



NEW YORK
Ayano Ohmi
Ceres Gallery

Ayano Ohmi, a long-time resident of New York City, originally comes from Japan. Her recent show featured groupings of slender totems that belong to neither the Western nor the Asian tradition; instead, they relate to the now worldwide experience of modernity. Ohmi creates artistic presences that remain in the mind long after viewing. Her sculpture may in some way connect to Noguchi's organic sensibility, but Ohmi is very much her own person, intent on the evocative resonances that emanate from a highly spiritual approach to art. Working in clay, she shows us how the force of a single work increases by its positioning within a larger group. Her arrangements succeed because the individual pieces retain a singular character—they are as different from each other as the Chinese terra-cotta warriors buried in Xian. Perhaps Ohmi's subtext is the relation of the

Above: John Beech, *Rolling Platform*, 2010. Plywood, enamel, casters, and screws, 168 x 152 x 152 cm. **Right:** Ayano Ohmi, installation view of "Meditative Scenery," 2011.

individual to the group—a theme especially suited to someone from Asia now living in the West.

In fact, Ohmi's work both begs and answers the question: Can someone from one culture find her calling within a context broadly boundaried by another culture? I use the phrase "broadly boundaried" because contemporary art experience is no longer provincial; it speaks to people across cultures, so that someone like Ohmi is understood quickly as a postmodern artist, that is, someone who belongs to what can only be called a global community.



Such a community brings to the fore both strengths and disadvantages—it provides hope for a more universal language of artistic communication even as it takes away national characteristics that used to support ideas and work that varied profoundly from one culture to the next. Inevitably, something is lost and something is gained by such change. Ohmi is the happy recipient of an aesthetic freedom that even a generation ago would have been looked at with some bemusement.

As a result, she finds value in the totem, a form that relates to indigenous culture as well as recent art. Her works perform numerous, graceful variations on a mostly singular form: a thin, often sharp-edged pole that rises some four to five feet in the air. Within a relatively narrow imaginative space, Ohmi creates numerous versions on a theme, which surprisingly yields figurative imagery such as mountainous peaks when the totems are looked at sideways. Her works remain striking in their subtlety. Textures differ from smooth to rough; colors, from off-white to nearly black. While some shorter pieces remind us of plants, most are alike in dimension. They belong to each other in the same way that individuals belong to a family—connected

and similar but maintaining important differences that highlight their separate natures. Ohmi makes good use of these familial relations, so that the forms echo each other across the room. She is an artist of real sensitivity—no small achievement in these times.

—Jonathan Goodman

NEW YORK
Marianne Weil
Kouros Gallery

There's a palpable human presence in Marianne Weil's bronze sculptures. The incisions, hatchings, and symbols scratched into her early totem-like figures reflect 10 years spent exploring and researching archaeological sites, from Neolithic cairns in Brittany to Bronze Age settlements in Spain. In her recent exhibition, "Ad Fundum: New Bronze Work," she takes a giant leap through the millennia—a shift in time, accompanied by a shift in perspective.

In 2008, Weil visited an ancient Roman sanctuary in Panóias, northern Portugal. The site, perched on a tranquil hillside overlooking the Douro River, is formed by three muscular granite outcroppings. The Romans dug deep rectangular pits into these rocky slabs, probably as holding tanks for the animals that

they sacrificed to the gods. Here, Weil began her studies for two new sets of work — “The Panóias Cycle” series and *The Dig*. In these works, she evolves a new style, laying the geometry of civilization over familiar organic forms and substituting the stuff of the 21st century for nature-inspired Neolithic signs and symbols. All of this tells us that we are but a tick on the cosmic clock, that millennia from now, traces of our presence will appear only marginally different from the remains of our prehistoric and ancient brethren.

In contrast to Weil’s earlier, elongated figures, the works in “The Panóias Cycle” are compact, squarish forms, clearly inspired by the rectilinear Roman ritual containers. Each surface contains an oculus that encloses a mythic spiral. By compressing space, Weil heightens mystery. The golden bronze patina of *Panóias Estrela* mimics the roughened, sun-baked Panóias hillside. Its oculus opens like a flower to reveal the inner spiral, coiled like a soul deep in eternal sleep. *Panóias Flor*, the only rounded shape in the series,

Below: Marianne Weil, *The Dig*, 2010. Cast bronze, 12 elements, 26 x 36 x .5 in. **Right:** Sarah Kabot, *Unfolding Space*, 2011. Mixed media, installation view.

suggests a coppery green Neolithic pinch pot with crazed markings incised into the bronze. Its spiked flanges splay upward, like a fully formed blossom, protecting the whorl that lies within.

Weil plays with a variety of Neolithic-inspired textures and signs in *The Dig*, an installation consisting of 20 unique bronze plaques. What appear to be prehistoric patterns of coils, water ripples, and fishing nets are, in fact, contemporary cousins of those mythic symbols: wax impressions taken from the textured surfaces of Teflon fry pans, waffle irons, and soda bottles and geometric designs found on cheap vinyl table cloths, all mixed in with an occasional natural texture, such as a honeycomb. Each composition consists of these overlapping textures, some set deep into the surface, others projecting from it, still others playfully teasing the edges,



curling toward and away from them. Weil has also intensified the color and patina of the plaques to a rich turquoise, the color of manufactured paint more than of sea or sky.

Each of Weil’s castings embodies the human spirit as it’s carried along through the process of shaping and making, a conversation about opposites. We cannot distinguish the synthetic from the natural, the archaic from the contemporary, or ancient relics from those we will leave for another millennium to ponder.

—Joyce Beckenstein

AKRON

Sarah Kabot

Akron Art Museum

In *The Matrix*, Neo bends and folds the world, wrapping it around to fit his will. A glitch in the matrix produces an uncanny sense of déjà vu. (“Was it the same cat?”) Sarah Kabot, a Cleveland-based artist, is no less facile in her ability to break and distort the limits of the material world. Her recent installation, *Unfolding Space*, presented a world in which the floor bends in on itself

accordion-style, seemingly of its own accord, folding into stair-like structures that climb unfettered from their place. Lights crawled down from the ceiling, repositioning themselves on the walls. The illusion of materiality belied the ephemeral nature of these painstakingly cut and joined foamcore, paper, and photographic prints, which convincingly reproduced the more substantial constructions of the gallery’s white walls and wood floors. Through them, Kabot generated a kind of déjà vu of her own that pushed us to see and to re-see.

The first and most obvious understanding of Kabot’s work has to do with wonder at the created illusion. The neutral, limited palette of the gallery generated elegant, almost minimal forms. Kabot’s strategies pushed forward into the space, breaking planes originally designed to recede behind art and obscuring the lines between container and art. For the viewer, an internal question-and-answer loop formed: “What is the art? What is the architecture?” Yet beneath this initial engagement, Kabot addressed even more

