

New England's Culture Magazine

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BOSTON SCULPTORS CELEBRATES 20 YEARS  
OF "HEIGHT, WIDTH, DEPTH, TIME"

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# HEIGHT, WIDTH, DEPTH, TIME: BOSTON SCULPTORS CELEBRATE 20 YEARS

Boston Sculptors Gallery  
486 Harrison Avenue  
Boston

Through January 27

Sculpture deals in time, the unfolding envelope of our human condition, from the gestation of the creative impulse to its compression and representation in the work itself. Boston Sculptors Gallery on Harrison Street inaugurates the New Year with its 20th anniversary celebration as a sculptors' cooperative and an exhibition of 57 extra-ordinary objects highlighting sculpture's less-celebrated fourth dimension. From the ridiculous to the sublime, each work opens a door to multiple worlds of time, metaphor and meaning.



Beth Galston, *Sycamore Wall*, 2003, resin, sycamore leaves, 12" x 8" x 14".

Beginning with a riff on the seasonal return of apotheosized consumerism, Dennis Svoronos' "Bargain Hunter" bookends time with light and sound. His decapitated, illuminated reindeer's severed head — a trophy mounted high on the wall — has a heart, a revolving Rube Goldbergesque ticker inside the wiry carcass collapsed below, periodically releasing a spring and striking a jingle, while a tangle of bloody

red Christmas lights gushes out of the pristine white pile.

Counting and continuum offer fundamental models of experiencing time. Laura Evans' "Endless Chain," a string of tiny white bones modeled from Sculpey, invokes Brancusi's 40-meter "Endless Column" of stacked hourglass forms. Evans's miniscule bones more

modestly undulate upward in the interval between floor and ceiling. Joyce McDaniel, recently retired from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston's sculpture faculty, lays out her academic and professional journey along a seamstress' measure that follows a narrow edge of partition-wall. Along its full 120-inch descent, 33 photo IDs stitched onto dressmaker's patterns, including licenses, passports, school IDs and memberships, descend from high school graduation to McDaniel's final year of teaching at ground level.

Time is also labor. Caroline Bagenal's video "Puzzle" documents the work of assembling one of her newspaper-wrapped rod-and-tube constructions. Stop-action condenses to within two minutes the construction of a structure on stilts as she and her assistants scurry like Keystone Kops to lift, shove, pull and pile their oversized building-sticks into an airborne equilibrium. Mags Harries employs video not as a tool but to make us conscious of the medium's own internal relation to time. "To Go By" is a small white box attached to the wall. Put your eye up against the nickelodeon lens to see a nearly motionless screen with the sands of three egg timers flowing downward. The looping video repeats the experience of time running out — indefinitely.

Kinetic art entrances our attention span with gyrations of form or reflection. George Sherwood's "Memory," a wall mounted mesh circle supports a surface of cheerfully fluttering



Hannah Verlin, *Extinct*, 2012, paper, pins, handwritten text, jar, 22" x 11" x 11".

metallic disks. And above the gallery's central desk hovers an ethereal globe of prismatic Mylar discs, a signature piece by the recently deceased Bill Wainwright, suggesting the proximity of his guiding spirit as one of the original Boston sculptors. "Tethering Home," Julia Shepley's suspension of paper, wires, glass and splinters of wood, seems welded together with only spit and hope. The superstructure exists for its shadows on the wall, perhaps only temporarily tied to the period of exhibition, but revealing the continuity in the imagination of our internal terrors and responsibilities.

Nearby, in "Extinct," Hannah Verlin equates forward-flowing time with responsibility. Hundreds of white vellum discs pierced by specimen pins are fixed to the surface of a suspended block like arrested butterflies.

Around each disc is inscribed the name of a species extinguished in the past 500 years. Visitors, asked to remove a disc and discard the pin in an empty jar below, reenact the extinction, and, perhaps experience reparative intentions as a result.

B. Amore's beguiling black marble "Personnage" carries physical, as well as historic and geological, weight. Three stacked squared-off blocks, upended, twist sensually around a central axis and implore the hands' caress. The ancient Italian stone, hand-hewn from its matrix, was rejected previously by Louise Bourgeois as unfit for realistic modeling. Amore rescued it, choosing to maintain the historical evidence of its archaic marks, and invested years of chipping, flaking, and scalloping strokes within strokes to expose the stone's natural pathways of fracture.

Working in more contemporary metals, Kitty Wales's "Infanta Margarita Theresa" whisks us into time as self-conscious art historians. In a transformation both witty and tragic, she presents in three dimensions a young girl's portrait appropriated from "Las Meninas," Velázquez's famous 17th century painting of the Spanish royal family, reframing a battered and perforated steel washing machine's agitator as the child's constricting hoop skirt.

Dan Wills' "Nervous Reaction" offers a cartoon-like abstraction harboring figurative intent



Julia Shepley, *Tethering Home*, 2012, cast glass, mixed media, 24" x 30".

while exploiting contrasts of black-and-white and rough and shiny surfaces. His life-size construction of polyester resin, wood, bondo and paint involves two forms in tension — a bulbous black thing, part wrench, part lobster claw, looming over a giant, off-balance screw. Whether remembered or invented, the moment of impingement is both absurd and frightening.

Nora Valdez's "Holding" suggests not lived moments, but the timelessness of dreams and the symbolic unconscious. Under a dark steel roof, she offers us the dreamer's gesture — perhaps the artist's — a carved stone forearm, free-floating with palm-up, grasping an egg-shaped stone equal to the force of its grip.

Beth Galston's "Sycamore Wall" literally encapsulates decay, with its resinous "bricks" embalming bunches of crisp, long-fallen leaves. Their stem-halves stick out on one side, paradoxically vulnerable and unprotected.

Acknowledging aging and its attendant weakness, Lorey Bonante's "Stand By Me" stands out: a pair of greenish wooden canes on claw-footed stands guard entry to the teeming exhibition space. Beeswax-infused wrapping provides structure as well as surface for these fragrant ambulatory aids, eerily studded with coiled ribbons punctuated by a thousand glowering glass eyes.

One might wish here for a definitive statement to wrap up the dialogue about sculpture and time. However, the diversity of the works described, as well as the many that also deserved mention, suggests that the conversation on this subject has only begun.



Nora Valdez, *Holding*, 2012, limestone, metal, 41" x 18" x 24".



B. Amore, *Personnage*, 1996-2007, black Trentino marble, steel, 72" x 18" x 18".