

WEIGHT FOR THE SHOWING

**Curated by Paul Carey-Kent
24 April – 13 June, 2015**

**Private view: Thurs, 23 April, 6.30 - 8.30pm
With live performance by Liv Fontaine**

**Curator present: Saturday, 9 May, 11 - 12 am
Saturday, 6 June, 2 - 3 pm**

Of the many competitors for our attention when we look at a work of art – meaning, narrative, form, colour, gesture, scale, sound, movement – its weight is not generally high in the list, heavy as much sculpture and some painting may be (Bram Bogart's super-thick applications or Analia Saban's container canvases come to mind). Indeed, although WEIGHT FOR THE SHOWING is themed around weight, all the works have other interesting agendas, most notably perhaps the frequency with which they skew logic and the zest with which they engage with art history.

Some artists playfully substitute the heavy for the light or vice versa: Gavin Turk's bronze bin bags are well known, Andreas Lolis has made marble look very like card or polystyrene; Fishli & Weiss fashioned all manner of items out of polyurethane; and Sarah Sze recently made rocks out of photographs of rocks, which she showed alongside real boulders. Others have used surprisingly-weighted items, e.g. Andrew Palmer attaches rocks to paintings, and Aselm Kiefer fixes anything from soil to submarines to his canvases; Damien Hirst's ping pong ball pieces might be the opposite end of that scale.

Such play is allowed here, but the show concentrates more on two other aspects: the relative weight of elements within or between works, which latter may be down to evident heaviness of mark, or else be a matter of 'feeling' heavy or light for no obvious literal reason; and the metaphorical association of weight with seriousness and being weighed down by troubles or history. There's no neat division, but Barlow, Rickard, Schur, Ferro and Martinez are perhaps more in the first category; and Serra, Jankowski, Marin, Feldmeyer and Fontaine in the second.

Enough weight may also lead to collapse. Nietzsche worried about the possibility of Eternal Return, in which we're doomed to repeat events for eternity, making existence a heavy burden, given the impossibility of escaping the cycle. Buddhism provides a potential way out of that by embracing the cycle, as does Milan Kundera when, assuming in contrast that such a cycle is impossible, he holds that 'life which disappears once and for all, which does not return is without weight...and whether it was horrible, beautiful, or sublime...means nothing'. Decisions are then 'light' - they do not tie us down - but meaningless and potentially empty. That isn't entirely welcome either, hence the 'the unbearable lightness of being'. A more pragmatic view would be that we're in the space between the baggage of the what's gone and the disintegration to come - but the interim phase may last a while yet, and we might as well enjoy it. Just so, there's plenty of wit in these works, so I hope they raise interesting issues but also contribute to visitors enjoying a few minutes of the gap.

Paul Carey-Kent

With background in poetry, Paul is a former editor of Art World magazine and currently writes for Art Monthly, The Art Newspaper and Border Crossings. His catalogue essays include Joseph Beuys, Richard Schur, Chema Cobo and David Rickard. He interviewed Arte Povera, Giuseppe Penone, Anri Sala and Aernout Mik and Francis Alÿs. Among British-based artists Paul interviewed Boo Ritson, Jemima Stehli, Nogah Engler, Roger Hiorns and Phyllida Barlow. As a curator he has put on five shows in London during 2013-15.



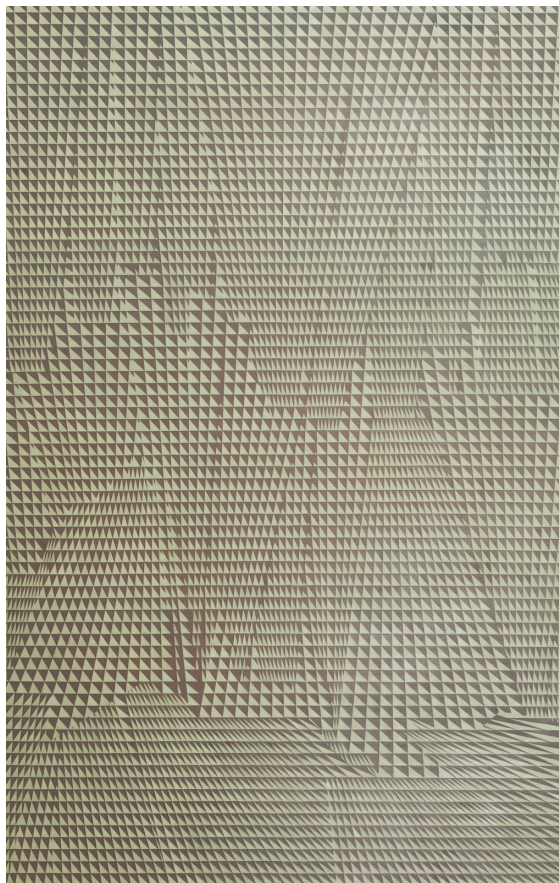
Christian Jankowski: (Born Göttingen, 1968, lives in Berlin)
Heavy Weight History (Ronald Reagan),
 2013 - b/w photograph on baryt paper, 140 x 186.8 cm

Christian Jankowski's full *Heavy Weight History* project, as shown at the Lisson Gallery last year, consists of an installation, a 25-minute film with an over-the-top sports-style commentary and a series of photographs. The German artist invited a group of champion Polish powerlifters to try to pick up massive public sculptures in Warsaw, including more than one Communist-era memorial and the statue of Ronald Reagan seen here. That provides a light-hearted and populist way of engaging with the contemporary relevance of such monuments, and as the past they represent. The weightlifters' attempts to hoist the burdens of history onto their shoulders had variable results: Reagan was among those to resist their efforts successfully.



Livia Marin (born Chile, 1973, lives London): **Nomad Patterns**, 2015

Livia Marin presents objects from the series *Nomad Patterns*, in which the ceramic seems to have been arrested mid-melt, or knocked over only to spill instead of breaking, and then retained an improbable continuity in their pastiche Chinese pattern. That poses questions of literal and metaphysical weight. Is that china or water? A destruction or a restoration? Casually playful or threatening instability? Our judgement is likely to be affected if we know that much of Marin's work deals with breakage and repair in the context of seventeen years of oppressive dictatorship in her home country of Chile...



Cipriano Martínez

(born Caracas 1965, lives London):

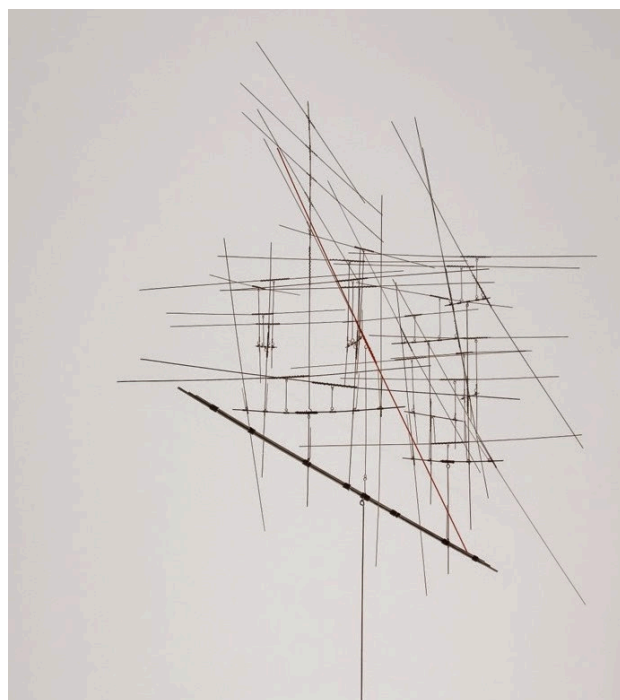
Orthodrome, 2012 - oil on canvas, 180 x 120 cm

If Ferro's mobiles are grids in a constant, yet always balanced, state of change, Cipriano Martínez' paintings and silkscreen prints are static works which use optical dynamics to resist any stabilization of their grids. That may represent the constant, and so never quite conclusive, change in urban environments and the systems which keep them going – nowhere more so than in his home city of Caracas. Doubt, it has been suggested, defeats reason in Martínez' world of cartography corrupted to the cusp of abstraction. A heavy agenda, perhaps, but delivered with a shimmer.

Knopp Ferro (born Cologne, 1953, lives Ammersee):

Raum 22-37, 2010 - iron and red colour - 124x109x87cm

The German-born and resident Austrian sculptor Knopp Ferro has a performance background, evident enough in the works he makes by slashing paper with a knife, but also implicit in his delicate mobiles. They repeat their slender units to lyrical effect, demonstrating a trembling lightness one might not – despite the precedents of Calder and Rickey - naturally associate with iron rods. The contrast is heightened when the sculpture hangs overhead, drawing a cloud in space. Here Knopp's playful yet extreme deconstruction of the grid counterpoints. Phyllida Barlow's rumbustious approach.





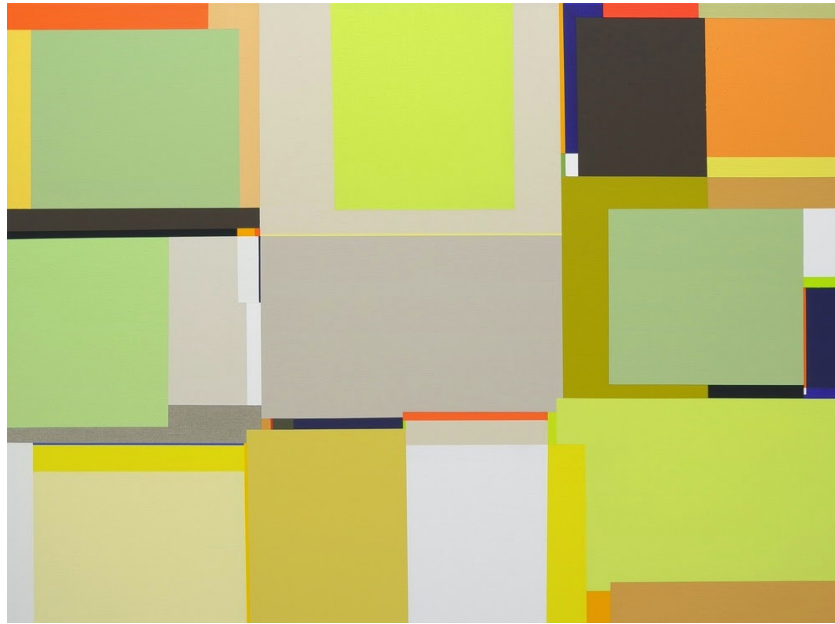
Phyllida Barlow (born Newcastle, 1944, lives London): **no title: brokenboxtube**
2014 - Cardboard, ply, polyurethane foam, scrim, bonding plaster, cement, paint, spray paint, PVA, sand - 40 x 30 x 33 cm

Phyllida Barlow has recently taken over Tate Britain, Hauser & Wirth Somerset and the Venice Biennale with her mock monumental installations, which act as obstructions to viewers' progress through the space as they parody the pompousness of phallogocentric traditions. She employs workaday builders' materials, which used to get recycled into the next exhibition until her rise to international prominence in the last few years. Consistent with the deflation of portentous weight, her work typically looks a lot heavier than it actually is. That facilitates her putting sculptures on the wall, which plays up their often painterly surfaces, as in this mini-anthology of forms.



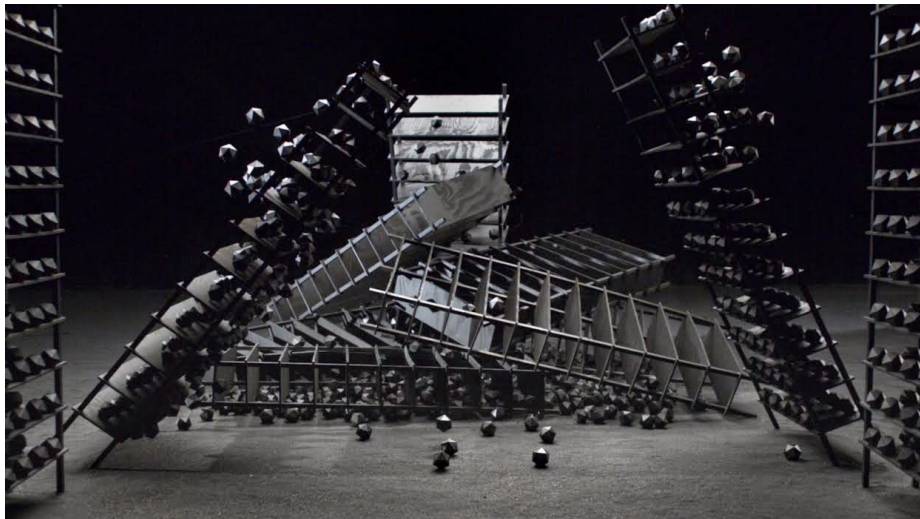
Richard Serra (born San Francisco, 1939, lives New York / Nova Scotia): **Level IV**, 2010
Etching, Paper 73.7 x 165.1 cm - Edition of 22

Richard Serra's fame rests on his mighty sculptural explorations of weight and space, but his super-dense applications of paint stick, and linked prints, capture much of that spirit. He draws as an act, giving process precedence over results. That leaves a residue, which depicts nothing but the logic of that action on his material: the pain stick fuses with its support, so there's no figure/ground relationship. Black helps in this: Serra regards it as the most objective hue, and says that since it the densest colour material, 'it absorbs and dissipates light to a maximum and thereby changes the artificial as well as the natural light in a given room'. *Level IV* defines its space in just those terms.



Richard Schur (born (1971) and lives in Munich)
Summer Lawns, from the Manhattan Series, 2015 Acrylic on canvas 120 x 160 cm

The internal organisation of Richard Schur's creamily sumptuous abstractions is all about comparative balance, weighing one colour and volume against another: looks at the effect of such small sectors of yellow can have in these pictures. But the whole painting can also seem 'heavy' (as in *Up*) or 'light' (*Summer Lawns*). Yet Schur's lightest touch is reserved for the tiller of art history - most obviously Mondrian - as he paints his way around the world in a series of residencies. His ever-mutating sequence of abstracts sails into actively serene visual spaces suffused with the light of those various places - here, America.



Levi van Veluw (born Hoevelaken, 1985, lives in Arnhem):
The Collapse of Cohesion, Archive, 2014 – video, 8.36 mins, 2014

In 2011, Dutch artist Levi van Veluw built three versions of his boyhood bedroom, covered with thousands of symmetrical wooden shapes to symbolise his 'urge for order and fear of losing control'. He has since developed that theme of the world on the edge of order or just tipping over it through charcoal drawings, installations, photography and film: *Archive* is part of his major project *The Collapse of Cohesion*. It shows cabinets laden with geometric forms crashing down in slow motion: not only might that stand in for emotional trauma, molecular references could easily link it to the 'Big Crunch' which will be the ultimate end of times. And yet the fabulous aesthetic offsets that sufficiently to us in an ambiguous space. He shows in Amsterdam with Ron Mandos, and also has a London solo lined up for 2016 with Rosenfeld Porcini.



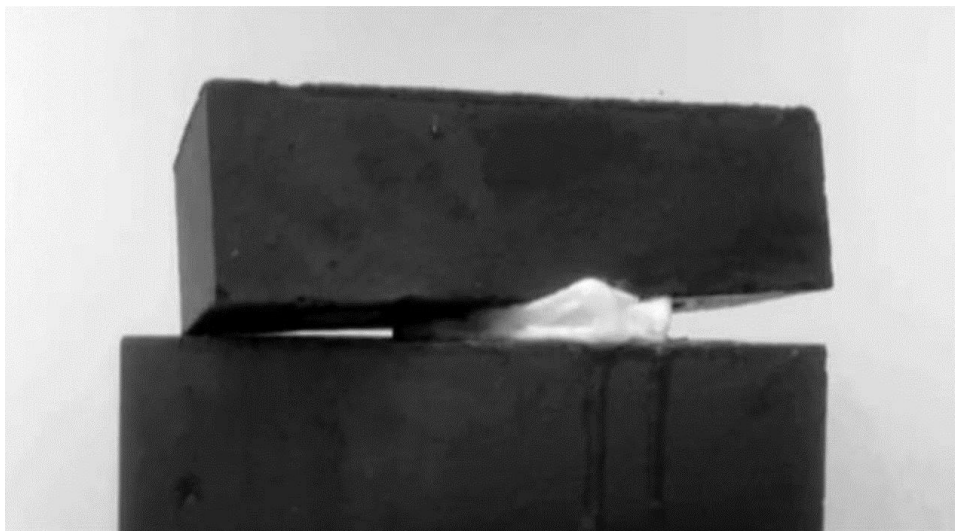
David Rickard (born New Zealand, 1975, lives London)
Ouroboros, 2013 Suspended weighing scales - dimensions variable

The hanging installation *Ouroboros* interlinks a series of weighing scales, each of which measures the cumulative weight of those below. With the lowest scale registering no weight the dials incrementally step around the face of successive scales up the height of the work as they weigh the increasing number of scales below them. Maddox's 2.85m ceiling height allows for eight scales, such that the top one registers halfway round the 25 kg dial. That implies the self-reflexivity of the ancient symbol of a snake eating its own tail. You might think, incidentally, that 16 smaller scales would have completed the full cycle in the given height – allowing the physicists' puzzle question: why is that not so?



Liv Fontaine (born (1989) and lives in Southampton)
Plinth Piece, 20 min video loop + performances

Liv Fontaine's lively performance practice typically uses alter egos to address sexual politics. Perhaps that cues in the phallic aspect of her would-be-flexible body's battle against the constraint of a large and rigid plinth. Sculpture, of course, descended from the plinth fairly decisively in the early sixties, but nowadays it's pretty common, nonetheless, to see small ceramics and sculptural items set atop a column – indeed, Fontaine says it was the number of such presentations, which triggered her performance. Anyway, the plinth has come down along with the artist, cast here to reference the classic nude and so emphasise just what a weight of art history there is to be dragged around. Fontaine's recent performance venues include Shoreditch House and the ICA.



Nicolas Feldmeyer (born Switzerland, 1980, lives in London):
Something heavy on something melting, 2010 – video, 1.03 mins

Trained in Zurich, San Francisco and London, Nicolas Feldmeyer's varied practice tends to explore the energies of the world in ways which suggest, he says, that 'there is much more to things and between them than I can understand'. 'Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?', we might ask along with Pope, seeing how weight picks on a substance which is losing its shape without any help. Perhaps there a critique there of how we're treating the arctic as well as a strong formal pre-echo of Serra's *Dead Load*, 2014. *Clearing Up II* also hints at the meteorological, and contrasts with the Serra etching by making an evanescence out of blackness.