

JOEL SHAPIRO: PLASTER, PAPER, WOOD, AND WIRE

Approximately 30 works spanning the artist's career illuminate his creative process through the lens of his engagement with specific materials

March 2–June 10, 2018

March 2, 2018, New Haven, Conn.—Over nearly five decades, Joel Shapiro (b. 1941) has continuously sought new ways to create meaningful form, whether in space through sculpture or on paper through drawings and prints. While Shapiro has always worked in a wide array of media, the material possibilities of plaster, wood, and wire and the direct mark making of drawing have especially suited the artist's open and experimental approach. *Joel Shapiro: Plaster, Paper, Wood, and Wire* is the culmination of a sustained collaboration between Shapiro and the Gallery. It brings together over 30 objects—many chosen with Shapiro from his studio, complementing selections from the Gallery's growing holdings of the artist's work—spanning the start of his creative practice in the late 1960s to the present.

When Shapiro first begins to explore an idea, he turns to readily available, hands-on materials as his chosen vocabulary. Moving with ease between abstraction and allusions to objects and figures, Shapiro probes fundamental concepts of sculpture—mass and volume, scale, positive and negative space, construction, and surface texture—and in the process evokes core aspects of human experience, such as movement, perception, embodiment, memory, and understanding. Though the works on view in the exhibition represent almost fifty years of Shapiro's career and vary dramatically in scale, they share an immediacy that results from the artist's familiar and fluent engagement with plaster, paper, wood, and wire. These objects thus afford an intimate view into the heart of Shapiro's artistic pursuit: his faith in material form as a language capable of communicating the profound humanist concerns that preoccupy him.

Shapiro worked directly with exhibition curator Pamela Franks, Senior Deputy Director and the Seymour H. Knox, Jr., Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, to create the poetic design of the exhibition. He chose the fourth floor of the Gallery's Louis Kahn building (constructed in 1953) to house his works, finding harmony between his aesthetic and the concrete surroundings and, more specifically, between certain artworks and the modern architect's signature design elements.



Joel Shapiro, *Untitled*, 2002. Painted wood and wire. Yale University Art Gallery, Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund. © 2018 Joel Shapiro/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Joel Shapiro, *Really Blue (after all)*, 2016. Wood and casein. Courtesy of the artist. © 2018 Joel Shapiro/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

For example, the manner in which Shapiro’s monumental wood sculpture *Really Blue (after all)* (2016) interacts with the tetrahedral ceiling is intentional—and breathtaking.

The exhibition is notably not confined to a single space within the museum. On the fourth-floor sculpture terrace, two bronze works by Shapiro stand alongside classical figurative sculptures by Aristide Maillol (1861-1944), and in the adjoining gallery, a large, red wood sculpture hangs in dialogue with *Wall Drawing #142* by Sol LeWitt (1928-2008), part of the concurrent exhibition *Sol LeWitt Wall Drawings: Expanding a Legacy*. The exhibition therefore engages the site of the museum in multiple ways—expanding on Shapiro’s career-long practice of site-specific installations—with works selected based on their relationships to objects by Shapiro in the Gallery’s collection, other artists’ works on view, and the surrounding architecture. Franks comments, “The exhibition offers a multidimensional

picture of Shapiro’s creative process, palpable in both the exploratory works themselves and the conversations among them that emerge in this new setting. The product of numerous studio visits, shared time at the Gallery, and many conversations, the exhibition and its related programs illuminate the ways in which working directly with artists adds an essential vitality to the museum and its community.”



Joel Shapiro, *Untitled*, 1975. Charcoal on paper. Yale University Art Gallery, Richard Brown Baker, B.A. 1935, Collection. © 2018 Joel Shapiro/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

On View

March 2–June 10, 2018

Related Programs

Costume Ball

Thursday, March 1, 5:30 pm

“Plaster, Paper, Wood, and Wire”

Conversations

Thursday, March 8, 5:30 pm

Joel Shapiro with Pamela Franks, Senior Deputy Director and the Seymour H. Knox, Jr., Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

Thursday, May 10, 5:30 pm

“Poetry and Sculpture: A Conversation”

Peter Cole, poet, and Joel Shapiro, with Pamela Franks

Exhibition Tour

Tuesday, April 10, 12:30 pm

Gallery Talk

Wednesday, March 28, 12:30 pm

“Seeing through the Eye: Joel Shapiro with Hart Crane”

Langdon Hammer, the Niel Gray, Jr., Professor of English and Department Chair, Yale University

Studio Program

Friday, March 9, 1:30 pm

“Sculpture: The Ingredients”

Joel Shapiro with Pamela Franks

Registration required; please call 203.432.9525.

All programs are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. For more detailed programming information, visit artgallery.yale.edu/calendar.

Exhibition Credits

Exhibition organized by Pamela Franks, Senior Deputy Director and the Seymour H. Knox, Jr., Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art. Made possible by the Gretchen, John, and Alex Berggruen Family Fund and the Joann and Gifford Phillips, Class of 1942, Fund.

Yale University Art Gallery

The Yale University Art Gallery, the oldest college art museum in the United States, was founded in 1832 when the patriot-artist John Trumbull gave more than 100 of his paintings to Yale College. Since then its collections have grown to more than 200,000 objects ranging in date from ancient times to the present.

General Information

The Yale University Art Gallery is located at 1111 Chapel Street, New Haven, Connecticut. Museum hours: Tuesday-Friday, 10 am-5 pm; Thursday until 8 pm (September-June); and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am-5 pm. The Gallery is closed Mondays and major holidays. Free and open to the public. For general information, please call 203.432.0600 or visit the website at artgallery.yale.edu.

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