

# Sculpture

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The work of composing her poetic constructions is left largely to her sense of intuition and an overarching animistic/philosophical belief in the totemic value of animals and in the literal history of bones. Veering from the otherworldly to the comical, with a undercurrent rooted in the tradition of the memento mori (little reminders of death's immutable presence), she crafts a strange, but complete, alternate universe. Her engagement with a meticulous and highly controlled ordering of minute objects such as bird bones is part of the reason her work elicits such a magical feeling. It doesn't seem possible that human hands could have gotten these tiny and deliberate aggregates to pirouette just so.

Her explicit references to the regions of the nether world, whether they be infernal, lunar, or crepuscular, is the other key to her success. Meaning in these zones corresponds less to a sense of the literal than to that of the spectral. Her sidereal creations conjure as much as they mean, and they do so with uncanny exactitude for the empathic viewer. Perry also uses scale to persuasive visual effect, particularly in her miniaturized works. In *Night Migration*, Lilliputian bird effigies balanced on lizard hands, with the face of a woman grafted onto their bodies, sit serenely on a mock stained glass tondo composed of dried rib bones. This work seems to oscillate between being some kind of scale model for something larger and seeming to be plausible at the size we see. Likewise, in *Praying to the Moon* and *Midway*, groups of minuscule bones are formed into flat circular rings and orbit around a rusted steel orb like the rings around Jupiter or float mysteriously in the middle of a glass chalice. The scale is perfect, and the crafting of the work utterly beguiling. Perry's extended stay in the desert resulted in the incorporation of a starlit skyscape in works such as *Time and Again*. The powdered



Left: Sarah Perry, *Six Seconds Before Midnight* (detail), 2001. Steel and animal heads, 8.5 x 19 x 8.5 in. Below: Sharon Que, *Cascade*, 2001. Stone, steel, and cast bronze, 18 x 29 x 40 in.

bone dust on blackened aluminum panel becomes a lens for us to scrutinize the place of our world among the myriad of planets and stars around us. It seems that the farther out from populous centers (whose artificial light blots out the night sky) Perry goes, the more she concentrates on uncovering our scalar relativity, both physical and philosophical.

The nostalgia that most assemblage art actively courts is present in Perry's work as well. The purely sentimental recuperation of things past through an artful resuscitation is the limit against which she occasionally bumps, but given the superlative odds she has established to date, the risk is certainly well taken. Autochthonous and self-propelled, Perry's objects erupt magically in our faces, giving us a reason to pause and momentarily reflect on our exact position in space and life. Some may even launch us into a wonderful and unexpected reverie, which, I suspect, is precisely what Perry desires.

—John O'Brien

## Santa Monica

### Sarah Perry

Hunsaker/ Schlesinger Fine Art Sarah Perry's new sculptures extend the stylistic bent and material specificity she has been developing over the last 10 years. Her spirit of assemblage, founded in the traditions of the West Coast, conjugates meaning through the juxtaposition of recognizable things gleaned from the detritus of the world surrounding us. Perry collects multifarious kinds of objects and parts of things, but her predilections guide her to thoroughly rusted metal objects, the mummified or skeletal remains of animals, and various ropes, cords, or thread binders for joining everything together.