

VIRTUALLY

SCULPTURE

The Study Gallery, Poole: 06.12.2008 - 21.02.2009

South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell: 04.07 - 31.08.2009

## The Particularisation of Form

Two major influences underpin Michael Shaw's work, the first is Minimalist sculpture and the theories of Donald Judd; the second is Piero della Francesca and his book on the Five Regular Solids (*Libellus de Quinque Corporibus Regularibus*) which describes innovative interpretations of solid geometry. The influence of minimalist sculpture focuses on Judd's concept of 'specific objects' where, as Judd writes 'the shape, image, colour and surface are single'. Through his practice as a sculptor Michael has subjected this concept of singularity of form to extensive examination and extension, so that perhaps his work is less ambiguous and therefore more faithful to this concept than Judd's ever was.

The ambiguity in Judd's sculpture relates to most of his sculptures conforming to box like constructions that rely on the precision of the right angle, the consequence of this is that just as square boxes have four sides, so do his sculptures, and in having four sides they can be said to be made up of parts, no matter how pervasive the quality of the orthogonal and the square are. Further to this, the repetition of squareness without variation can result in a work having little or no aesthetic significance, what is required therefore is the addition of a 'different' part or change in composition, to strike a contrast. The intention of this 'different' part is that it will through its contrast either reinforce or destabilise qualities of squareness. Judd did this extensively, but because he seldom gave his sculptures titles other than *Untitled* they are difficult to reference in an article such as this that is without illustrations. There is, for instance, his *Untitled* of 1964 that also has the colloquial title of 'Swimming Pool'. This sculpture is of a square configuration resting on the floor. Consistent with its square configuration it has straight sides, but the corners do not intersect at right angles, instead they are round. Inevitably this gives rise to the contrast between straight and round, as in the sides and corners respectively. Meanwhile his wall relief constructions consist of parts, that in their horizontal orientation relate to one another through a positioning often based on the Fibonacci series, some of these later pieces even containing diagonals that contrast with the strict rectangularity of the surrounding box. Could it be that Judd did not accept the developmental consequences of his own practice?

In considering the artists who are associated with the minimalist movement, one could never say that its membership was coherent, not everyone was as deliberately restrained as Judd. Take for instance Robert Morris, who was involved in art forms ranging from minimalist sculpture to the elevation of his own body. It may, nevertheless, have been the more open minded approach of Morris that enabled him to more convincingly comprehend the implications of Judd's narrow aesthetic. In his *Notes on Sculpture, Part I* Morris draws attention to the perceptual ramifications of Judd's aesthetic by considering it within the context of Gestalt psychology. He writes that 'In the simpler regular polyhedrons, such as cubes and pyramids, one need not move around the object for the sense of the whole, the Gestalt, to occur. One sees and believes that the pattern within one's mind corresponds to the existential fact of the object.' Note the 'pattern in one's mind' with it the implication that our minds are somehow hard wired to respond with familiarity to these regular configurations. Later he expands on this by saying that 'the irregularity' which is found in irregular polyhedrons 'becomes a particularizing quality'. The 'irregular' for Morris therefore leads to the particular, and it is only when the familiar is displaced by the particular and the process of perception is delayed that we 'see things as they are, not as they are known'.<sup>1</sup>

In the UK we all too often see minimalism in terms of a male dominated movement and that perhaps it was

Eva Hesse whose work showed how sculpture might be retrieved from minimalism's strictures. This view ignores the contribution of Anne Truitt, an artist that Greenberg was to call the 'first minimalist'<sup>2</sup> As early as 1963, as seen in her exhibition at the Emmerich Gallery in New York, Truitt was making sculpture that explored the perceptual uncertainty created by vertical elements whose axis is a few degrees off of the vertical. One such example is her *A Wall for Apricots* of 1968, where by this time she was not only offsetting verticality, but was also contributing to its perceptual significance through the use of colour.

Some 6 years ago Michael also began working with what he called – the deflection of geometry involving Judd's theory of singularity in relation to specific objects. Although his commitment to this theory is present in his work, it is also reinforced by his interest in Piero della Francesca's book on the five regular solids, where they are described with a graphic sensitivity that conveys the vitality and precision of their geometry and potential volume. They appear almost simultaneously to be existing in both a solid and skeletal state, making one equally aware of their interior and exterior; something that is common to almost all of the work Michael has in this exhibition. In addition to these qualities, Piero's skill in drawing these solids is suggestive of a process that encompasses both hand and machine, where the conformity of the machine is tempered by the sensitivity of the hand. I am rather speculating here, but for the last four years Michael has been working with the technical forming process called rapid prototyping. Through this process he has made the sculptures in this exhibition; all of which have a subtlety that is indicative of a process that somehow resides between the hand and the machine. Some of this subtlety is due to what he calls – the deflection of geometry, where the central axis is set slightly off of the horizontal or vertical, as in the case of Anne Truitt's sculptures. What this means is that initially the circular form of his sculptures illicit a perceptual response that seeks the symmetry of the circle as the underpinning of the cone or the cylinder, a symmetry that is almost always deflected by the slight deviation of the central axis. This is what Morris called the 'particularising quality' and it can be seen in *RPQCI*, *RP27* and *RP28* where it is given an added dimension, through the interior having a more complex sequence of contours than the exterior. Rapid prototyping has also enabled Michael to move from the planar to the skeletal where the interior and exterior of the sculpture can be seen simultaneously as in *RP34*. These skeletal examples are equally convincing in their capacity to describe volume, interior/exterior and main and subordinate axes. Also apparent in the skeletal sculptures is the implication that the line prescribing the skeleton is a continuous line in a perpetual state of movement. Whilst in these sculptures, movement is perceptual, it becomes graphic in his videos such as *What Might Be*, 2007, where lines repeatedly plot and transcribe volumes. Finally it becomes physical movement in his inflatables, such as *INF 05*, 2008, where the form does actually move, becoming animate.

Since its inception, minimalism has been subject to post-modern critiques, that see it as sterile, formalist and lacking in vitality and spontaneity, and for some of the work that is associated with this movement, this is undoubtedly true. Michael's sculpture suggests this pessimism may not be well founded and that concepts such as 'specific objects' are far from exhausted. There is in his work a 'particularising quality' that is indicative of nature itself, where patterns of growth are logical and intrinsically subtle in their complexity as described by D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson in *On Growth and Form*.

Professor Andrew A Stonyer

January, 2009

1. Morris, R., *Notes on Sculpture, Part I*. Artforum vol 4, no 6, February 1966, p 42-4.

2. Meyer, J., *Minimalism: art and polemics in the sixties*. Yale, 2001, p 226.



*RPQC2A*, 2008 - (left)  
SLS Nylon  
23 x 18 x 17 cm

(clockwise from top left)  
*RPSW2B*, 2008, SLS Nylon, 16 x 10 x 9 cm  
*RPSW3B*, 2008, SLS Nylon, 10 x 10 x 11 cm  
*RPO*, 2006, SLS Nylon, 10 x 8 x 6 cm  
*RPQC1A*, 2008, SLS Nylon, 25 x 21 x 20 cm



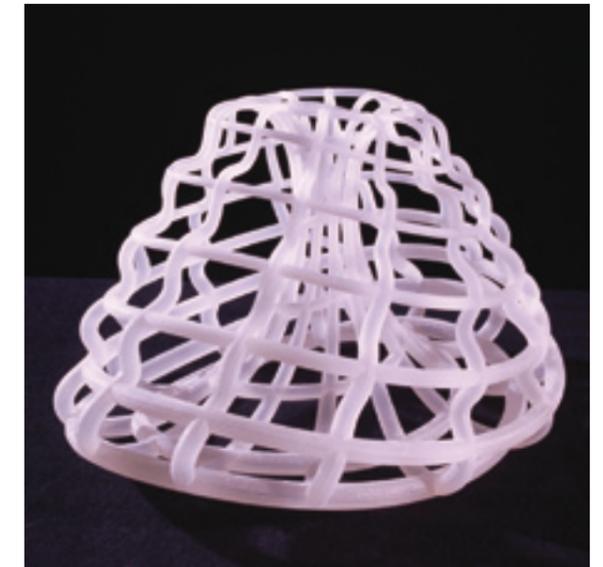
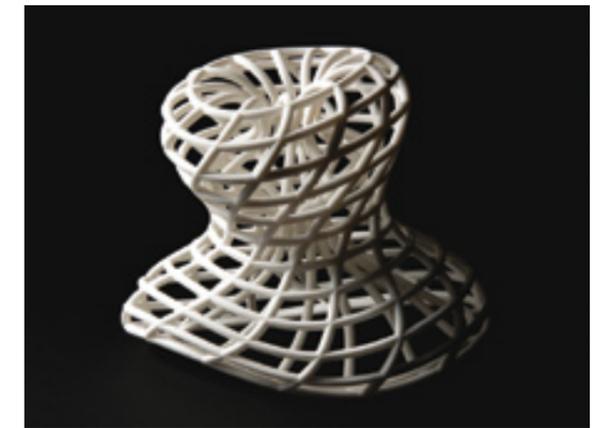
*RPQC2*, 2006 - (left)  
SLA Resin  
20 x 14 x 15 cm

(clockwise from top left)  
*RP28*, 2007, SLA Resin, 23 x 19 x 18 cm  
*RP24*, 2007, SLA Resin, 28 x 18 x 18 cm  
*RP27*, 2007, SLA Resin, 26 x 18 x 24 cm  
*RP29*, 2007, SLA Resin, 24 x 20 x 18 cm



*RP14*, 2007 - (left)  
SLA Resin  
22 x 18 x 14 cm

(clockwise from top left)  
*RP13*, 2007, SLA Resin, 18 x 14 x 14 cm  
*RP21*, 2007, SLA Resin, 18 x 18 x 22 cm  
*RP11*, 2007, SLA Resin, 16 x 11 x 9 cm  
*RP3*, 2007, SLA Resin, 16 x 11 x 10 cm



*RP15*, 2006 - (left)  
SLS Nylon  
20 x 16 x 16 cm

(clockwise from top left)  
*RP34* , 2007, Envision-Tec Resin, 20 x 16 x 16 cm  
*RP8*, 2007, SLS Nylon, 24 x 24 x 18 cm  
*RP35*, 2007, Envision-Tec Resin, 16 x 12 x 14 cm  
*RP9a*, 2007, Envision-Tec Resin, 18 x 16 x 16 cm

## Sculpture and the Specific

Michael Shaw's *Virtually Sculpture* surprises the viewer. Shaw's sculptures depart from everything that one may expect a sculpture to be: a solid object resulting from a long-process of modelling, carving, casting or construction in a sculptor's studio, then to be displayed on a gallery plinth or floor.

Shaw has replaced the traditional masculine labour of casting with a perhaps equally masculine process of digital design and manipulation. He explores the sculptural potential of computer aided design and manufacture. Drawing from the modernist tradition of simplified shapes, Shaw presents a new sculptural language of playful and weightless forms that depart from the conventional use of bronze and marble and the postmodern interest in industrial steel, iron and alloy. Shaw studies the characteristics of PVC, resin and nylon. The sculptures are often transparent and suspended from a ceiling.

Shaw uses digital manipulation to extend and explore the work by the American minimalist Donald Judd and his concept of "Specific Objects". Judd's renowned essay *Specific Objects* (1965) was a response to his native art critic Clement Greenberg's essays *The New Sculpture* (1949) and *Sculpture in Our Time* (1958). Greenberg was increasingly suspicious about the developments of modern minimal sculpture. Although he was positive about the modernist language of abstract reduction, Greenberg was concerned that minimal sculpture was in danger of ending up being nothing more than an ordinary object.

Responding to Greenberg's concerns, Judd introduced his concept of "Specific Object": the minimal artwork with such a strong presence that the sculpture was unavoidably "felt" by the viewer. According to Judd: "Most sculpture is made part by part, but 'the new work' is between... something of a single object and that which is open, extended and environmental." Judd's specific objects aimed at stimulating both the viewer and the environment: the viewer is expected to correspond to the art object and space, experiencing them as a single quality - "as a whole". Judd also considered the presence of specific art objects to be anthropomorphic; they contained human attributes. Unlike portraiture, the specific objects did not require figurative references such as images of people or objects. Instead, they have an anthropomorphic presence, which is not in the object but in the viewer's emotional experience of the object's human-like presence.

Like Judd's specific objects, Shaw's sculptures set up a bodily experience. They enhance the viewer's awareness of the actual space. Suspending sculpture from a high ceiling encourages a new approach to space and opens unexpected viewpoints. Shaw's method of display and interest in colossal size often seem to disobey the rules of gravity. Shaw's sculptures transform their surroundings, extending the artwork beyond the object, into space. This develops an experience that is similar to Judd's concept of experiencing specific objects, which allows the viewer's body and movement to interact with the artwork and space. Shaw's sculptures become objects with a specific nature.

Minimal sculpture is closely linked with an idea about a lack of "piori systems". For Judd, the tradition of European art is based on "piori systems" that are concepts and intentions prior to the making of the artwork. Judd argued that his specific objects have neither pre-given shapes nor inner ideas that function as their immutable, conceptual core. Likewise, the American minimalist Robert Morris wrote in *The Notes on Sculpture* (1966) about a new model of

meaning that was put in place in artworks that were vulnerable to the play of the viewer's perspective. Therefore, the suggested lack of "piori systems" and an increasing emphasis on the viewer's reading of the artwork is closely linked with a notion about the death of the author - one of the key postmodern debates. Judd and Morris were interested in Ludwig Wittgenstein's idea that a meaning of any word was not an absolute definition but a vague concept within the context of its application which depended on the use and the user. This suggests that the meaning of the words we speak is not secured by the intentions that we have prior to saying them ("that is what I mean"), but takes on significance in the public exchange with others. Moreover, the minimalists explored Maurice Merleau-Ponty's ideas in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) that presents a model for a "meaning-as-context", in which meanings are produced by a function of the body immersion in its world.

Transforming the semiotics about the meaning of words, Judd's sculptures aim to avoid preconceived ideas, the priori systems, as securing signification of artwork by depending on the moves in the viewer's visual trajectory: the way the viewer sees and reads the artwork while moving in a gallery space. Both Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty's models suggest the meaning as "use" or "meaning as a function of the body connection to its spatial horizon". In the minimal notion, the artist is unable to direct the viewer's intentions or feelings to serve as the artwork's meaning. Therefore, the essence of the meaning in the minimal encounter between the viewer and the sculpture depends on the interchange that occurs in the public space of the artwork's connection to its viewers.

Do Shaw's sculptures have priori systems? While his work extends the minimalist language of abstraction and develops a total experience of space, the sculptures are not based on a postmodern semiotic utopia: they do not suggest avoidance of the artist's intention that may affect the viewer's experience of the artwork and the gallery space. The lightness, transparency and careful computer aided design of Shaw's sculptures are suggestive and preconceived. They leave room to the viewer's play and interpretation, but they do not imply the impossibility of avoiding priori systems. Shaw's sculptures are a product of the twenty-first century technology and they testify for complexity in simple preconceived forms.

Shaw's *Virtually Sculpture* is drawn to transfer space, the artwork and the viewer's experience into a total specific object. They depend on the viewers' range of responses in order to become successful. We have seen similar forms to Shaw's sculptures on a computer screen before but never quite in a gallery space and on such a large scale. Shaw's sculptures have escaped from two dimensional entity of a computer monitor into the real world of wider dimensions, provided both by the artist and the viewer. They are preconceived to provide a delightful surprise.

The exhibition *Virtually Sculpture* is the culmination of Michael Shaw's three year fellowship hosted at Loughborough University and supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

Dr Outi Remes, February 2009

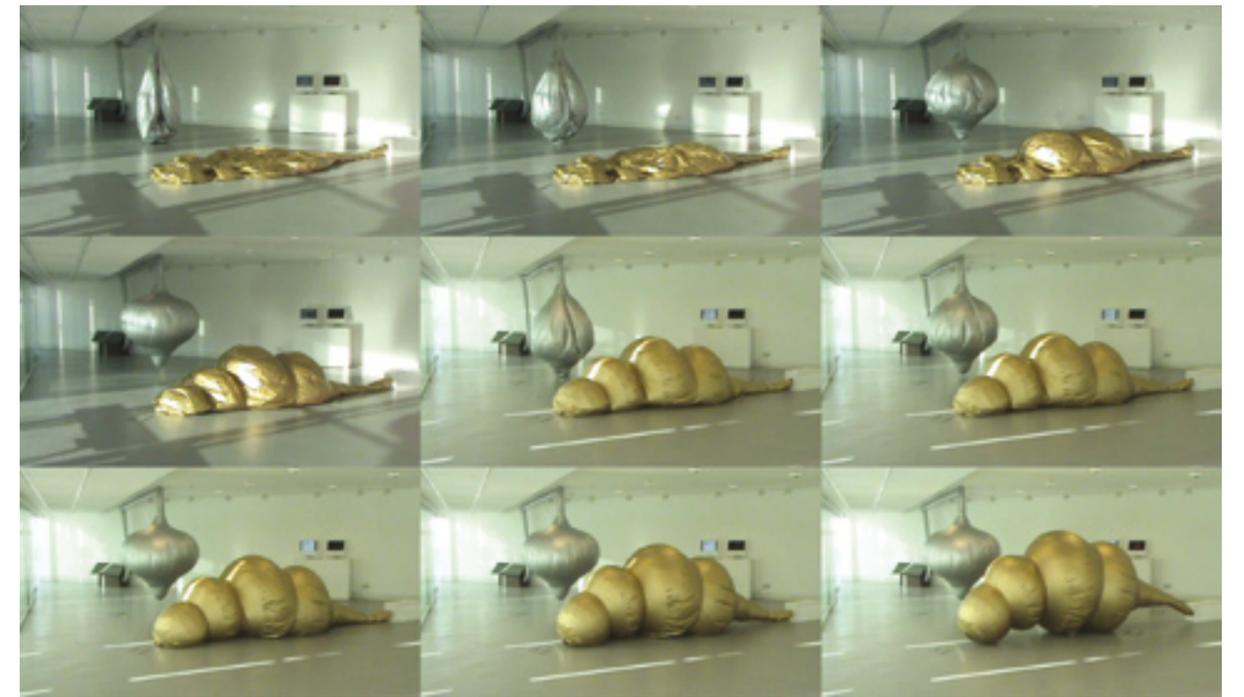
Dr Remes directs the exhibitions programme at South Hill Park, Berkshire, and lectures at Birkbeck, University of London.

Greenberg, C. "The New Sculpture" (1949) in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2, Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1986, pp. 313-319.

Judd, D. "Specific Objects" (1965) in *Complete Writings 1959-1975* (1975), New York: New York University Press; Judd Foundation, 2005, pp. 181-189.

Merleau-Ponty, M. *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), London: Routledge; 2 ed., 2002.

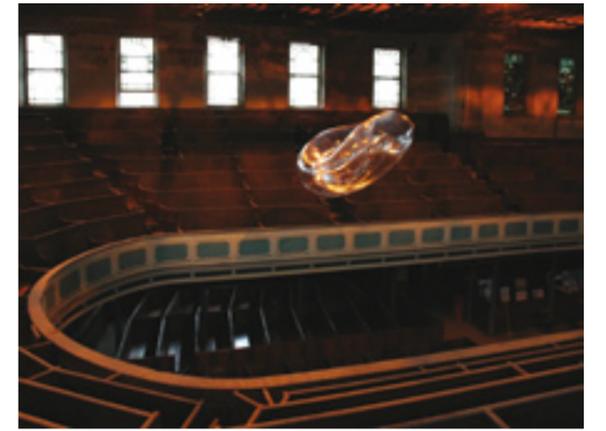
Morris, R. "Notes on Sculpture" in *Artforum*, iv/6 (Feb 1966), pp. 42-4; v/2 (Oct 1966), pp. 20-23; v/10 (June 1967), pp. 23-9.



*INF 5*, 2008 - (left)  
 ripstop, fan, digital timer, air  
 240 x 180 x 270 cm  
 installed @ Burghley Sculpture Garden

*INF 7 & INF 9*, 2008 - (top)  
 ripstop, fan, digital timer, air  
 360 x 185 x 185 cm & 240 x 165 x 165 cm  
 installed @ The Study Gallery, Poole

*INF 12*, 2009 - (bottom)  
 ripstop, fan, digital timer, air  
 560 x 660 x 160 cm  
 installed @ V&A, London



INF 6, 2008

PVC, air

240 x 160 x 90 cm

installed © Bethesda Chapel, Stoke & RBS Gallery, London



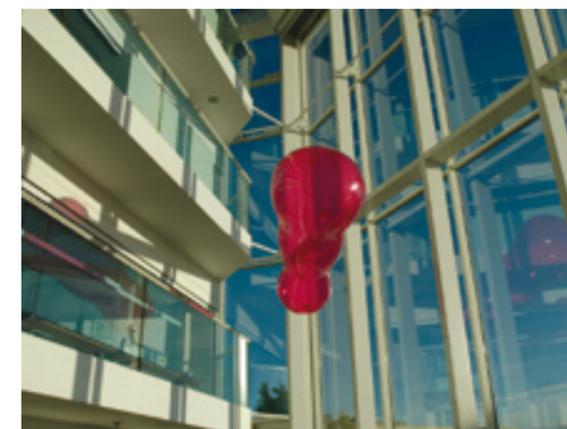
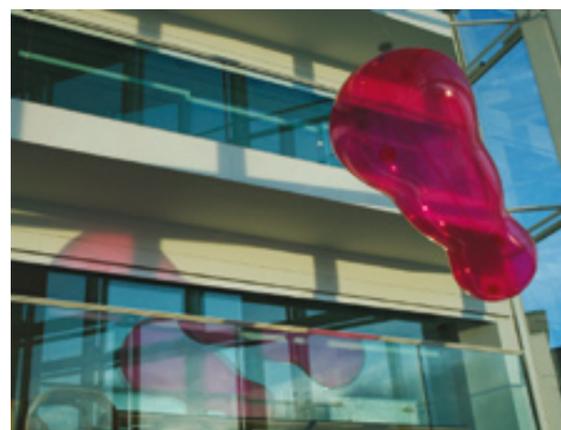
INF 8, 2008

PVC, air

420 x 240 x 180 cm

installed @the Winter Gardens, Sheffield

(Galvanise Festival & Davy Markham)



*INF10*, 2008  
PVC, air  
240 x 110 x 110 cm  
installed @ The Study Gallery, Poole



## Animated Drawings

A drawing usually sits there whilst we take a pleasurable mental stroll around it. We create shapes and spaces, recognizing form and re-imagining the process by which our physical world is rendered into line. However Michael Shaw's animated drawings have done a lot of this for us already. Through time they emerge into forms and change or find themselves erased before our eyes. They pirouette in three dimensions and give us access to their structuring and shape. So where is the pleasurable space for us as the viewer in all of this? They are films as well as drawings. They do something to us. They engage us in a narrative or a journey. We are no longer strolling around the drawing but riding it like a bucking bronco.

The drawings share the forms and conventions of mark making in 2 dimensions - hatching, scribbling, exploring shape, with the graphic conventions of the digital display - the 360 degree spin and the fly-through. The pleasure of the drawings comes from the exquisite moment when the mind comes to grasp a shape or direction crafted out of the combination of drawing and digital conventions. The suggestions of form on the delicate edge of resolution sometimes resolves itself into digital convention and sometimes deliciously pulls back or opens itself up to reveal a conundrum to be resolved in the mind of the viewer. The images play with the narrative of the viewer's emerging expectations.

These drawing films are not objects of contemplation but places to return to and interrogate as they involve us in a spatial discourse which has something of the obsessive character of a space within a virtual world or a computer game. The titles suggest the tentative grasp we have on what we encounter - they are *There, but not there* and images of *What might be* - ultimately mathematical constructions sustained on an electronic screen for as long as the power is fed through to them and we keep on watching.

Frank Abbott

January 2009

Senior Lecturer, Fine Art

Nottingham Trent University

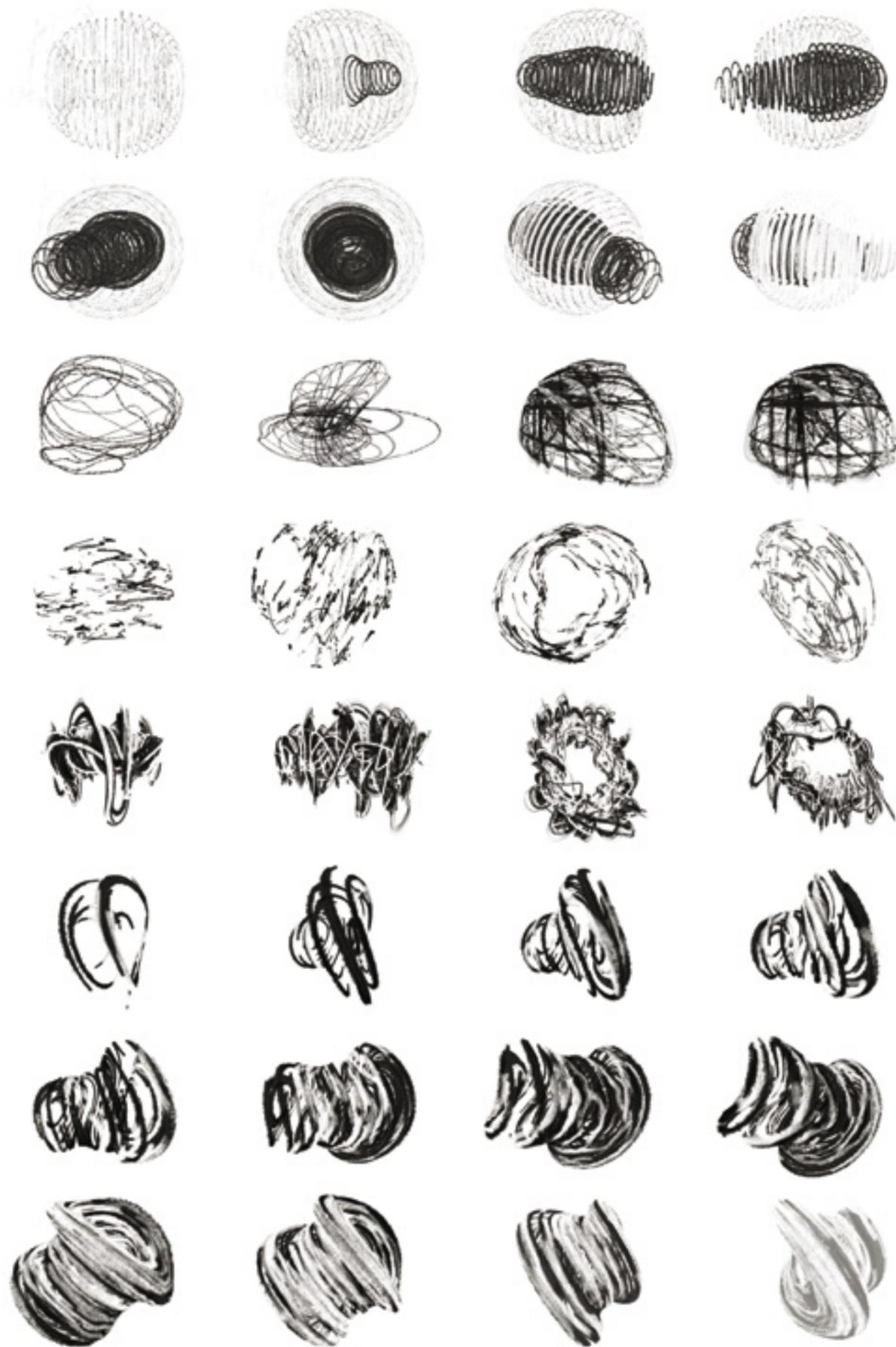
*There, but not there*, 2006

7.11'

*Doodle*, 2007

6.12'





## Notes on Animated Drawings

The animated drawings attempt to bridge the divide between two and three dimensions. Their process of creation subverts the gradual progression towards refined form commonly associated with sculptors drawing; instead virtual forms are modelled, and then lines of motion are bound to their surfaces to determine the flow of mark-making. These constructions may therefore be considered: sculpted drawings.

They explore one of the fundamental aims of drawing: creating the illusion of three dimensional space on a flat plane. The latter is of particular interest to the sculptor, and intriguingly animation appears well placed to recreate the perambulatory and kinetic nature of experiencing sculpture by manipulating the observer's viewpoint by proxy. The animated drawings therefore unite the second and fourth dimensions to imply the third.

*There, but not there* charts the development of linear and spiralling 'drawings in space'. Also present are looser renditions whereby multiple traces fidget about in space to imply otherwise invisible surfaces below. This work also references the act of drawing by effectively documenting its own creation. The continuous mapping of form through moving pencil strokes is a sculptural sketch of what might be, there, but not there.

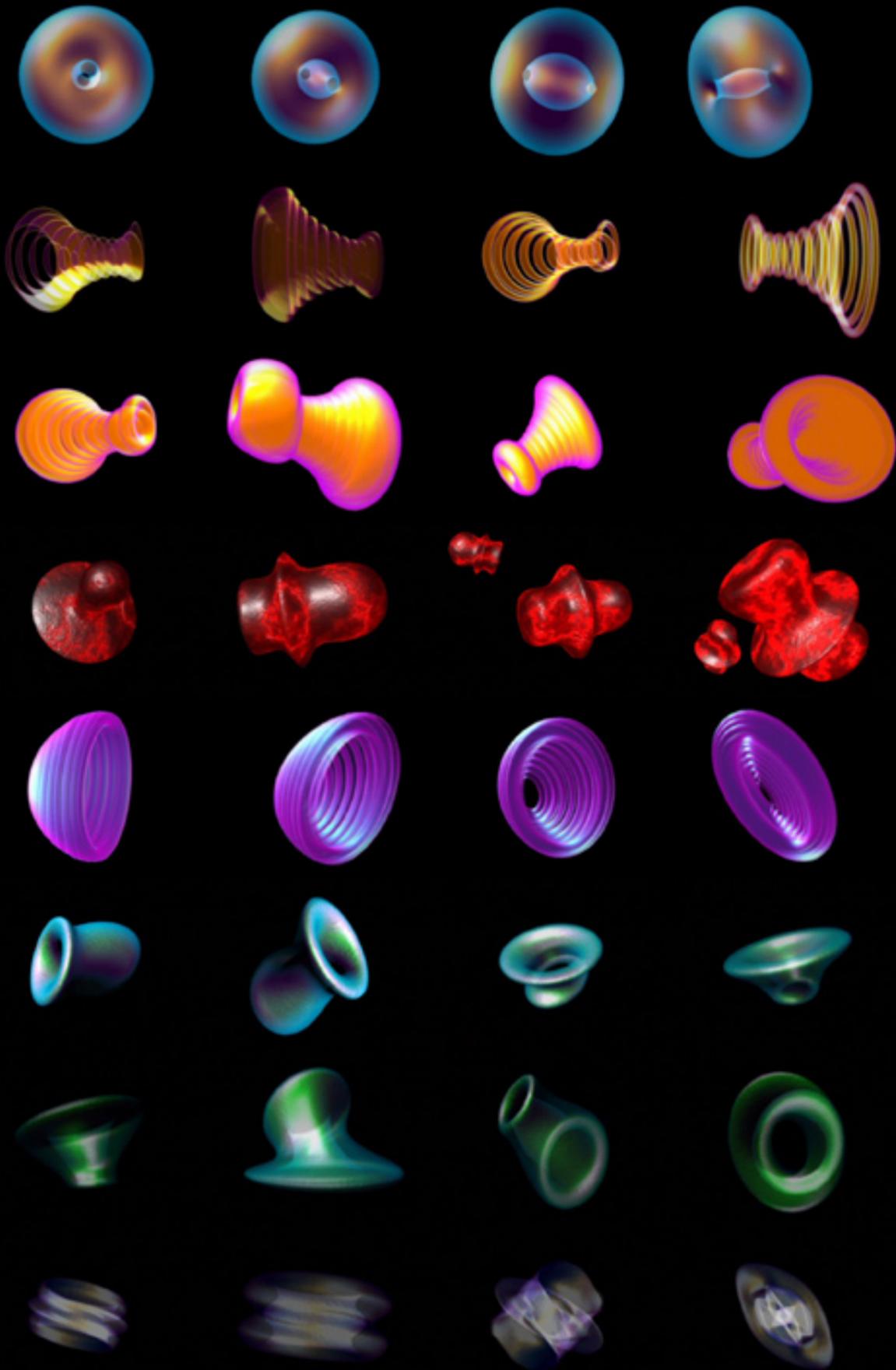
*Doodle* is explicitly two dimensional and equates to peering over a sculptor's shoulder whilst they draw. Allusions to the act of drawing are intensified by the lifelike depiction of materials including pencil, rubber, graphite, wax resist, pen and ink and the subtlety of marks such as smudges, overdrawing, traces, and bleeds. It appears eerily close to the 'dirty' and slightly indistinct nature of working with charcoal and rubbers. Indeed, it is intended to subvert the 'perfection' which sometimes pervades in the digital realm. In other words, it imports a bit of digital dirt under the finger nails - the oyster's grain of sand. Over time, layer upon layer of virtual material is overlaid, partially erased and then laid down again until a stained history of its making emerges. The making process therefore ceases to be a means to an end and becomes the end in itself.

Whilst *Doodle* asserts two dimensionality, *What might be* transposes the exploration of drawn light and traditional drawing materials more fully into three dimensions, and thus complements *There, but not there*. Whilst the latter may be perceived as somewhat speculative, *What might be* is more assertive in its definition of form. This emphasis on concrete geometry, combined with a dramatic approach to cinematography that sees the camera diving into and through several of the forms as they grow, appears to enhance the illusory sense of spatial dynamics in this drawing.

Michael Shaw

January, 2009

*What might be*, 2007  
4.30'



#### Four dimensional drawing; the use of digital technology to extend the reach of sculptural practice.

The series of digital animations produced by Michael Shaw illustrates an artist exploring the critical space between disciplines, a point of contradiction and dilemma. What is offered by the work is a gestalt which not only illustrates a sculptor testing the potentialities of a new medium but an exposition of the technique, tools and thought processes which become apparent when expertise from one discipline is deployed in new and unfamiliar territories.

Working with digital tools to produce virtual descriptions rather than physical artefacts has resulted in work which takes the viewer back toward a point of creativity. The evolving forms in *Respiro I & Respiro II* echo the reproduction process or imagination by the sculptor of physical pieces, describing space and form in an idealised way. The works can be interpreted as initial pieces as well as final outcomes where the initial sketch and the completed sculpture coexist and change simultaneously.

Shaw's main points of concern are specific and obvious to the viewer. Form, colour, texture and space remain the focal points of each piece indicative of an artist used to manipulating and controlling these elements in the physical world. But this emphasis on figurative values combined with an unfamiliarity with the technology and medium offers value to fellow animators and filmmakers by exposing fundamental techniques and doctrines which are normally assumed or even actively avoided by seasoned practitioners. In the same way that each work displays exploration of abstracted elements such as symmetry, transparency and luminosity, the use of the tools without preconception of what is expected of them is a de facto experimentation and evolution of the medium itself.

Herein lies the contradiction and dilemma. The ignorance or innocence of the new medium in which Shaw is working is an important element in shaping and delivering the final outcomes. The application of expertise and reference from a related or distant discipline not only manifests itself in the finished visuals but allows the knowledge and deployment of the techniques and tools to develop along a path outside or adjacent to established routes. By approaching the practice of animation not simply as a novice filmmaker, but with a finely targeted agenda and an established skill set, Shaw has assembled a limited palette of new tools and techniques to accommodate the requirements of a sculptural exploration.

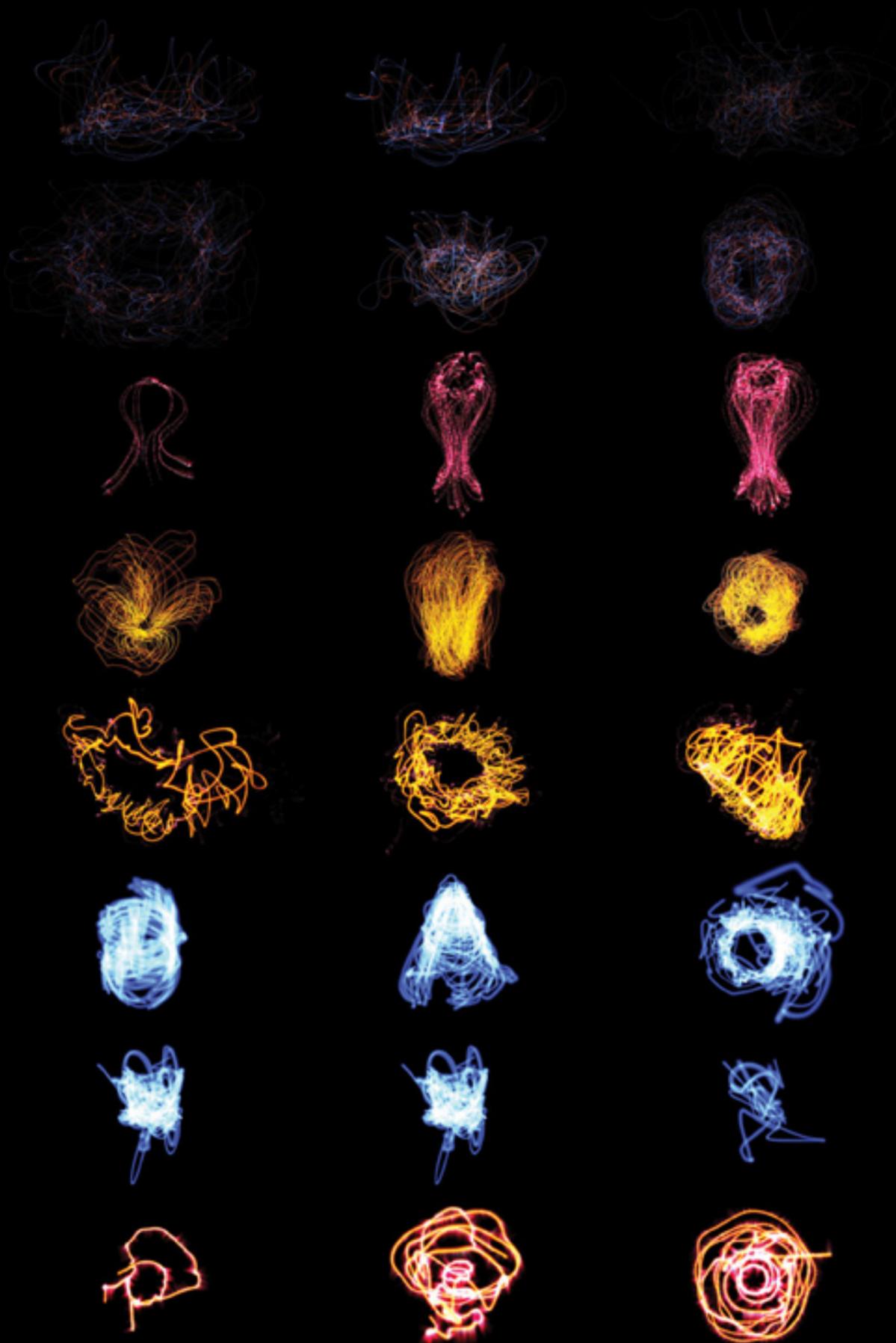
The value of this migration to a new medium is measurable not simply by the explorer but by practitioners in related disciplines who are offered a new approach to the use of familiar tools. The flattening of learning curves which previously inhibited the occupation of computer imaging by non technical users not only allows easier entry into the practice but allows cross-fertilisation with connected disciplines by route of the digitisation of media.

*Respiro I*, 2006

2.46'

*Respiro II*, 2006

5.25'



Indeed Shaw's own work exemplifies the potentiality of this reduction in boundaries with the piece *Neon Aurora* which includes a soundtrack by the group Threep, and provides a more evolved use of digitisation; that of sound design and music. The mixture of recorded or sampled elements with synthesised sound echoes the creation of the animation, which started with a fabricated artefact and is translated by first a motion captured performance and later by Shaw directly with software manipulation so that the audio and visual components reinforce each other both sensorially and in the production process.

Two important steps away from traditional practice that Michael Shaw has taken are exemplified in *Neon Aurora*. Firstly, the adoption of video requires a more collaborative creative process. Even with small scale productions, filmmaking usually involves the joint effort of practitioners even if they are working under a strict directorial regime. The transition from physical construction to digital visualisation has required the submission of control to third party collaborators in order to achieve the final results. The various technologies and methods through which the work must pass has meant Shaw has had to learn processes as the work developed or entrust the material to the expertise of colleagues.

Secondly, the use of motion capture to record a dancer Ian Dolman's reaction to an object and the addition of a musical score by Threep, both demonstrate the acceptance of direct authorial control by third parties in shaping the final outcome. While the original object was a sculpture created by Shaw, the translation into choreography requires not simply a technical exercise to facilitate production but an interpretation by Dolman into a new medium. This not only distances Shaw from the creative process but actively includes an alternative artistic voice, a fact which is further pronounced by the audio component composed by Threep. While the dance component may be regarded as the equivalent of an interpretive performance of Shaw's script or direction, Threep's score represents a greater surrender of authorship. By arranging for the soundtrack to be composed after the final cut of the animated sequences, Shaw has allowed the sound to be a dominant guiding factor in the interpretation of the completed film.

An increasing number of collaborators and the translation of capture data from Ian Dolman's movement has not only delivered a more irregular and organic set of images in *Neon Aurora* but shifted the aesthetic further away from the notion of a conventional finished artifact and more toward an abstraction of the concept of space and form. The use of a traced line of action to define space gives the appearance of an evolving sketch or drawing; the animation is less like a finished object and more like preparatory visualisations, by rendering these traces over time *Neon Aurora* creates the effect of not just delivering a three dimensional drawing but suggests a visual representation of the concept of a sculpture, both its formation and development.

Andrew Chong  
Lecturer in VISCOM - Animation Academy  
Loughborough University

January, 2009

*Neon Aurora*, 2008  
3.00'

**EDUCATION**

1992-93 Foundation Certificate in Art and Design, Isle College, Wisbech  
 1993-96 BA (Hons) Fine Art, Leeds Metropolitan University  
 2001-05 PhD in Sculpture, University of Gloucestershire

**SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

1997 Leeds City Art Gallery \* catalogue  
 2000 Palazzo Pretorio, Sala Espositiva, Sansepolcro, Italy  
 2002-04 *Sculpture in 2D: Object as Artist*, RBS Gallery, London – touring to: Stamford Arts Centre; Otter Gallery, Chichester; Babylon Gallery, Ely; Hans Price Gallery, Weston-Super-Mare\*  
 2003 Alternatives Gallery, Rome  
 Il Gianicolo, Perugia, Italy\*  
 2004-06 *Membranes and Edges*, Thelma Hulbert Gallery, Honiton – touring to: 20/21 Visual Arts Centre, Scunthorpe; MAC, Birmingham; Red Gallery, Hull\*  
 2008 *Animated Sculptures and Drawings*, Clapham Picture House, London  
 2008-09 *Virtually Sculpture*, The Study Gallery, Poole & South Hill Arts Centre, Bracknell\*

**SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

2000 *Vetrina del Premio Arezzo*, Galleria Comunale d'Arte Contemporanea, Arezzo, Italy\*  
*Michael Shaw & Roberta Bernabei*, Galleria le Arti Orafe, Florence, Italy  
*Fili d'oro*, Il Gianicolo, Perugia, Italy  
 Hilde Leiss Gallery, Hamburg, Germany  
 2001 Burghley Sculpture Garden + *Inside-Outside*, Stamford Arts Centre\*  
*Made Flesh*, Francis Close Hall Chapel, Cheltenham  
*L'Immagine del Gioiello*, Alternatives Gallery, Rome\*  
 Royal West of England Academy, (RWA) Bristol  
*Bursary 2000-01*, RBS Gallery, London  
 2003 *Itinerari*, Il Gianicolo, Perugia, Italy  
*Open Sculpture*, Royal West of England Academy, (RWA) Bristol\*  
*Jerwood Sculpture Prize*, Jerwood Space, London + MAC, Birmingham\*  
 2004 *Jurassic Challenge*, Honiton Festival\*  
*Omaggio a "Umbria Jazz" 2004*, Il Gianicolo, Perugia, Italy  
*Fantastic Plastics*, 20/21 Visual Arts Centre, Scunthorpe  
*Drawing the Line*, Orleans House Gallery, Twickenham  
 2005 *Sculptors Drawing*, Burghley Sculpture Garden + Stamford Arts Centre\*  
*Through Time and Process*, The Study Gallery, Poole  
 6 X 6, Fermynwoods, Brigstock  
*Encantas*, St Nicholas's Church, Gloucester  
*Sculpture in the Planning, Sculpture in the Making*, Atkinson Gallery, Street  
*Watch Out For The Small Print Too*, City Gallery, Leicester  
*Prototype*, NewMuseum of Contemporary Art, Norwich  
 2006 *Heavenly Bodies: Astronomical and Anatomical*, Burghley Sculpture Garden\*  
*Drawing with Light*, Shire Hall Gallery, Stafford  
*Paperworks*, Bury Art Gallery  
*Trenta Anni*, La Rocca Paolina, Perugia, (con Il Gianicolo) Italy\*  
*Jerwood Drawing Prize*, touring to: Jerwood Space, London; MAC, Birmingham; Pittville Gallery, University of Gloucestershire; Bury St Edmunds Art Gallery; Durham Art Gallery; BayArt54, Cardiff\*  
 2007 *Open Sculpture*, RWA, Bristol  
*WRO 07 Media Biennale*, Lodz, Poland\*

**CV**

2007 *Digital Experience*, Walford Mill Crafts, Dorset  
*Tracing Light*, RWA, Bristol (3 person show)  
*Shot by the sea*, Hastings film festival  
*Arts and Mathematics - Intersculpt 07 biennale*, École Nationale Supérieur des Arts et Métiers, Paris  
*ING Discerning Eye*, Mall Galleries, London  
*Prints Tokyo 2007*, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Japan  
 2008 *Space to Draw*, Jerwood Space, London\*  
*A Space to Think Outside the Body*, ArtSpace, Southwell  
*Drawn to Sculpture*, Fermynwoods, Brigstock\*  
 RGB Gallery, The Collection, Lincoln  
*Zerosandones*, Fairfield Arts Centre, Basingstoke  
*Figure*, Burghley Sculpture Garden, Stamford\*  
*OSOP*, Northampton  
*DigitalArt.LA*, Los Angeles Center for Digital Art, Los Angeles, USA  
*Abstracta*, Filmstudio 80, Rome  
*The Fine Art of Drawing*, Museum of Fine Arts, Florida State University, USA\*  
*Wirksworth Festival*, Parish Rooms, Wirksworth\*  
*Conjunction 08*, Bethesda Chapel, Stoke  
*Galvanise Festival*, Winter Gardens, Sheffield  
 2009 *First@108 Public Art Award*, RBS Gallery, London  
*2<sup>1/2</sup> D*, RBS Gallery, London  
*Light*, Burghley Sculpture Garden, Stamford\*  
*Digital Ritual*, Open Concept Gallery, Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
*Terminal*, Short Video Festival, Terminal, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, TN, USA  
*Captured in Stone* (Friday Lates) V&A, London

**PRIZES/AWARDS**

2001 Membership Bursary, Royal British Society of Sculptors  
 Bursary, Royal West of England Academy (RWA)  
 Bursary, Gilbert Bayes Charitable Trust  
 2002 Kensington & Chelsea Arts Council  
 AHRB Postgraduate Award  
 2003 Shortlisted for Jerwood Sculpture Prize  
 2004 Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation  
 Arts Council of England  
 2005-08 AHRC Research Fellowship, Loughborough University  
 2007 Lynn Chadwick Prize, RWA, Bristol  
 Discerning Eye Drawing Bursary

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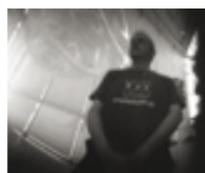
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*Space to Draw*. Jerwood Space, London.  
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## STATEMENT

My practice deals with the singular form and its extension through unity and variation. Subtle variation is achieved through physical and illusory deflection to the geometry of elemental forms such as the cone, torus, sphere, cylinder and tubular derivatives of the figure of eight.

Recently, the sine wave has influenced profiles that gracefully shift from concave to convex. In the case of cylindrical forms this results in sinuous undulating chambers in which the apexes of transition create multiple apertures that can stimulate variance in geometry. The latter must however, balance the perceived potential for a Gestalt and the undermining of its establishment.

Naturally, the material qualities of any sculpture can aid the impression of a unified and singular form. In my sculpture a common characteristic is often transparency or translucency. Nothing is hidden by transparent materials, as witnessed by the clear PVC of sealed inflatables such as *INF 8*. Nonetheless, the physical deflections of geometry - achieved through twisting and bending in CAD software, and the illusory deflections - derived from the highly reflective surfaces, combine to make these sculptures' precise polar coordinates difficult to fix. This apparent paradox makes the forms both specific and non-specific. Translucency is therefore a means to completely reveal my sculptures, yet at the same time a device through which their mysteriousness, perceptual ambiguity and sculptural significance is heightened.

Transparency and moreover translucency, can be a conduit for the manifestation of light; another important concern in my sculpture. The diffusion of light is fundamental to the rapid prototyped sculptures, such as *RPQC 1*, manufactured using the Quick-Cast technique. It builds a transparent hollow skin and fills it with a supportive honeycomb filigree structure, which graduates the capture and diffusion of light, so that forms shift from translucent to opaque the deeper one's gaze penetrates. RP has also enabled skeletal transparent structures, whose struts alter diameter as they flow around the form, thereby inducing implied movement and rhythm in a static form's geometry. Fabricated in translucent resin, they result in 'see through see through' sculptures. Other variants include cylinders with thin, sub mm walls, which in strong light become translucent; contributing unifying ambiguity to the duality of interior and exterior. This can be observed in *RPQC 2*, whose paper thin walls permit the diffusion of light into the internal cavities.

The relationship between interior and exterior has been extended to the surrounding space by the PVC inflatable sculptures. They have suggested some potential for universal site-specificity, by which I mean, sculpture capable of creating a meaningful relationship with any location. In their case, it derives from the containment of, and existence through, a location's air, responding to its ambient air currents, highly reflective surfaces that draw their surroundings on to themselves and finally the projection of ethereal shadows and reflections onto adjacent architecture.

Another development has been the emergence of, what I describe as, chameleonic sculpture or shape-shifters. Inflatables such as *INF 5* cyclically inflate and deflate over time as though breathing. This pulmonary contraction and expansion enables metamorphosis between a swollen 'complete' geometry and a much looser form defined by 'chance' and the reducing air pressure within.

Future research will focus on other chameleonic manifestations defined by changing rhythms of coloured light, and ideally shape shifting sculptures that change both colour and geometry. Naturally, this is allied to the ideal of transcending obdurate mass in favour of the animate and ephemeral; an ambition held by sculptors for millennia.

Michael Shaw

December, 2008

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