

BLOUIN ARTINFO

23 Questions For Abstract Sculptor Richard Deacon



Photo: Sonia Kolesnikov-Jessop

Richard Deacon with his new paper sculptures at STPI

by Sonia Kolesnikov-Jessop, ARTINFO

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Name: Richard Deacon

Age: 63

Occupation: Artist

City/Neighborhood: London, UK

Current exhibition:

“Beware of the Dog” at [Singapore Tyler Print Institute](#) presenting 76 pieces by the artist from his five-week on-site residency. It includes marbled polygonal paper columns of folded paper, relief prints, woodblock on kozo paper, paper works, and shaped handmade paper collaged on screen-printed

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paper.

Had you worked on paper before this exhibition?

I'd made some sculptures in the early '90s that had paper, but I've never worked with handmade paper before. And I've never used paper for such a big body of work. In fact, I've rarely done exhibitions that are material-based. Most of the exhibitions I've done have had a big mixture of materials, so this is probably unique.

What were the challenges?

Because I've always used paper as a dry material, and never as a wet material, I was quite cautious about putting colors into the wet surface. It took a while to get the confidence to do so. This unfamiliarity with the wet material led me to push it around a bit too much initially.

What were the overarching ideas for this body of work?

The invitation was to come here and just work and see what happened. I had some ideas about folding before I started, and a couple of days before I came here, I saw some hazard warning tapes which kind of tied in with some drawings I'd done. And in my mind there is some link between the pattern of the warning tape and folding.

With the series of 19 paper sculptures titled "Housing," are you revising previous shapes you've created in ceramics and steel?

Working with these kinds of forms started about five years ago with folding cardboard, went to steel, became clay, and now have become paper. Here, both sides of the paper are marbled before they are folded so that there is a choice about which side is out and which is in, and (it's also) about sequencing of colors.

What about the series "Konrad Witz" where you used crumpled handmade paper?

These shapes don't really resemble any of my works. They started out with quite big pieces of paper and some ended up quite small, so there is something about compression, which I think is interesting, reducing material by compressing it. I've never done this before. Most of the time I stretch materials.

Is this something you would like to explore again?

Yes, I think it would be quite interesting. There is also the ambiguity at the end of the material here which I find quite interesting.

So what have you learned during this residency?

A lot about marbling (laughs).

And what did you enjoy most in the process?

It fell into two parts. The rigor and control of doing the early works (inspired by the hazard warning tape), the patience needed to do the woodblock, using such a simple technique for such a complex image made out of photocopies. And in the second part: the teamwork to get the marbling done. Over two weeks it was kind of an everyday performance.

What are you working on now?

A cornice for the St. James Gateway in Piccadilly (London), which is being put up now. It's not a million miles from the folded columns.

So where are you finding ideas for your work these days?

In surprising places – mostly when you least expect it.

What's the most indispensable item in your studio?

A good supply of clamps.

Where's your favorite place to see art?

The Thorvaldsen Museum in Copenhagen.

What's your favorite post-gallery watering hole or restaurant?

Tate Modern Restaurant.

What's the last show that you saw?

Bronze at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

Do you collect anything?

Yes, but not with any rigor – I buy a lot of junk.

What's the last artwork you purchased?

A painting by Derek Holland from 1965 – he was my art teacher at secondary school.

What work of art do you wish you owned?

An early work of Donald Judd's.

What would you do to get it?

What are you asking me to do?

What's your art-world pet peeve?

Art fairs – there are too many!

What international art destination do you most want to visit?

The Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg.

What under-appreciated artist, gallery, or work do you think people should know more about?

Olga Jevrić – a sculptor from Serbia, well known in the '60s.

Who's your favorite living artist?

Robert Ryman.

What are your hobbies?

Walking, bird watching.

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