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Above: Fausto Melotti, *Cat Dog*, 1948. Glazed ceramic, 58 x 21 x 36 cm. From "Return to Earth." Right: Peter Barrett, *Paper Clip*, 2013. Stainless steel, 10 x 5 x 5 ft. From *SculptureNow* 2013.

tortured face emerging from a gray ground, while a pair of dark ovoid slabs from 1959, each with a gaping wound in the middle, complements the stabbed and slashed canvases for which he is best known. These "Spatial Concepts" works—brooding terra-cotta sculptures—were the most stripped-down works in the show, foreshadowing both Minimalism and Arte Povera.

Melotti, by contrast, was a dreamy soul whose work runs the gamut from mysterious to terrifying: the grinning *Cat Dog* (1948) should send shivers up the spines of pet lovers everywhere; and *Madness*, an androgynous, fragmented figure,

rendered with what Marin R. Sullivan (a research fellow at the Henry Moore Foundation) aptly describes as "a hemorrhaging color scheme," alludes to the trauma of the war in Italy. The poetic side of Melotti found inspiration in music and literature. His little sculptures of Echo and Orpheus (both 1945) are each set inside a rudimentary stage-like setting. He often favored such miniature theaters (*teatrini*), creating snug enclosures for his figures and fragments that call to mind Giacometti (*The Palace at 4 a.m.*) and Joseph Cornell. In *Lament Over Dead Heroes* (1961), Melotti situates a quartet of ghostly characters on a

shelf above a pair of recumbent bodies. Other diminutive structures enclose a naked, faceless woman and a pair of disembodied hands resting on a cushion. The influence of Surrealism seems irrefutable, but Sullivan says, "It's not something he ever overtly acknowledged."

Though apparently of opposite temperaments—Fontana is often described as "bombastic"; Melotti as "reserved and contained"—the two were close friends for more than 40 years. Both worked at porcelain factories in the 1930s, a training that Sullivan says they "wanted to disavow," though that experience no doubt helps account for their sophisticated facility with glazes and firing. Both became involved in commercial projects, especially under the auspices of the visionary architect Gio Ponti, who turned the magazine *Domus* into Italy's leading design publication. Ponti was an ardent proponent of postwar ceramics, part of an overarching program to "persuade the general public of the value in thoughtfully crafted, beautiful things in all areas of their lives," as Sullivan notes. Nonetheless, the two artists were self-conscious about operating in a perceived gap between art and craft. "I am a sculptor not a cerami-

cist," Fontana loftily declared in a 1939 text. "I have never turned a plate on a wheel or painted a vase...I loathe the mystification of technique, the amazing technical achievement of Sèvres or Copenhagen [that] satisfies the tastes of the upper classes and collectors."

"Return to Earth," which regrettably did not travel, was a triumphant affirmation of clay as a multifaceted medium for sculpture—one with a sprightly history that precedes the contemporary accomplishments of artists who have made it their preferred material. The show also demonstrated the optimism of a culture that was salvaging itself almost literally from the ashes. And it brought to light the ceramic works of two artists who deserve to find a broader audience.

—Ann Landi

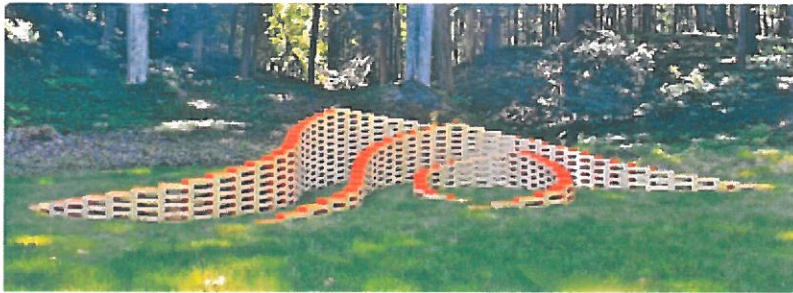
LENOX, MASSACHUSETTS SculptureNow 2013

The Mount

For 16 seasons, sculptor Ann Jon has organized outdoor exhibitions in Western Massachusetts, attracting increasingly able artists as time has gone on. The venues for *SculptureNow* have also changed, as the show migrated from the Berkshire



TOP: © 2013. MICHELE MULLER; MIDDLE: COURTESY ARCHIVO MUSEO MELOTTI, ANUSA; BOTTOM: COURTESY ANA DIT



Botanical Gardens to the streets of Stockbridge, Great Barrington, and Lenox. This past summer, "Confluence" was installed at SculptureNow's most spacious and appropriate site yet—the vast acreage of The Mount, summer home of the writer Edith Wharton.

Some of the boldest work was the simplest, showing up best in the landscape. Traffic barriers inspired Matt Harding's assertive *The Thirteenth Piece Was a Shape Switch*; despite a strong interplay of angles and zebra stripes, there was not much lingering subtlety. The same may be said for Gary Orlinsky's very visible *Prasceium in Green* and Bob Turan's *Heat Wave*, although both looked great in their environs. Steven Dono's boldly constructed *Medusa Oblongata* could be mistaken for a playground element, except for the hawser rope delicately held by a mannequin hand. I failed to see the message in Thomas Matsuda's phallic *Purification*—three short logs and one tall one held upright and charred to charcoal—but I give him credit for nerve.

From afar, Robin Tost's *Mrs. Wharton Takes a Walk* looked like an angel wearing a hat. In close-up profile, the wit of the plywood piece appeared: a caricature of a woman in Edwardian dress—bustle, long skirts, leg-o'-mutton sleeves, and feathered hat—who might have been better advised to wear a color other than white. *Nature's Laugh II*, though maybe a bit heavy-handed, was amusing. Gunnar Theel's simple little house stood on its ridgepole with wild grasses growing atop what should have been its cellar—the built world upended and on its way to ruin.

Allen Williams's *Erratic* might have been mistaken for such—a boulder left behind by retreating glaciers—but it was constructed of several huge stones. The giveaway was a slender lintel made of polished granite. This piece was audaciously laid up like a classic New England dry stone wall, almost without mortar. A child could get inside, although I don't think a parent would have approved. Not large but visually monumental, *Bore Block* by Jonathan Prince was perfect for its grassy setting. It pretended to be a massive, solid block of metal with a smooth hole bored through it. Rusty Corten steel fore and aft stood in tactile and coloristic contrast to textured silvery ends and the sleek steel of the bore hole.

The beauty of materials was also exploited by Henry Royer's *Igneous*, a black, silk-smooth blade of granite supported by bronze and stainless steel. For *Sabbath Loaf*, Murray Dewart enclosed a string of beach stones, like peas in a pod, in bronze petals. Most traditional, but intriguing, was Richard Erdman's riff on a bronze Mobius strip, *Continuum*.

Peter Barrett took a common *Paper Clip*, unbent it partially, and multiplied it about a thousand-fold; its "wire" is three-plus inches in diameter. It was clever in its simplicity. Ann Jon's *Genesis IV* also relied on simplicity, its series of low curves built of brick-like blocks of wood painted orange on top. Tim Prentice, a master of air flow, linked the wands of

Thistle Piece so that when the wind moved through them, they danced in contrasting ways. George Rickey's 20-year-old *Four L's Eccentric II*, also a kinetic piece, has been exhibited before, but remained striking in its engineering as well as in contrast with the outdoors.

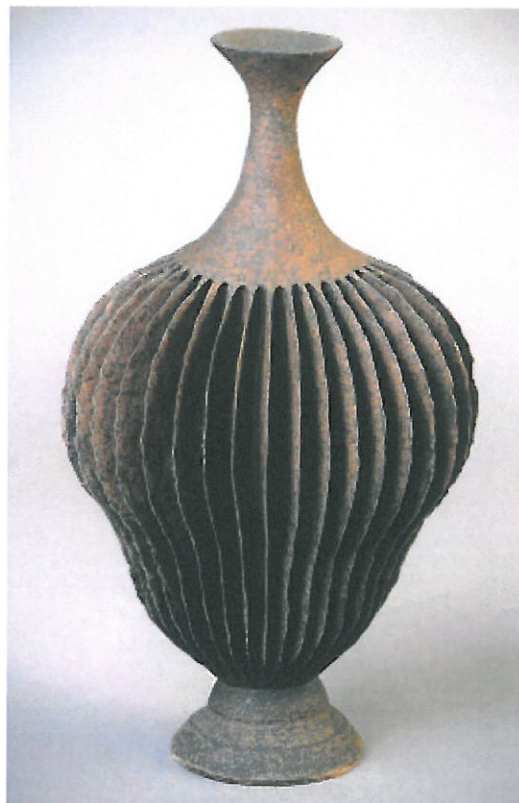
An annual exhibition involving many of the same artists inevitably produces some déjà vu. Still, the interplay between new ideas, familiar works, and the lush landscape of The Mount resulted in a lively visual experience.

—Marty Carlock

NEW YORK

Ursula Morley Price
McKenzie Fine Art

Born in Britain, ceramic sculptor Ursula Morley Price now lives in southwestern France. She is known for her fluted vases, bowls, and jars, which begin in craft and end in a place where craft cannot be denied as fine art. In Price's hands, the traditional pinch-and-coil method becomes a statement of remarkable subtlety, with almost impossibly thin flanges flaring outward in tight circular patterns. While Price's works are based on functional objects, their lightness and sculptural effects proclaim them more than fit for an art audience. Indeed, these recent works sit secure in their hybrid existence, with their functional purpose becoming nearly negligible in



Above: Ann Jon, *Genesis IV*, 2013. Wood, lexan, fiberglass, and pigment, 3 x 36 x 12 ft. From SculptureNow. Right: Ursula Morley Price, *Brown Flange Bottle Form*, 2013. Stoneware, 11.5 x 7 in. diameter.

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