

# sculpture

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## PHILADELPHIA

### "Individual Gravities"

#### Tiger Strikes Asteroid

"Individual Gravities," an exhibition at the artist-run space Tiger Strikes Asteroid, featured new work in sculpture by Alexis Granwell, Elana Herzog, and Trish Tillman. All three artists investigate the visual culture of undoing, literally and abstractly. They gesture toward various slowly evolved design traditions through the language of their demise, gently breaking them open by offering images of potential ruin or re-conception. This forms part of what curator Alex Ebstein refers to as a shared commitment to the practice of focused creation; in her exhibition essay, she describes a ponderous, experimental, material-based practice that defies today's fast-paced, information-seeking world. Focusing on a methodical approach serves as a kind of anti-capitalist reclaiming of process and space, "communicating alternative relationships to mainstream structures." Granwell, Herzog, and Tillman draw from sewing, papermaking, and painting. Their work shares a tinker-

ing, experimental quality, with objects emerging from process rather than formula—though some maintain a sleek form, slickness is always paired with some unwieldy or unmanageable elements.

Granwell's work most actively references a pedestal-bound Western sculptural tradition, with bulbous hand-formed shapes set atop individually designed plinths, each unique and in conversation with the object it supports. The surfaces communicate a specific material process involving handmade paper and

papier-mâché, applied so that the forms appear to contain a historical record of layering, like a three-dimensional palimpsest. The pedestals are fashioned from carefully crafted arrangements of building materials. Simultaneously construction-oriented and fleshy, Granwell's work maintains a memorial quality without being specifically nostalgic. The organic (sometimes figurative) gestural nature of the paper elements gives these sculptures a dynamic quality, almost as if they were breathing.



Left: Alexis Granwell, (left to right) *Grave*, 2018, handmade paper, papier-mâché, and cement, 28 x 12 x 11 in.; *Manifold*, 2018, handmade paper, papier-mâché, and wood, 73 x 22 x 18 in.; and *Sum of Parts*, 2018, handmade paper, papier-mâché, and wood, 53 x 30 x 15 in. Below: Elana Herzog, *Untitled (Noresund/New York)*, 2017. Mixed textiles, floss, embroidery, and needles, 59 x 133 in. Both from "Individual Gravities."

Herzog's work employs a similarly layered and rich method of making, conveying an active energy through tenuous construction—whether that energy serves to hold the object together or to activate its slow demise is up for interpretation. It seems as though the process of making and unmaking are both generative for Herzog. Her large textile *Untitled (Noresund/New York)* consists of multiple combined fabrics whose motifs are mimicked and blended within one another through multicolored embroidery stitching, bringing an antiquated practice onto a digitally designed surface. Herzog handles each element—one antique, the other mass-produced and pixelated—with the same curiosity, sensitivity, and interest in chronicling its undoing.

The inherent fragility and relic-like nature of Granwell's and Herzog's

work is counterbalanced by Tillman's pieces, which are as sturdily crafted as 1960s Buicks. Made of thick pleather faux-hides and linked metal chains, their upholstered surfaces are bright, reflective, and distinctly of another time. Tillman reimagines the classic American diner aesthetic as a template for futuristic experimentation, adorning her forms with bungee cords repurposed as bondage gear and thick horsehair tails. Her process of undoing involves a more active, "Frankenstein" approach, collecting disparate elements and reassembling them seamlessly and sleekly into a new reality.

Each of these artists seeks to engage the act of commemoration: of a particular method of making, of a material object, or of time's

Below: Trish Tillman, *Traveler*, 2016. Vinyl, wood, chrome exhaust pipe, horse hair, and embellishments, 71 x 30 x 1.5 in. From "Individual Gravities." Above: Frank McEntire, *RAM*, 2018. Mixed media, 13.5 x 15 x 72 in. Right: Frank McEntire, *Rapid Response*, 2018. Mixed media, 85 x 37 in.

passage. "Gravities" signals a physical consideration when exploring weight, as well as a serious, ponderous approach to thinking and making. Even when embodied in discrete sculptural form, the work feels more deeply immersed in investigative process than in finished product, affording viewers a glimpse into a private practice that is honed and cultivated elsewhere.

—Samantha Mitchell

