

# sculpture

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Only a few props are seen, including two plastic chairs, a suspended police hat, and cans.

Wa Lehulere, Deutsche Bank's Artist of the Year 2017, is considered one of the most vital of a new generation of South African artists. Just as Max Beckmann was able to capture Europe's angst and broken culture in the 1930s, Wa Lehulere delivers insights into South Africa's sinister history.

—Elaine A. King

**WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

**Fred Eversley**  
Rose Art Museum

However much Minimalism may be out of fashion, the products of that movement still retain the capacity to delight the eye. The 13 works in Fred Eversley's recent exhibition, "Black, White, Gray," date from the mid-1970s; they eschew chromatic qualities, yet they contain tricks and delights that on analysis produce a kind of optical circus. All but one are made of cast polyester resin, hand-polished to the perfection of an astronomical lens. Most are



Adjacent to this enormous work, the commanding installation, *In the Neck of Time*, filled the space with 21 large porcelain dogs, suggestive of tchotchkes, seated next to nine old suitcases filled with earth and grass. A new take on Wa Lehulere's previous explorations of transit, mobility, and diaspora, this work, with some of its guardian canines smashed, evoked violence culminating in the grave.

The taxidermy African gray parrot perched inside *One is too many, a thousand will never be enough*, an open-design, folksy birdhouse suspended from the ceiling and made from salvaged school desks, faces a flimsy music stand that plays American elocution exercises. It was inspired by a cache of cassette tapes that Wa Lehulere found in 2014: "I had been thinking about America, South Africa, the relationship between the two post-'94, and American domination in our cultural sphere and society—the way people aspire to be American, whether it be sounding American or American culture." In *A, B, C*, tires filled with earth and punctured by crutches constructed from school desks lined up against the wall. They resembled

**Above:** Kemang Wa Lehulere, installation view of "In All My Wildest Dreams," 2016. **Right:** Fred Eversley, *Untitled*, 1974. Polyester resin, dimensions variable.

His poetic American museum debut, "In All My Wildest Dreams," featured installations, drawings, performance video, and sculpture. Recycled school desks, sketchbook pages, as well as letters written to friends and public institutions form the materials for his highly personal sculptures, which achieve a unique balance between art and activism. Wa Lehulere mines his country's history through storytelling, communicating narratives of the past (both private and collective) in order to rethink the present. He is concerned with "deleted scenes" in South African history, repeatedly exploring themes of exile and displacement. He desires to preserve memory and feels strongly about history, saying, "History continually disappears. It comes and goes. It is not something fixed; it is malleable...It is the elasticity of history that excites me."

In the first gallery, viewers encountered a looming chalk drawing on blackboard paint. The image resembles an old-fashioned pencil sharpener, but *When I can't laugh I can't write* reinterprets fallen pencil shavings as human bones piled into an overflowing mound, perhaps symbolizing the treatment of black South African intellectuals. Shortly before his suicide, journalist Nat Nakasa, who reported on the conditions of black life under apartheid, confided to a friend, "I can't laugh anymore, and when I can't laugh, I can't write."

TOP: COURTESY STEVENSON, CAPE TOWN AND JOHANNESBURG / BOTTOM: JOSHUA WHITE, COURTESY THE ARTIST



circular. Solid black, muted gray, or creamy white, their colors illustrate Eversley's investigations into monochrome. To our puzzlement, although they sink into parabolic shapes, few of them act as a lens.

Eversley has urged that these works be moved, handled, seen in different lights and from different angles. Their slick tactility cries out for such interaction. But here, as in any museum, staff members asked us to keep our distance. Even so, the discerning viewer could find a lot to look at.

An epitome of optical fun, *Untitled* (1980) has a glossy black surface ground down to clarity at the center. Like a wide-angle lens, the little window captures activity that should be beyond its scope: in one direction, the doorway with figures moving in and out; in the other, three sculptures in the room, two round pieces and one long arc on the wall, a stunt pulled off by a discerning installer's eye. At the same time, the black surface, shiny as a new Mercedes, reflects surrounding

**Above:** Fred Eversley, *Untitled*, 1976. Polyester resin, dimensions variable. **Right:** Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise, view of exhibition, 2017.

space and—upside down, as in a spoon—the viewer's own shadow.

White and gray *Untitled* experiments are extremely beautiful. A hint of yellow is introduced near the center of one, like a solar flare. Others are annular, their empty centers shifted off-center and formed by angled gradations. One 1974 piece evokes the idea of a solar eclipse.

Now in his 70s, Eversley still lives and works in Venice, California, and New York. Trained as an engineer, the Brooklyn native moved to the West Coast to work in the aerospace industry but quickly migrated to Venice Beach, where he began to experiment with plastics. (He casts his polyester resin circles on a centrifugal turntable that once cast casings for bombs.) Originally seduced by saturated magenta, amber, and blue hues, he abandoned color under the influence of fellow sculptors working with black resins. These works followed.

While the round works have cosmological connotations, wall-mounted pieces involve dozens of acute triangles, either all black or alternating black and white, layered into arcs that conjure wings, feathers, and flight. Though handsome, these

works lack the emotive power of Eversley's circular ideas. This mini-retrospective offered a nibble to whet our appetites for a major Eversley survey planned for the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California, in March 2018.

—Marty Carlock

#### NEW YORK

#### Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise SculptureCenter

This exhibition of the Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise (Congolese Plantation Workers Art League or CATPC) could not have been timelier. It arrived at a moment when racial and economic inequalities are center stage, and the voices of the suppressed are being heard. Featuring a series of chocolate sculptures made from molds obtained from 3D prints of the clay originals, the show brought artistry from the rural hinterland of the Democratic Republic of Congo to the U.S. Finally, descendants of Congolese plantation workers, who continue to be exploited long after gaining independence from their Belgian colonizers in 1960, get their due.

Established in 2014 in Lusanga with the help of Dutch artist Renzo Martens and his Institute of Human Activities (IHA), CATPC began with the intention of creating greater economic stability for workers still dependent on vastly unequal and venal labor conditions. Economic disparities between these laborers and the conglomerates that exploit them like Unilever—whose founder, William Lever, established his plantation in Lusanga in 1911—gave impetus to Martens's cause. Farmers, cacao pickers, and laborers, some with rudimentary artistic training, joined art workshops set up by the IHA, and soon forms reminiscent of primeval African sculpture began to emerge. These self-taught artists, whose works are deeply imbued with tragic personal stories, have found a resonant way to criticize the multinationals, making sculptures that combine folklore and their own life experiences.

For instance, in Thomas Leba's *Poisonous Miracle* (2015), a rough-hewn, feeble old woman—with shriveled-up breasts, thin elongated arms, matted hair, and a worn, emaciated face—bends over a chameleon at her feet. The sculpture was



TOP: CHARLES MAYER, COURTESY THE ARTIST AND THE ROSE ART MUSEUM, BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY / BOTTOM: KYLE KNOELL