

MingX. Zhang

Untitled, 2013

Before the 2000s, Christopher Wool was primarily known for working with paint on canvas. The 4-ton sculpture on view at the Hill Art Foundation *Untitled, 2013*, represents the artist's successful expansion from 2D painting into sculpture. Why is Wool interested in sculpture? In an interview with writer Christopher Bollen for W magazine, Wool explains that his turn towards sculpture was inspired by his time spent in Marfa, Texas where he purchased a house in 2007. "The sculptures are directly inspired by being there," said Wool "Unlike New York, there's so much open space" (Bollen 2018, 5). This paper explores the way in which working in three-dimensional media enables Wool to experiment with ideas that may otherwise be difficult to express on canvas.

"Tension between control and disorder" is how the Guggenheim museum describes Wool's work (Introduction, 1). One can definitely see how this quote plays out in Wool's sculpture *Untitled, 2013*. At first glance, the piece looks tangled and distorted: it's difficult to see its beauty. Only after observing the artwork for a while does one begin to notice the little details. Unlike a 2D work, a sculpture can be experienced from multiple angles. If one walks around the sculpture, they quickly realize that the artwork is completely asymmetrical—every vantage point evokes different images. For example, the sculpture may come to resemble anything from hair, ocean waves, or perhaps most immediately, a bird's nest. A nest calls to mind feelings of home, warmth and comfort, and thereby creates a strong contrast with the sculpture's metallic materials of bronze and copper plated steel. Steel is considered to be a hard, cold, and lifeless

material. In utilizing this wide range of materials, Wool experiments with different ways of embodying stark conceptual contrasts beyond the limitations of paint on canvas.

Another notable factor of *Untitled, 2013* is its simplicity. Wool left the metals exposed without any paint or decoration, which makes the piece look as if it is fresh out of the factory. It is minimalist, chaotic and abstract, like many of Wool's works on canvas. *Spokesman*, for example, is a perfect representation of Wool's minimalistic style. It employs the contrast of black paint on white canvas and cutting the word 'spokesman' into weird pieces so as to disrupt the audience's attention on the word and focus on its form. Wool also tends to focus on the form of an object when making sculpture. Overall, what one sees as they shift their attention down to the sculpture's base are the few points holding the sculpture up. This relates to the idea of interdependence, as these points need to work together to support the weight and form of the sculpture. Thanks to Wool's expansion into sculptures, audiences can see more of his creativity and gain another window into the artist's thought process.

Lastly, the scale of *Untitled, 2013* offers another lens for interpretation. Measuring at nearly 13.5 feet, the sculpture towers over the visitor without overwhelming them. It's as if it were the perfect size. Large works like *David* by Michelangelo tend to intimidate their audience. On the other hand, the bronze sculpture *Prince Ferdinando di Cosimo III on Horseback* by Giuseppe Piamontini, which is also on view at the Hill Art Foundation, was cast at a much smaller scale but Piamontini's attention to detail aggrandized the work. Scale is an aspect all sculptors and artists take into consideration, as it plays a huge role in how the art is perceived. The size of this sculpture is similar to many of Christopher Wool's large-scale paintings.

In closing, while Wool is still relatively new to sculpture, form, simplicity, and scale continue to dominate his practice as interdependent points that contribute to the complexity of work. As his career continues to evolve, we are bound to experience Wool from many different perspectives for years to come.

Works Cited

Katherine Brinson "Trouble is my Business" Guggenheim Museum

<http://wool735.com/assets/uploads/Wool-Guggenheim-KB-2013-ilovepdf-compressed.pdf>

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Christopher Wool: "Introduction" <http://web.guggenheim.org/exhibitions/wool/>