

MEGAN PIPER

Paul de Monchaux: *Ten Columns*

24th November 2016 – 13th January 2017

67 Jermyn Street [door bell: Harris Lindsay], London, SW1Y 6NY

Please note: the gallery will be closed for the holidays from 16th December – 4th January.

Each of the sculptures in this exhibition is developed from a geometric core which acts as an anchor around which improvisation can take place. Paul de Monchaux, 2016

Megan Piper is pleased to present *Ten Columns* – an exhibition of recent work by Canadian artist Paul de Monchaux – his second solo show with the gallery.

The path to these recent sculptures began over half a century ago in the life modelling room at the Slade. At that time, close and exacting study from life dominated the studios. Although his work has long since moved towards abstraction, the intensity of this early experience continues to provide a rich source for invention: the precarious balance of an upright body on a footprint a fraction of its size, its mirror symmetry, the sudden surface transitions from shallow relief to acute depth and the sense of it being a finely calibrated self-contained universe, all find echoes in the work on view.

De Monchaux taught full-time at art schools for nearly three decades after leaving the Slade – at the Nigerian College of Arts, Goldsmiths College and finally Camberwell School of Art, where he was Head of Sculpture until he retired in 1986. Since then he has had the opportunity to focus his attention on his studio work. His last exhibition, *Fixing Memory* at The Piper Gallery, presented work from 1986-2013 and this exhibition looks at his most recent output.

The architectural historian Joseph Rykwert's book, *The Dancing Column* (1996), details how the proportions of ancient buildings were engineered and understood with the human body in mind. The sturdier Doric column was likened to the male body, for example, while the slender, more elegant profile of the Ionic column was thought of as feminine. The lime wood *Eight Studies for Male & Female Columns* touch on this idea with study No.1 containing the seed geometry of the remainder, as they move back and forth between the two associative poles. The sculptures are presented together on a single ledge as you enter the gallery, emphasising the quiet gravity and rhythm within each piece and of the ensemble itself.

The bronzes *Volute IV* and *Volute V* continue to explore the theme of the column but here the movement of the shapes into deep space is more significant as the edges dissolve and re-form with trajectory changes, changes that he notes are 'more sensed than seen'. The two pieces 'act as foils, setting stillness against restlessness'. He likens his use of geometry to the keys on a piano, which are inert until they are played. De Monchaux's job is to find the tune and perform the music.

Gallery hours: Monday – Friday, 10am – 5pm
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