

Appeal

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BENOÎT LEMERCIER

The French artist talks of his unique perspective on sculpture

It took years of experimentation for the work of artist Benoît Lemerrier to evolve into his current sculptures. As a 16-year-old schoolboy he began with an Indian ink drawing of the periodic table. Then, he tried collage, welding and sewing, amongst other crafts. It was only 15 years ago, at the age of 30, that his paintings started to morph into sculptures as he was encouraged by his artist peers. And it is only now that his signature works – beautiful, minimal and rooted in an exploration of space – are being recognised for their play with perspective and volumes.

“The aim of my work is to give form to the invisible, that is, to reality that we cannot perceive with our senses,” explains French-born Lemerrier of his most recent output. What he refers to are strikingly sophisticated forms handcrafted at either his workshop in Gers or his Paris atelier. On show at Paris’s Galerie Dutko until June 20, his pieces appear in either two, three or, indeed, four-dimensions – sometimes bursting out of the wall.

“When I sculpt, I try to transform the material to give it more harmony. That’s perhaps why a sculptor – more than a painter – is an alchemist. He has to modify the contours of the material and sometimes transform its innermost structure,” remarks Lemerrier of his métier.

“When you weld something, which is a slightly curious and almost indescribable act, you take two quite separate pieces of steel and you bring them together to weld them and make them into a single unified piece. Once this is done it’s definitive, as if by magic!” he says of his artistic process.

“When the two pieces are welded together, a wave of energy passes through my hand and throughout my whole body. It’s almost as if the ‘elements’ that don’t take part in this fusion disperse through me in order to migrate

to another part of the universe – a very unsettling thought!” At Galerie Dutko, Lemerrier’s two signature series are contrasted side-by-side: Hypercubes, which are sharply defined works in black versus Superstrings, which are undulating freeforms in white.

“Hypercubes of geometric, angular, black sculptures. They represent the projection of an object within a four-dimensional space,” explains Lemerrier of his works where the hypercube can only be discovered from a unique and specific angle, which the viewer must seek out, thereby participating in the very work itself.

“Superstrings are inspired by superstring theory, which presupposes that the smallest element of matter is not a particle, but minuscule pulsating strings of energy. I always paint these sculptures in white because this colour represents purity and virginity,” he says of his works that tend to reveal themselves immediately. “Superstrings are fluid and are in constant movement and omnipresent, diffusing creative energy.”

What connects the two series is Lemerrier’s scientific research into perspective. That and an as-yet-unseen body of work. “In the period between the two series, I conceived other more colourful series, which are based on different scientific approaches,” he further elaborates. “Although I conceived and created them several years ago, I have not exhibited them yet.” With this information in mind, then, perhaps Benoît Lemerrier’s best point of view is still to come.

Benoît Lemerrier: Sculptures
Until June 20, Galerie Dutko – Saint Louis
4 rue de Bretonvilliers, 75004 Paris
www.benoit-lemercier.com

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