

Aesthetic of the Ascetic, John Shand

*This essay appeared in the catalogue accompanying 'Not So Firm As Faded Ink', 2015
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Concepts. Knowledge, ideas, information, measurement, time. Such concepts may be both as objects of mind and things that mind may be subject to. Concepts as objects of thought may be turned and examined in logical-space. So may they be represented in literal-space, occupy space, and turned and examined as one moves around them. It may also be shown in this way how the mind is subject to the various concepts. Characteristic of the work generally in both these ways is the transformation of logical-space to literal-space. Cognitive experience reified.

Concepts have a structure, shape, content, connections, and a trajectory of meaning over time. They have an experienced logical-form and texture that may be represented, indicated and highlighted in a three-dimensional object. And in so doing we think and experience things in new and different ways.

These works have lightness, delicacy, intricacy, a finely-tuned clarity. They express in their form and materials the necessity of the intricate, meticulous, and repetitive work that has gone into creating them. The work involved in fabricating them is clearly visible in the object itself, not hidden. Explicit artefacts. They could not have been created in any other way than by hours of careful work by hand. This also makes each one ontologically unique. The antithesis of reproducible manufacture. They are both non-mechanical and yet highly controlled. And that is essential to their nature, not an accident. The act of creation is there manifest in the work itself.

They also stand in contrast to, and might be said to fight, the monumentalist tradition of three-dimensional artworks. They are at the opposite pole from carved stone and marble statues, casted bronze and iron, and huge chunks of hacked wood. The anti-monumentalism is not accidental. There is something to be said now – and what would one say that one would want to be committed to saying forever? As such, the works highlight the transient, ephemeral, and temporal, matching the changing multifarious perspectives on and of the concepts that they embody. It is also the aesthetic of the ascetic. A cutting away to leave a pure and delicate cool beauty that may also be acute and sensual, born of quiet meticulous care. Perfection and spontaneity. The easy destruction of the works produces an enlivening tension stemming from a fear of their vulnerability, of their being damaged or of one harming them. If the works were music they would be carefully planned improvisations, the second version of which could never be the same as the first. Ephemeral and real.