

Maxime Brigou
| Aleph |
FRED&FERRY GALLERY
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“Where do they find these lines in nature? Personally, I see only forms that are lit up and forms that are not, planes that advance and planes that recede, relief and depth. My eye never sees lines or details.”

These overheard words by the Spanish painter Francisco Goya echo his artistic attitude: he wanted to capture life in its ever-moving whole, beyond concrete objects or superficial parts. Reality may have unfolded too quickly, too abruptly to fully observe and comprehend, but in essence it made itself felt. In his dramatic, emotionally charged paintings, Goya (certainly in his later years) translated these kinds of essential experiences.

Achieving such truthfulness is also what **Maxime Brigou** strives for in her practice. Passing life pulsates in her ongoing series of large-scale sculptures. Each work is an evocative glimpse into an seemingly unfathomable world. An elusive coup d’oeil, quickly remarked, yet only slowly unraveled. An image in the corner of an eye, however real it might be, that nestles into memory.

For her series of images, Brigou draws on her memories - true, forgotten, distorted, or even false. The archive functions precisely because it fails, because it is fragmentary. It shows how the need to order everything, to reason it, clashes with the impossibility of doing so. Where perception and memory rub against each other over time, Brigou exposes an imaginative universe.

However, each visitor brings his own image archive to orient himself in that universe. “What do I recognize? Have I seen this somewhere? Where could I see this?” They are legitimate questions, but Brigou does not direct anyone in this or that direction, does not provoke an unambiguous understanding. As an additional consequence, she questions the subjective interpretation in itself. It is no longer a matter of whether the work represents a natural landscape or a psychologically elaborate 'mindscape', but why someone would read it that way. Brigou's sculptures thus undermine the idea of one truth, in favour of infinite perspectives. Now, let the aleph number be precisely the indication of the quantity of infinity.

Equally endless is the dynamism that speaks from Brigou's works. Exciting contrasts between intense black and luminous white enhance the three-dimensionality; blue-gray shapes stand out sharply against a bright red. Robust volumes that seem to be pushed to the foreground play a mysterious game with delicate strips that rhythm the image. Brigou's skilful application of colour, chiaroscuro and composition betrays her background in classical painting. She adds art historical references in multiple layers, but so effortlessly that they might not be noticed at first glance.

The steel framework could also be considered a painterly relic. Like a frame that defines the painter's gaze, the sculptural structure offers the possibility to limit the space that the work would occupy. The other space, the one in which the work is displayed, continues to play an important role for Brigou though. She experiments with the total scenography, from the way in which the monumental works are approached to the continuously changing incidence of light. The relationship between the sculptures is also crucial: between all the

works, whether they stand alone or belong to a multi-part, a narrative is created, told in the visual language that Brigou made her own. Now, let aleph be the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, a letter that only acquires a sound and a meaning when combined with other letters.

There may be a solid painterly basis underpinning her works, but Brigou does use rather rudimentary materials for her sculptures. However, they are impossible to name separately. Brigou abstracts her raw materials, mystifying them in an almost sublime way: beautifully alluring and frighteningly strange at the same time. The stretched outer layer of the works is indispensable for this: it puts an 'uncanny' filter over the image. Like fragile skin on the point of breaking, it holds everything internally together.

In her practice, Brigou also explores when control must be kept, and when it can be let go. Where the frame is a self-imposed limitation and the canvas encloses what is happening behind it, the work is also created by assigning the materials 'agency'. Brigou's body takes over during the making and follows the materials, charges them with energy. Impulsively and intuitively, she lets the materials speak without already having an outcome in mind. She doesn't work with preliminary sketches, or planned models; in the unpredictable creative process there is a great freedom to be found.

An overwhelming feeling as well.

Beyond the lines and the details, indeed.

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