliti*, Montanstahl, Stabio, Switzerland, 33' height. Courtesy of the artist and Valli Art LLC.

Energia Rusty (2013) has a non-reflective, brown-colored finish with its shape resembling a chocolate bar. The surface indentations look like that of its packaging wrapper, crumpled and discarded in the duality of its function. *Energia Attraverso Il Rosso* (2013) offers a lipstick-red, matte-polished façade that features a random abstraction contained at its core. The concave and convex characteristics of the piece are sensual in appeal, as this illusionary impression begs a second look.

In *Reflections* (2013), oval sculptures of mirror-polished stainless steel are placed at either end of the gallery's Zen-like garden. The pieces interact with the environment as the viewer's perception is challenged by nature, reflected and deconstructed on the surface inconsistencies. In these works, Xhixha shared that he was inspired by "the luminosity of the sky and modeled the steel sheet into a free and sinuous form that will fill the eye of the observer with a cascade of tones and shades, reflections and gradations." The brightly colored effects explode in an array of light dancing on the molded areas in a resplendent sublimity.

Xhixha cites Henry Moore as inspiration. "He introduced a new form of modernism and was able to combine past to present through the plasticity of his works." He also references Jackson Pollock as an abstract expressionist, with his rhythmic use of paint and fierce independence.

His pieces are reminiscent of the Light and Space and Finish Fetish artists who achieved phenomenological results incorporating high-tech processes into their works. Larry Bell comes to mind in his reflective processes and keen attention to detail as an example of this approach. Similarly, the polished sculpture of Constantin Brancusi, the dynamism of Umberto Boccioni, the abstract geometries of David Smith, and the contemporary motifs of Anish Kapoor, Joel Morrison and Brad Howe draw parallels to his work.

Xhixha's monumental works are majestically imposing yet balance the intricacies of his surface treatment. His techniques create nuances in cause and effect that engage a broad audience. The artist notes, "I

was born as a monumental artist, and I always considered art with a sense of greatness and vastness, as it is the ultimate expression of the human mind and soul. Even when I work on a smaller sculpture, I mold in it the concept of immensity." Most notably, some of his permanent installations include: *Steel Monolith*, National Museum of Science and Technology Leonardo da Vinci, Milan, Italy; *Historical Reflections*, Presidential Palace of Tirana, Albania; *Sound of Steel*, the Violin Museum at the Palazzo dell'Arte, Cremona, Italy; *Sun Light*, Saint Jean Cap Ferrat, France; *Sky Reflection*, Lombardy Regional Government Building, Milan, Italy; *Elliptical Light*, The Hall of the Melia Hotel, Dubai, UAE; *Vitality*, Santa Maria Novella, Florence, Italy, and *The Three Monoliths*, Montanstahl, Stabio, Switzerland.

As viewers, our perception is informed and affected by what we know and believe. Seeing brings awareness and reflexivity into the visceral experience. As Berger asserts, "The painter's way of seeing is reconstructed by the marks he makes on the canvas or paper." For Xhixha, the marks are of his own making—modeling, shaping, folding and sculpting with inherent forces that relinquish a radiant energy from the practice he employs. These unique interventions manipulate the material and embrace the surrounding landscape in a consistent approach that push the boundaries of contemporary sculpture. Says Xhixha, "My creative process is mostly organic. I'm flexible and open in my life and value innovation over tradition." Each piece is contemplative, articulate and beguiling in fabrication and aesthetic. The works reflect not only a multifaceted world of our interpretation, but also the artist's masterful process. Seeing *is* believing. ■

(September 5 – November 7, 2014)

Jill Thayer, Ph.D., is an artist, educator and curatorial archivist. She is on-line faculty at Santa Monica College in art history: global visual culture; Southern New Hampshire University in humanities/art history; and post university in MBA marketing for the Malcolm Baldrige School of Business.