Yinka Shonibare: The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia,” Sculpture Magazine, April 2014


The show features 17 works focused on themes of education, opportunity, and scientific inquiry—all problematic, of course, with a sly undercurrent of identity construction, class, integration, and assimilation. Magic Ladders—the foundation’s first commission since Albert C. Barnes ordered The Dance from Matisse in 1930—may innocently evoke empowerment through knowledge, but learning is not always neutral: for every aspiring child climbing a ladder of books, another absorbs darker lessons of domination, exploitation, and destruction.

Web site <www.barnesfoundation.org>

Dallas Museum of Art
Dallas
Robert Smithson
Through April 27, 2014
Straddling Land Art and Minimalism, Smithson’s defiance of conventions has had a lasting impact on contemporary art and the cultural landscape. His non-traditional materials—language, mirrors, maps, dump trucks, abandoned quarries, hotels, and earth—helped move art out of the museum and into the wider sphere of experience. This show focuses on five projects that he developed in Texas in the years between his Dallas-Fort Worth Airport project (1966–67) and his only realized work in the state, Amarillo Ramp (1973), including proposals for Houston’s Gulf Coast and Dallas’ Northwood Institute. More than 25 lesser-known drawings, photographs, and sculptures illuminate a productive period of his career, accompanied by a new video, The Making of Amarillo Ramp, by Nancy Holt, based on original footage from 1973.

Web site <www dma.org>

Frankfurter Kunstverein
Frankfurt
Being Here & Being Thus: Sculpture, Object & Stage
Through April 13, 2014
Though the world of things seems to be dissolving, dispersed into the immaterial, digitized ether, this breakdown is not without an accompanying backlash—the so-called “material turn” cited in cultural critique and the social sciences. Sculpture is no less divided than the world at large, splitting into denizens of the virtual and upholders of the physical. “Being Here” brings together works by nine sculptors who reassess the status of materials and objects. Employing scale manipulations and conjuring unusual, reworked elements in odd juxtapositions, Maria A בגים, Peter Buggenhout, Sandra Havlicek, Sofia Hultén, Sabine Kuehne, Thomas Maier, Simon Rubesamen, Michael E. Smith, and Andrea Winkler are creating a new formal language based on a confrontation between things as they are and the aesthetic aura of materials. Exploitations of “sculpture,” “object,” and “stage,” their agglomerations of cast, folded, glazed, carved, and otherwise altered source matter share a sense of immediacy, conveying an expressive presence that asserts being while referring to nothing beyond itself.

Web site <www.fkv.de>

Haus der Kunst
Munich
Abraham Cruzvillegas
Through May 25, 2014
Cruzvillegas’s thought-provoking arrangements of disparate, apparently unrelated objects employ everything from feathers and studio props to bowling balls, candies, leaves, and other everyday finds. The volatile energy that pervades his work re-creates the life of Mexico.