

## *In time: the work of Nick Hornby*

It has been long held that the making of any work of art represents the collapsed, condensed and often fragmentary retelling of the entire history of art. The premise of this idea is that the making of any work is only possible because of the experiments, failures and successes of past makers. Every work of art constitutes the marshaling of accumulated knowledge – from across time and place — into the intellectual and material mechanisms that give rise to a new art object that is likewise situated in the simultaneously particular and universal conditions of time and space.

The work of sculptor Nick Hornby (b. 1980 UK) offers much for those interested in the entwined realm of ideas, their tangible realization and the role that the art historical past can assume in the making of art in the present. For while it would be right to say that all art objects are about the expression of ideas and the materialization of thinking, it is, arguably, the character and quality of the relationship of concept to execution – the realization of semiotic form – that differentiates one work or body of work from another. With Hornby, there are always two concerns that frame what he does in his practice. The first is his longstanding questioning of the legacies of western art and the contributions they can make to current day art making. The second is the productive tension that can result from using or referencing historical works of art as the basis for new endeavors. For Hornby, the unavoidable presence of history in contemporary consciousness and studio practice – the knowledge of makers and works of significance – necessarily raises questions about precedent and indebtedness, the implications of homage, the parameters of sampling and the conditions of postmodern creativity. Hornby is an artist whose practice might well be characterized as one where historical awareness is the ever-provoking mechanism for the explorations of forms – complex, unexpected, owing – Hornby's work seeks to respond to the ideological and aesthetic conditions of the society in which he exists, and where the benefits born from the mixing of genres and artistic precedents are obvious.

Hornby's installation of work at Glyndebourne in May 2017 constitutes an opportunity for the artist to work as curator and install a body of work that is a distillation of his focused and timely practice. Titled *Sculpture (1504-2017)*, the nine pieces of work on display in the house and on the grounds – produced between 2013 and 2017 – effectively summarize what functions as his extended investigation of the pertinence of a tangible history in the critical ideation and realization of work. Importantly, however, Hornby's deferential and informed historicism is, without question, radical and compelling. Hornby's practice turns on his understanding of the role of the trace in history and how the acknowledgement of the work of eminent practitioners – perching on shoulders, nodding to the canon and being open to possible lessons – can give rise to new works defined by their conceptual rigor and gravity.

For the viewer, Hornby's referencing of works such as Michelangelo's *David* (1504), Rodin's *Age of Bronze* (1870-1875), Matisse's paper cut outs (1951-1952) and Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* (1907) invites rewarding consideration of the temporality, both informed and speculative. This is work that through its openly acknowledged reconfiguration of the past bridges temporal divides – changed ideas about art, changed cultures of making and changed conditions in the contexts of production that always mark the passage of time – and which exist as testaments to how the what is deemed the contemporary is ever beneficially beholden to the past.

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