

W O R L D  
SCULPTURE NEWS

HK\$80/US\$10/  
CAN\$11/£6/€7

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 2 SPRING 2018



# G. Ravinder Reddy

**Peter Tilley** \* **Shenzhen Urbanism and Architecture Bi-City Biennale** \* **Access To Justice** \* **Gibbs Farm** \* **Reviews**



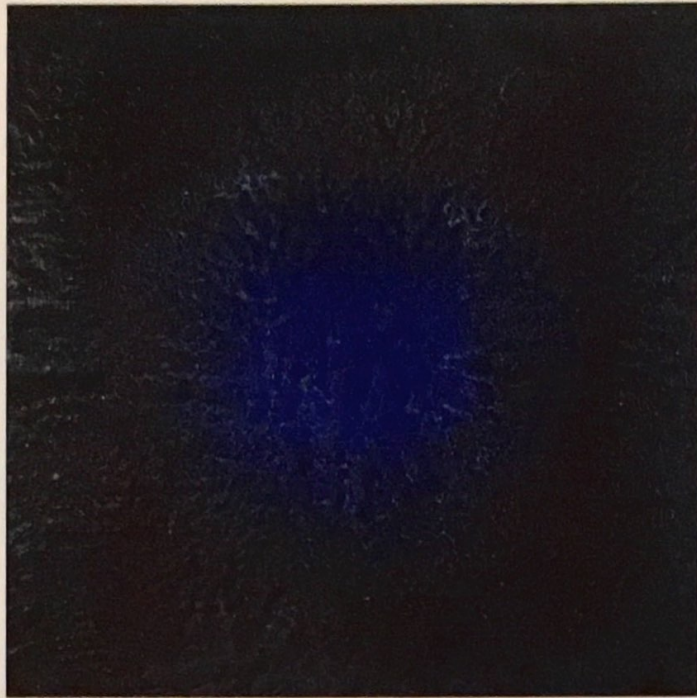


The many reconstructions, since it was found in Rome during the Renaissance, have created a configuration that would probably dismay the Greek artists who made the original Hellenistic bronze. Ruminating on the *Laocoön's* repeated "misalignments" led Dasher not only to seek out other examples of misguided reconstructions in museums around the world, but also to fashion "pseudo-historical" statuary fragments for his own work. In *Retrospection: Monuments to Human Imperfection*, Dasher's most recent exhibition, displays his surreal visual metaphors of the human predicament: its zany ambiguities and its moral frailties.

Two works give fanciful expression to the Janus-like character of interaction between men and women. Highly erotic symbols associated with romantic love, three realistically carved marble feet stand on a stainless steel base in *Asylum* (1993). The tall, slender "cage" rising above the feet gives an equivocal message—at once protection and comfort but also enclosure and confinement. The door opening inward implies, the artist says, "once you're in, you can't get out." At the same time that marriage offers emotional refuge, it can also imprison. By choosing three feet rather than the expected four, Dasher underscores unity. The triad, according to Aristotle, is the number of the whole.

Similarly ambivalent, *Spike* (2002) places two bronze feet firmly on a base, with another, heel lifted, pointed in the opposite direction. The fourth foot—truncated, with only the ball remaining—rests lovingly just above the ankle of its pair. Steel rods like those joining sculptural fragments in museum reconstructions link these emblems of intimacy to a sharply pointed obelisk above, an image that is decidedly bivalent: stable but potentially injurious, like wedded union.

The title conflating the words "prophet" and "profit," *Third Quarter Prophits*



**Michele Schuff, *Blue Wobble*, 2016**, encaustic on panel, 12 x 12 x 4 inches. All images: Courtesy of the Artist and Sandler Hudson Gallery.

(1983-1990) is a masterfully witty censure of the double-dealing preacher. Planting his right hand on a Bible and gazing sanctimoniously heavenward, Dasher's "prophet/profit" is depicted as a bust whose shape imitates that of an owl. The crosses on the Bible's bookmark are actually dollar signs, and the columnar lectern opens to reveal a fanged reptile wrapped around a sledgehammer, an instrument of havoc. But the other symbols are bivalent. The owl is at the same time an image of wisdom and of night and therefore of evil; the hand on the Bible, normally a sign of veracity, is here a gesture of

duplicity; and the serpent can stand for good or evil.

In the vanitas tradition, *Strata II* (2006) projects the precarious balance of a fallen world. A bronze foot crushes an apple resting on a marble base, an echo of Adam's original sin. An obelisk above, twice broken but pieced together at jagged angles, supports a tiny doll's chair and a thimble. Found near an abandoned old folks home in Cortona, Italy, the thimble was for the artist an emblem of what aging women do—sit and sew. Life is transitory.

In a more humorous vein, *Dada Vinci* (2010) intimates the futility of human

effort. A bronze cast of a right leg—in Medieval thought the leg symbolizing the intellect—broken above the knee stands on the ball of the foot, as though exerting great effort. A gear-like mechanism connects the leg to pseudo-bird wings above. Moving back and forth in front of the motion detector on the plinth, the viewer causes the wings to expand as in flight, only to fall when he stops. The title recalls not only Leonardo's futile efforts to create a flying machine but also the absurdity of everything, as proclaimed by the Dadaists early in the last century.

Allusive and equivocal, Dasher gathers the "detritus" of the tradition—fragments both sculptural and verbal—and recasts them into contemporary configurations. And in thus repurposing traditional ideas, he highlights them for the viewer to reconsider, always accentuating the duality of the human condition.

**Dorothy M. Joiner**

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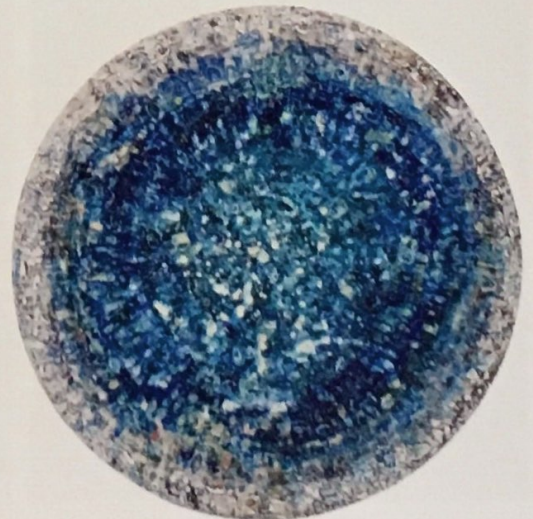
## Atlanta, Georgia

### Michele Schuff at Sandler Hudson Gallery

Long before the Hubble Space Telescope and NASA's Cassini spacecraft provided breathtaking photographs of the seemingly



**Michele Schuff, *Callisto's Mirror*, 2018**, encaustic and mixed media on wood panel, 28 x 28 x 3 inches.



**Michele Schuff, *Jupiter Storm*, 2018**, encaustic on wood panel, 30 x 30 x 3 inches.



endless reaches of our galaxy, William Blake (1757–1827) enjoined us to “Hold Infinity in the palm of ... [our] hand/ And Eternity in an hour.”

As though responding to the British poet’s invitation to “grasp” the infinity of space and time, artist Michele Schuff produces mesmerizing images inspired not only by those provided by recent photographic explorations in space, but also those emerging from her own imagination.

To be brief, she aims to fuse “the cosmos of the mind to the mysterious, immeasurable vastness of space.” Pivoting between two and three dimensions, her labor-intensive work (all works date from 2018) in encaustic involves repeated layers of color, scraped and reapplied, fused with heat, and often rendered luminous with ground glass and bits of mirror. The exhibition’s title intimates this intermingling of space, time, and consciousness: *On the Edge of Forever*.

Several of the works deal with the moons of Jupiter: all discovered by Galileo in the early 17th century but assigned Classical names in the 19th century. *Callisto (Blue)*, a circle projecting a few inches from the wall, takes its title from the second largest moon of the planet, the darkest of the four satellites identified by the 16th-century astronomer but twice as bright as the earth’s moon.

Schuff’s title alludes both to the satellite and to the nymph Callisto, punished for her dalliance with Zeus by being changed into a bear. But her divine lover then transformed her and her child into stars of the constellations Ursa Major and Minor. Echoing the moon’s tenebrous reality as well as the romantic appeal of its Classical associations, Schuff sprinkles the deep lapis-hued surface with touches of rose clustered near the top and scatters flashes of white throughout the mottled surface.

In *Callisto’s Mirror*, she incorporates ground glass together with splashes of white

on the deep-gray encaustic, thereby lending the surface a luminous quality. Also circular, *Ganymede’s Dream* (2018) deals with the most massive of Jupiter’s moons, the ninth largest object in the Solar System and the only moon known to have a magnetic field. Celebrating the young prince who was swooped up to Mount Olympus by a lustful Zeus disguised as an eagle and given the role as cupbearer to the gods, Schuff creates a jewel-like surface: deep blue shot through with tinges of rose, aqua, green, lighter blues, and white.

Some works reflect other planetary phenomena, such as the minute deviations in a planet’s axis of rotation, popularly known as “wobble.” Schuff signals this “enigmatic oscillation”—to borrow from one scientist—in *Blue Wobble*, in which a ragged center of peacock blue seems to be sucked in like a vortex from a square of inky ultramarine, the depth of the hue resulting from powdered pigments pressed into the surface. *Collapsing Star* projects a dark center surrounded by circular swirls in ever-lighter shades of gray, replicating a funnel. Here the artist alludes to the fascinating but as yet not altogether understood cosmic event in which a stellar core disintegrates into a neutron star.

One series offers a particularly uncanny instance of the artist’s prescience: *5 Million Suns I, II, III, IV*, and

V. Though each is distinctive in color and in design, all the works show a luminous center surrounded by an aura from which “points” of white light seem to burst forth. The fourth of these iterations was painted before the artist saw a photograph that seemed to echo her own image—a striking intimation of the numinous filiation between the mind and “the immeasurable vastness of space,” to which the artist alludes.

Were he around to see Schuff’s compelling images, Blake would indeed be pleased to witness such a provocative response to his invitation. But he might also be somewhat surprised that the show’s title was taken from an episode from the once popular TV series *Star Trek*, a favorite of the artist. Even popular culture echoes the poet’s mystical aspirations.

Dorothy M. Joiner

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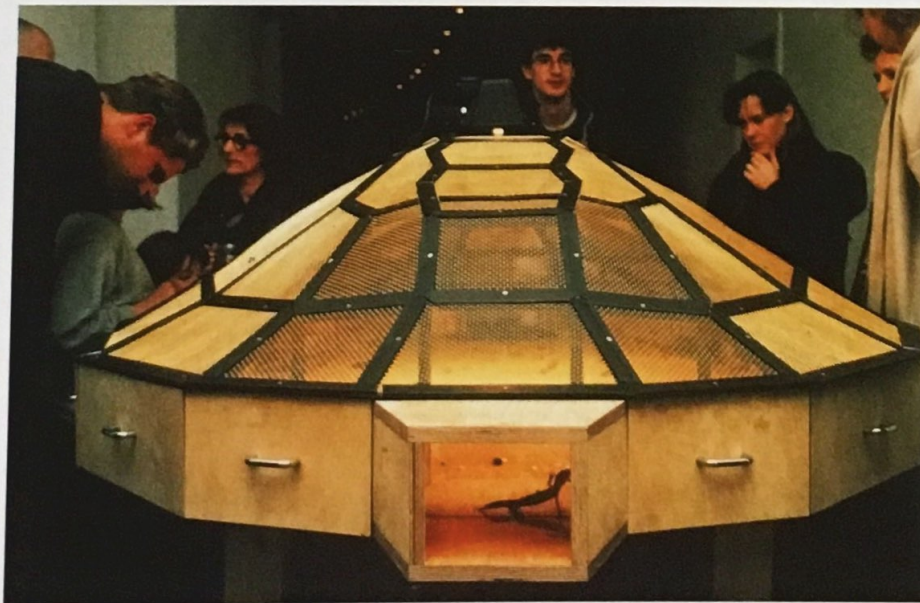
## New York City

### *Art and China After 1989/Theater of the World at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum*

On the morning of the opening reception for *Art and China After 1989 / Theater of the World* at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, Alexandra Munroe, the Samsung senior curator

of Asian art, clarified the purpose that lay behind this complex, though groundbreaking exhibition. She stated that it was neither a survey nor an historical overview of contemporary Chinese art. Rather the curatorial team, which included herself, and co-curators Hou Hanru and Philip Tanari, would focus on artists who were actively engaged in producing new ideas in the years between 1989 and 2008. This could be translated to mean artists interested in sublimating the violent conflicts of the past into a new kind of art-language, including artists who worked primarily in performance, video, and installations.

Inspired by important formative works by Xu Bing, Chen Zhen, and Huang Yong Ping, the artists chosen for the exhibition combined historical ambiguities from recent history with a discreetly critical angle of vision on the present. Many of the artists included in this exhibition had been activist artists who emerged from the chaotic remains of their culture in the late 1970s, only to be followed a decade later by the violent—if not tragic—events in Beijing on June 4, 1989. There is little doubt that this date will not be forgotten in the annals of Chinese history. Nor will it be forgotten in former Eastern Europe or in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as this was also the year that Soviet Communism ended and the Berlin Wall



**Huang Yong Ping, *Theater of the World*, 1993, wood and metal structure with warming lamps, electric cable, insects (spiders, scorpions, crickets, cockroaches, black beetles, stick insects, centipedes), lizards, toads, and snakes, 150 x 270 x 160 cm. Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. © Huang Yong Ping.**