

Meliksetian MB Briggs



JANUARY 2018

Lisa Seebach at Turn Gallery



Installation view, Lisa Seebach at Turn Gallery

Meliksetian MB Briggs

Lisa Seebach

Turn Gallery

By JONATHAN GOODMAN, DEC. 2017

Lisa Seebach, now in her mid-thirties, comes from Germany, roughly an hour outside Berlin, where she lived for a number of years. In the last twelve months, she has been working in New York, in a studio at the International Studio and Curatorial Program in Brooklyn. Her work in metal is clearly improvisational and drawing-oriented. At the same time, the sculptures reflect a ready contact with modernism and a strong formal interest, affiliations no longer greatly prized by the American art community. But this does not mean the artist has developed in isolation here; instead, she has grown during her time in Brooklyn. This has been achieved by Seebach as someone who reifies ideas about art that have remained alive in museum shows or among individuals who continue to be taken with sculpture as an essentially formalist vocation. As a result, her achievement denotes an ongoing determination to push the language of three-dimensional art ahead, to whatever the next place might be. At this moment, actually, it is difficult to place her in an American or European context; the sculpture is original enough to look nearly self-sufficient, although, of course, that is actually not the case (all art has a precedent and a context). Perhaps the closest formal origin can be placed with the work of Julio Gonzalez, the Spanish modernist whose work regularly

Meliksetian MB Briggs

made use of steel. But the originality of Seebach's achievement, startling at so young an age, cannot be denied.

In the show at Turn Gallery, Seebach is offering a small number of works. Yet each of them is stylistically independent and esthetically considered. They usually are assemblages of planes and linear forms of steel and glazed ceramic. Because of this dialectic between broader areas and straight files, the art tends to generate a tension that keeps it very much alive. But it not a balance between opposites so much as it is an opposition in the space generated by the differing shapes. It is also true, at the same time, that Seebach's audience appreciates the overall gestalt of the sculpture. Perhaps it is the concomitant, successful presence of individual component and general completeness that makes her art so imaginative and successful. In *Dark Matter (Like Vague Feeling)*—all the works were made this year—a linear triangle without a third line concluding the base rises quite a bit into the air; at the apex of the triangle, there is a line extending outward, with a sphere at its end. Made of steel and glazed ceramic, *Dark Matter* also has small triangular planes attached to the two lines composing the main outline. It is marvelously original in its drawing-like precision.

Touching the Dusk, made of steel alone, comprises an open hexagonal made up mostly of single lines, although one of the six sides is filled with several thin bars. Other single lines extend from the bottom of the hexagonal, while the top has two flat disks extending toward the viewer. This work, like the other sculptures, veers between a flat, planar existence

Meliksetian MB Briggs

and a three-dimensional presentation. Seebach is more than clever in constructing the two kinds of formal determinations; she is inspired in her discoveries, which feel as though they have been made in the spur of the moment (although they also look highly considered when viewed over time). As a group, the works nicely fill the long, narrow space of the gallery. *Inverted Mountains*, with its tulle fabric ending in the high point of the sculpture, is supported by tubular lines of steel. Here the difference between broad planes and linear buttressing, between open and closed space, finds sharp recognition. Maybe the best visual sculptural art is created by these kinds of opposition.

All of Seebach's titles are characterized by poetic titles: *Deserted Landscape (Fragmented Enclosure)* is another example. This piece, overall, resembles the sharp incline of a mountain, but without mass; its shape is constructed entirely from tubular lines of steel. The ascent of the form is narrow and constrained, but a small, unattached steel sphere nearby offers contrast. Like the other works described here, it is an unusual and accomplished exercise in dissimilarities. "Nothing Ever Touches," the name of the exhibition, could well describe the way Seebach works with shapes. But it also indicates, if we are willing to regard the title this way, a certain unhappiness with both physical and emotional closeness. This may be true of life now, especially in light of our preoccupation with technology.

Meliksetian MB Briggs

One of the most interesting attributes of this excellent show is its demonstration of kinds of qualities associated with sculpture. Fine art doesn't always communicate feeling, especially in current circumstances, strongly influenced by technology, politics, and conceptualism. Yet America's foremost contribution to world art is probably abstract expressionism, with its obvious connotations of sentiment. In Seebach's case, we cannot call the art emotionally demonstrative, despite the poetic names of the work, which do orient toward feeling. Like the formal involvement found in the components of her pieces, the experience of the sculptures is based upon contrasts—lyric titles and emotionally neutral form. this is the reason why her art will remain in our consideration. **WM**