

NOTES ON SCULPTURES

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Copper is the most ancient metal in terms of human usage. The Romans called it *aes cyprium* (metal from Cyprus); the Greeks initially called it *chalcos*, then *cuprum*, the source of the English word. The "red metal" – which is actually pink – was the key to the fortunes of the Minoan, Mycenaean and Phoenician cultures. It showed remarkable conductivity and malleability and was resistant to heat and corrosion. Last but not least, it was associated with femininity by the alchemists—whence those early mirrors.

So it is by no means insignificant, that Alice Anderson should be working with this noble metal, which—rare exceptions like Carl Andre and Joseph Beuys aside—is little use by contemporary artists. Her utilization of it, however, is quite different from theirs. Using bobbins of copper wire she creates sculptures, architectural forms and environments on which she frequently invites the public to collaborate. She weaves the wire around a given object until that object is beneath the metal. Her approach, then, has as much to do with process—since the act involves the bodies of those participating (Travelling Studio)—as with an altered description of the object, achieved via its transfiguration.

Some of the shapes actually remain recognizable beneath their woven trceries: Coke bottle, bicycle, tools, telephone, suitcase, canoe, and even a mummified car. This mode of recording no longer consists in representation by the image; rather it takes shape through the presentation of the object, which the artist and the participants choose from among the everyday shapes of contemporary life.

Other works involve abstract geometrical structures ranging from straightforward series like *Floorboards Diagrams* and *Skylights Data* to more complex arrangements such as *Cables* and *Lighting Tracks*.

As an artistic procedure, the series is far from commonplace. It endows simple shapes with an arithmetical dimension. The interest of the series relies in its phenomenological implications as a method of reduction—"Go to the thing itself," Husserl said—and in the pre-objective experience of perception. Any geometrical shape, as long as it is tangible, can be considered abstract because it engages the viewer's body. The perceptual experience guarantees the object—even when abstract—fullness of meaning. As Robert Morris reminds us, "While the work must be autonomous in the sense of being a self-contained unit for the formation of the Gestalt, the indivisible and undissolvable whole, the major aesthetic terms are not in but dependent on this autonomous object and exist as unfixed variables that find their specific definition in the particular space and light and physical viewpoint of the spectator."¹

Alice Anderson's minimalist approach meet with this rational, conceptual method of composition. These works—monumental sphere, staircase, arrangements of geometrical forms—are caught just as much by light as by the body, and enable the capture of all the data of reality: space, time, matter, form, volume, scale.

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