

MOCCA Reflects Trending Return to Material Media with Trans/FORM

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Sasha Pierce, *Cycle* (detail), 2011.

by Benjamin Bruneau, ARTINFO Canada

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MOCCA's David Liss has brilliantly tapped into a fast-emerging trend, in his recent Toronto-focused group exhibition: material and tactile media, and a revision of the modernist agenda. "Trans/FORM: Matter as Subject > New Perspectives" showcases eight young artists, most of whom situate their practice in a former industrial parkland in west Toronto, and all of whom position their labors in the legacy of conceptualism's subtle love for material, and its potential for transfiguration.

Foregrounding the show's preoccupation with objecthood, the contents of **Georgia Dickie's** studio litters the exhibition entrance. Comprised of found objects, the detritus belies the vestigial human touch in its wear, its deliberate shape. Further into the gallery, Dickie arranges these decrepit materials organically: the languid droop of heavy steel mesh melds with a shaft of rebar and a flash of brass tubing in "Smoking Gun Sculpture 1" (2012); the weary shrug of wood and metal ring in "Speed Reducer" (212). Her sculptures nicely respond to the human scale.

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Scale is similarly important in the sculptural work of **Derrick Piens**, whose range of materials and methods are as numerous as his works in this show. Two large-scale pieces stand in the galleries, here geometric and there organic; but a shelf of smaller works, including "Pink Shim" (2011), position the artist's practice in deference to the microcosm. **Jaime Angelopoulos**'s sculptures veer toward the organic, like Seussian trees or alien fauna.

In an exhibition focused on tactility and form, Piens and Angelopoulos make the most of revealing their mark. Their works are revealing, in this regard, in contrast with **Niall McClelland**, whose structural pieces operate beyond the artist's hand. McClelland's large "Stains" (2012) presents heavy paper, soaked in leaked inkjet ink; the resulting colors coordinate in endless kaleidoscopic patterns with such exactitude that we feel ourselves receding in their presence. Similarly, in "No Maps - Nights 1-3," a series of huge black photocopies, the precise geometry of the creases and the laser-bright stripes of white paper both obscure and suggest the fleshy fingers that folded them.

More paradoxical tactility abounds in **Jennifer Sciarrino**'s iterative "Leaning Structure" (2012). Constructed of rough-looking cement and gypsum, the work is strangely sharp and eerily smooth. The artist insisted I touch it and when I did, the piece felt eerily smooth, given its harshly angular form; the effect is confounding, mesmerizing, and elegant.

Nearby, the small but significant canvases of **Sasha Pierce** channel homespun yarn and quilted geometric patterns; but the artist's deft application of oil to linen is more similar to cake decoration than handicraft. Still, the artist's painstaking labor is utterly elided by psychedelic detail and robotic precision, warm from afar but confrontationally mechanical upon closer inspection.

Hugh Scott-Douglas's "Untitled" canvases (2012) are mechanical but revealing: laser cut and spare, they allow the stretcher to peer through their oddly organic cut-outs. Working somewhere between the gaping canvases of **Lucio Fontana** and the infinity nets of **Yayoi Kusama**, Scott-Douglas is arriving at a strident reduction. But still, his works point indelibly to their making. Likewise, **Aleksander Hardashnakov** refers to heroic painting in terms of his works' size and composition, but their grandiosity is immediately tempered by his revealing materiality and process. In "Untitled (#48)," swampy concrete dye seeps into the canvas and eats the light, while in "Béton Baton" (2012), Newman-like zips in colored pencil peer through milky murk. Ultimately, Hardashnakov falls in line with his colleagues, making manifest his desire to revisit late modernism within the framework of our contemporary, dematerialized world; no longer certain it's actually there, we reach out to grasp it.



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