

WORLD SCULPTURE NEWS

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SAMUES LEUNG



G R Iranna * **Jason Lim** * **Cynthia**
Sah & Nicolas Bertoux * **Reviews**

Welcome to World Sculpture News

Of all art forms sculpture, to my mind, is magical as it speaks to our humanity and frames our most personal narratives in ways that two-dimensional art forms do not. As with human beings, sculpture has its own space in which it lives and breathes. Regardless of style, sculpture demands to be touched, and in the touching our humanity is reinforced. We need an art form that is full of dramatic narratives that enhance our public and private spaces. We need an art form to help us question ourselves and to understand the deep social and political problems that impact the broader society in which we live. Sculpture is that art form.

The Indian artist G R Iranna is well aware of the power of sculpture in society to unlock our imaginations. History and deep personal experiences inform his work, as his awareness of art as a vigorous creative tool came early to him. Iranna says that he is intent on making an impact on society's many social and political challenges as well as exposing the futility of war and highlighting concerns of the polluted environments that plague the health of virtually all societies. Iranna's art is challenging for audiences. He demands our complete attention to understand his subtleties and how these can be seen clearly by removing our metaphorical blindfolds. Messages in his art encourage us to speak up about the social and political injustices in the world to give voice to the voiceless.

Singaporean Jason Lim is a considerate and contemplative artist. For Lim sculpture is magic, if not entirely magical, as he says. Working with clay for many recent sculpture is definitely a challenge as time and process throw up very different problems. Lim is a master of the effects that please the eye and his results often surprise. He draws upon a wide range of material for inspiration: from tree branches to stones, from rocks to diverse found objects that he finds substantial to him.

The successful sculptural careers of Italy-based Cynthia Sah and Nicolas Bertoux is proof that art making and marriage can work well together. Both artists are highly individual in vision but their sculpture is informed by unique aesthetic sensibilities that are arrived at through consensus. Their individual works are strong but their work together on monumental sculptures for large architectural spaces and many public and private spaces shows great presence of materials and form. The environments in which their sculptures have been placed have added great imaginative stature.

Sculptors in the 21st century have many challenges ahead of them as the Internet comes to dominate so much of the creative world. The Internet is an ephemeral world while sculpture is very much a tactile one that makes very different emotional and intellectual demands on audiences. Hong Kong sculptor Samues Leung understands this very well. His formal public sculptures enhance the apartment complexes in which they are situated, but he is also an artist for whom experimentation with materials and aesthetics is also important. Leung's vision as a sculptor embraces both the challenges of public sculpture and a sparkling private *wabi sabi* narrative. Pleasure and joy in his art touches our spirits that make it stand out.



Ian Findlay-Brown
Editor/Publisher

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WORLD SCULPTURE NEWS

VOLUME 25 NUMBER 2 SPRING 2019

7 EDITORIAL

Welcome to *World Sculpture News*.

8 NEWSBRIEF

News and views from the art world.

32 INDIA

Intensely Individual Narratives

History and deep personal experiences inform Indian artist G R Iranna's diverse art. His awareness of art as a vigorous creative tool came early to him. He says that he is intent on making an impact on society's many social and political challenges as well as on showing the futility of war and individual concerns. Iranna's art is challenging for audiences, as it demands our complete attention to understand its subtleties.



G R Iranna, **Naavu (We Together)**, 2012, wood and mixed-media, dimensions variable, site specific, 500-650 padukas. Installation views at the India Pavillion in the Arsenale, the 58th Venice Biennale. All images: Courtesy of the Artist.

38 HONG KONG

The Traditional And The Wabi Sabi In Sculpture

Sculpture in all its forms, whether traditionally figurative or materially experimental, whether naturalistic or romantic, offers up many challenges for the artist as well as the viewer. Samues Leung's vision as a sculptor embraces both public sculpture and a sparkling private *wabi sabi* narrative. His art touches the spirit, which makes it stand out in the crowded sculptural world.

Cover: Samues Leung, **The Man Story**, 2017, brass, Japanese rice paper, and found objects, 240 x 180 x 90 cm. Image: Courtesy of the Artist.

45 ITALY

The Two Of Us

The successful sculptural careers of Italy-based Cynthia Sah and Nicolas Bertoux is proof that art making and marriage can work well together. Both artists are highly individual but their sculpture is informed by unique acathetic sensibilities. Their individual works are strong but their work together on monumental sculptures for large architectual spaces and many public and private spaces shows great presence of materials and form. The environments in which their sculptures have been placed add great imaginative stature.

50 SINGAPORE

Chance Is The Thing

Singaporean Jason Lim—ceramicist and sculptor—is a considerate and contemplative artist. For Lim art is magic, if not entirely magical. Lim is a master of the effects of time and process, which pleases the eye as the results are keenly felt. His sculptures take him back to tree branches, stones, rocks, and collected items that are substantial to him.



Jason Lim, **Vesak Meditation**, 2019, glazed terracotta, 22 x 21 x 40 cm. Photograph: Gajah Gallery Singapore.

54 REVIEWS

Reviews from Australia, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United States.

The Tradition And The Wabi Sabi In Sculpture



Sculpture in all its forms, whether traditionally figurative or materially experimental, whether naturalistic or romantic, offer up many challenges for the artist as well as the viewers. Samues Leung's vision as a sculptor embraces both public sculpture and a sparking private wabi-sabi narrative. His art touches the spirit which makes it stand out in the crowd sculptural world.

By Ian Findlay



Sculpture offers myriad creative challenges. As a sculptor and painter Samues Leung faces these everyday as he develops his wide-ranging sculpture offers myriad creative challenges. As a sculptor and painter Samues Leung faces these everyday as he develops his wide-ranging public and private sculptural narratives. His art is welcoming, informed as it is by a generous aesthetic that embraces traditional Chinese philosophy, landscape art, social consciousness, memories of time and place, relief sculpture, the monumental, collage, meditative Zen, the spirit of *wabi-sabi*, installation, photography, painting, the philosophy of slow living, politics, and free-flowing Western sculptural abstraction, among others. His varied materials - from marble to cloth, from water to rice paper, from metal to found objects celebrate the fundamentals of art-making through which he speaks to the vitality of the human spirit. Through his materials and forms Leung also questions human reality as it moves across time and through place, seeding memories that will invigorate the future of his art's discourse.

Leung's subject matter and themes flow lyrically from his imagination and expectations of his art's purpose where reality moves between fast and slow, be-

tween the spontaneous and the formal, from strength to fragility, and between permanence and impermanence. All of these have drawn Leung into a world of shrewdly questioning the reality and the spiritual qualities of life around and within humanity. There are no fixed answers as everything is in flux, evolving slowly in his which is why he has been drawn into the orbit of slow living's seductive aesthetic and philosophy where the pleasure of making art is paramount to creative endeavor and self-awareness. Leung wants viewers to subscribe to this, too, encouraging reflection. He is aware that slowing down will revive our humanity, allowing people to see the present and life's complexities clearly, which might lend peace to our inner selves as we move into the future. "Having lived and worked in a fast-paced city like Hong Kong for many years," Leung wrote in his 2015 MFA book *The Art of Impermanence*, "I could not help but wonder what would happen if we all slowed down our pace a bit discover and appreciate the natural aesthetics and organic compositions of the little things around us"

Looking across both the large and the small works of Leung's *oeuvre* of the past five years it is clear that he relishes surprise, loves the originality of unexpected natural forms, alone or in combination, and takes satisfaction in magical outcomes through experiment

and risk-taking. A dramatic recent work entitled *Unfolding Umbrella* (2019) speaks boldly to Hong Kong's social protests and in recent years. Leung notes this work was made "not only to recall our memories of Occupy Central events that happened in 2014 but also the experience of the recent protests against the HK Extradition Law. The burned umbrella records our tears and sweat in the various events. The up light on the plastic tube represents people's hope, belief and effort dedicated our beloved Hong Kong. And its words remind us Keep Calm and Carry On."



His monumental installation piece entitled *Fish-1989* (2019), made for Hong Kong's Drainage Services Department's 30th anniversary, speaks, I feel, to nature and freedom through the repeated images of a fish suspended on poles: there is joy and an impish humor here in nature's flow. This work was a challenging one as it involved so many pieces, which had to be suspended correctly to achieve the sense. Different projects and the scale determine how Leung prepares. For *Fish-1989*, he used 3-D computer-drawing.



Above: Samues Leung, *Fish* - 1989, 2019, Drainage Services Department's 30th Anniversary. **Previous pages:** Samues Leung, *Mountain in Mountain*, 2018, sculpture on water feature, 10 meter diameter, mixed media. All images: Courtesy of the Artist.

The spirit of freedom in the flying fish lends grace to the artwork. This is something that underpins much of Leung's art and ideas and his love of *wabi-sabi* as well as his support of the ideals of slow living. Leung is not dogmatic with his visual messages; he invites interpretations that expand the narrative reality of his art, and in so doing encourages people to look inside themselves. For Leung, making art should not only be a pleasure but it should also be a contemplative intellectual and spiritual adventure. He wrote in MFA Book *The Art of Impermanence 2015*, "What I enjoy the most in making art is the spontaneity and the almost providential nature of the creation process. There are always unexpected outcomes which can be anticipated delightfully."



Samues Leung, *Narcissus Love: clocks and shoes*, 2015, sewing tools, card-paper, mixture of sand and acrylic, two clocks, a pair of bronze shoes, dimensions variable.

People living in the expansive housing complexes, where Leung has placed a number of his striking monumental sculptures and installations, have found great "delight" in them. Although they vary in size, there is something that speaks human scale. While he has been influenced by Western sculptural language, some of his works speak to the drama of Chinese landscape as in his dramatic mixed-media sculpture *Mountain in Mountain* (2018).

This is an especially elegant piece with pleasant naturalness and spontaneity about it. As the day progresses from dawn to dusk to night and the light changes from natural to the lamp light in the water, the smooth sculpted forms pushing toward the sky are revealed as mountains in a classical Chinese landscape. The effect of this sinuous work is a calming, encouraging momentary contemplation.

Samues Leung's five commissioned public monumental sculptures are powerful visual statements that change the perceptions of living environments. But the road to achieving their reality is beset by many challenges, not the least of which is the work needed in gaining the relevant government permissions to work in a public area on large-scale artworks. Getting approval for the structural design is a tough challenge as



Samues Leung, *Narcissus Love: Family*, 2015, plastic animated flower, sewing tools, card paper, mixture of sand and acrylic, dimensions variable.



Samue Leung, Memories of Shadows series : **The Present**, 2017, Installation view at the MFA Graduation Show in HKAC, Medium: brass, Japanese rice paper, found objects, dimensions variable; maximum height 200cm.

is deciding on method and the standards and quality of materials used. Every aspect of the work is discussed down to the smallest detail.

In all of Leung's *oeuvre*, it seems to me, he works across art forms with uncommon ease, with the confidence of an artist who is in full control of his vision and materials. His aesthetic challenges in sculpture, installation, sculpted collage are driven by a desire to reveal new worlds to us, new ways of seeing the world, and a fresh emotional response to art as well as the making of it.

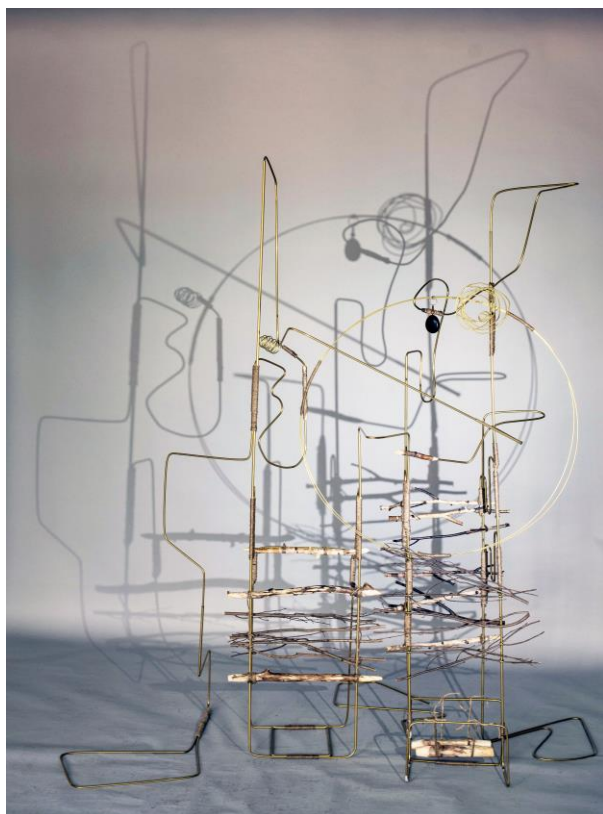
One sees this in his three-part sculptural project *Narcissus Love* (2015), which includes the works that make up *In Praise of slow*, and which refers to the philosophy of slow living. The seven beautifully realized pieces, narcissus flowers and shirt collars that make up *Narcissus Love*, were driven by Leung's deep desire that his artworks "should have an aesthetic which can be dedicated to my family, as well as honoring my father's profession as a tailor." The *Narcissus* works began life as oil painting but became one of his most personal artworks, the making of which shows just how careful Leung was in the realization of his art.

From the painting of *Narcissus love* shirt collars to installation works was an interesting journey of layering meaning and narrative as he tried "to make a new series of installation art in which the pots were handmade and sculpted in the shape of British shirt collars and the blossom stalks were made of real thread spindles."

The making of *Narcissus Love* and *In Praise of Slow* speaks to memory, experimentation, and personal artistic challenges. Leung notes that in the painting of *Narcissus Love* and onto sculpting the flowers in their collar-shaped bowls in the *Family* part of *Narcissus Love* he learned an important lesson that has served him during the past five years. "One lesson learnt in this exercise, from today's contemporary art-making perspective, is that I can explore a wider spectrum of media and processes to test various materials and motifs to find out which best expresses the original idea. In this case, painting might not be the most suitable medium." Leung, the consummate sculptor, still has doubts about his preferred medium. "I love painting," he says, "so perhaps, I should paint more than making sculpture."

But what has also played a central role in Leung's art has been travel that has included extensive exposure to art and urban environments. He notes that his art journey through *Kansai and Setochi* in 2014 was especially influential. His explorations of deserted Hong Kong villages, where memory is revealed in broken objects in destroyed houses, have also played a significant part in his art practice. *Deserted Stories #3*, (2015) has a dramatic simplicity to it that quickly grabs one's attention. His contact with silence and isolation have also played important roles in his art-making as have the materials he uses in his public art practice, including marble, stainless steel, and bronze for sculpture. But for other, more private art, Leung says that it depends on the idea and context, but his favorite materials are wood, sand, rusted metal, and paper, among others.

There is significant aesthetic depth to Leung's art made over the past have years, which has been achieved through discipline and a willingness to take risks with experiments across media. While his monumental sculptures are impressive achievements physically and aesthetically, the small, lean, stripped-down, more experimental abstract works



Samueles Leung, *The Seed Story*, 2017, brass, Japanese rice paper, found objects, 180 x 90 x 240 cm.



Samueles Leung, *The Man Story*, 2017, brass, Japanese rice paper, found objects, 180 x 90 x 240 cm.

works that make up his beautiful mixed-media *Memories of Shadows* series (2017) possess a drama that is a powerful human and emotional statement that address something of the nature of life and its qualities. As Leung notes on *The Seed Story*, one of nature's most important rules is "people need to practice living naturally and following their heart with patience and a peaceful mind without too much manipulations and expectations. Like a seed, an event can only happen at the right time, at the right place, and under the right conditions."

This series includes *The Man Story*, *The Seed Story*, and *The Present* that speak directly to Leung's concern with space, time, and the elements and the characteristics of *wabi-sabi* as well as the viewer's presence as part of the installation. As he says, "In the setup of these site-specific installations with lighting, different shadows will be reflected on the walls at the back of the sculptures. They will be viewed in a holistic perspective of *Memories of Shadows*, including the viewers' shadows."



Samues Leung, Hidden Memory Series: **Deserted Stories #3**, 2015, wood, metal, acrylic, knife, fork, postage stamps, dimensions variable.

Leung is fascinated with both computer and human memory and the quality of these memories. The way that Leung uses brass, Japanese rice paper, and found objects in the construction of the works in the *Memories of Shadows* series develops his understanding of how *wabi-sabi* appears in our quotidian existences. It may seem like chaos to many people, but it is a rough reality that helps us to navigate the world. While there is a sense of abandonment in *Memories of Shadows*, there is a wistfulness in the lines of construction of each work that suggest things as different as windows looking into a distant future; present that seems fragile and immensely strong by turns; while twisted wires speak of a personal calligraphy and so to the importance of culture in society. The organic qualities of *Memories of Shadows* have filled with intense energy, which speak to the notion "memory is relative to time and space."



Samues Leung, **Hidden Memory - Past, Present and Future** 2016, brass, found objects, dimensions variable.

Samues Leung's monumental public sculptures and his more intimate private works have broad emotional messages and appeal. Some artists are little moved by their art, but not Leung, who says that he is especially affected emotionally by his work. "In particular the small works," he says. "They carry the message or story that I intended to tell audience, for example, such as *Narcissus Love*." And in line with this Leung says that over time he has "learned and will always bear in mind that, in the making of art, less is always more"