

ART DESK

CONTEMPORARY ARTS, PERFORMANCE, AND THOUGHT



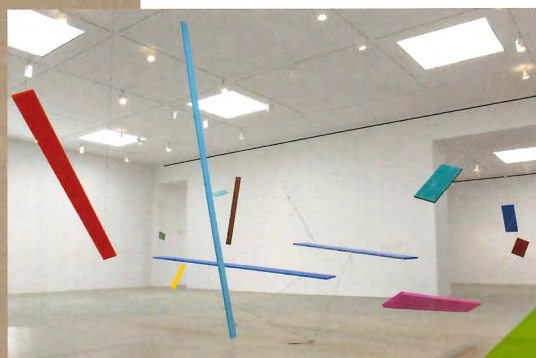


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Installation view,
Joel Shapiro,
Nasher Sculpture Center,
Dallas, 2016
photo by KEVIN TODORA

Installation view,
Joel Shapiro: New Work,
Pace Gallery, New York, 2010



CALL IT A HANG TEN. With a variety of elements that appear to float in mid-air, Joel Shapiro's new site-specific sculpture will fill an entire gallery of the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, Texas. The acclaimed contemporary sculptor's remarkable self-titled exhibition opened in May and continues through August 21, 2016. In it, Shapiro suspends brightly-colored wooden forms in a variety of shapes and sizes, a configuration that lets visitors experience the work in an unusual manner, by walking through the piece rather than around it. Explaining his approach, Shapiro says, "I was not interested in doing what I knew. I wanted to push the dimensions, doing something quite different than what people expected."

by MICHAEL DUTY

A New York City native, Shapiro, seventy-four, spent two years with the Peace Corps in India, an experience that he says opened his eyes to the possibility of being an artist. Soon after returning to the United States, he explored different sculptural forms. He has continued to look for new ways to express his vision with each period of his artistic career building upon the last. His current work, he says, is a "synthesis" of the past and present.

Shapiro and Jeremy Strick, director of the Nasher Sculpture Center, had informally discussed the creation of a new commission for the Dallas museum, but it was a chance meeting on the streets of New York that began the project in earnest. During that fortuitous encounter, Strick asked Shapiro if he would like to create a new work for the Nasher within the next year or so.

The Nasher Sculpture Center, opened in 2003 in the Dallas Arts District by founders Raymond and Patsy Nasher, features many of Shapiro's sculptures on permanent display. Although Shapiro had visited the Nasher on numerous occasions, it was on a trip to Dallas in the spring of 2015 that he reacquainted himself with the building—designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect, Renzo Piano—that would soon host his new work.

Shapiro says the space itself was a key element in conceptualizing the new artwork, described as both "balletic" and "severe." He also says, "It's not a retrospective, so I had the opportunity to let my sense of the space influence the work."

Over the course of a year, Shapiro carefully worked out the details of this installation and

the relationship between the various forms that compose the sculpture. He says he thinks about the ways in which the perception of the sculpture will change as the visitor walks through the space, adding that his own perceptions change as he works on each new sculpture and that "thoughts develop as you work, discourse occurs as you work." During this phase, change is inevitable.

"You think you know how things will turn out, but you don't know for sure," he says.

That lack of certainty as to how the work will evolve produces both excitement and anxiety, but above all the process is challenging, and Shapiro embraces that reality. "I am always eager to work," he says. "I am someone who wants to be challenged by the work."

In a highly successful career that has spanned four decades, Shapiro has repeatedly met the challenge of creating sculpture that pushes beyond tradition and convention in museum collections throughout the world. As this new exhibition confirms, his work is in high demand. As an artist, he does not lament the passing of time, in fact, he thinks artists get better as they age.

"[Older artists] may not have the fire they had when they were young, but they certainly know a lot more," Shapiro says. New work, he adds, builds upon the older work and "expanding your work is always a little gift."

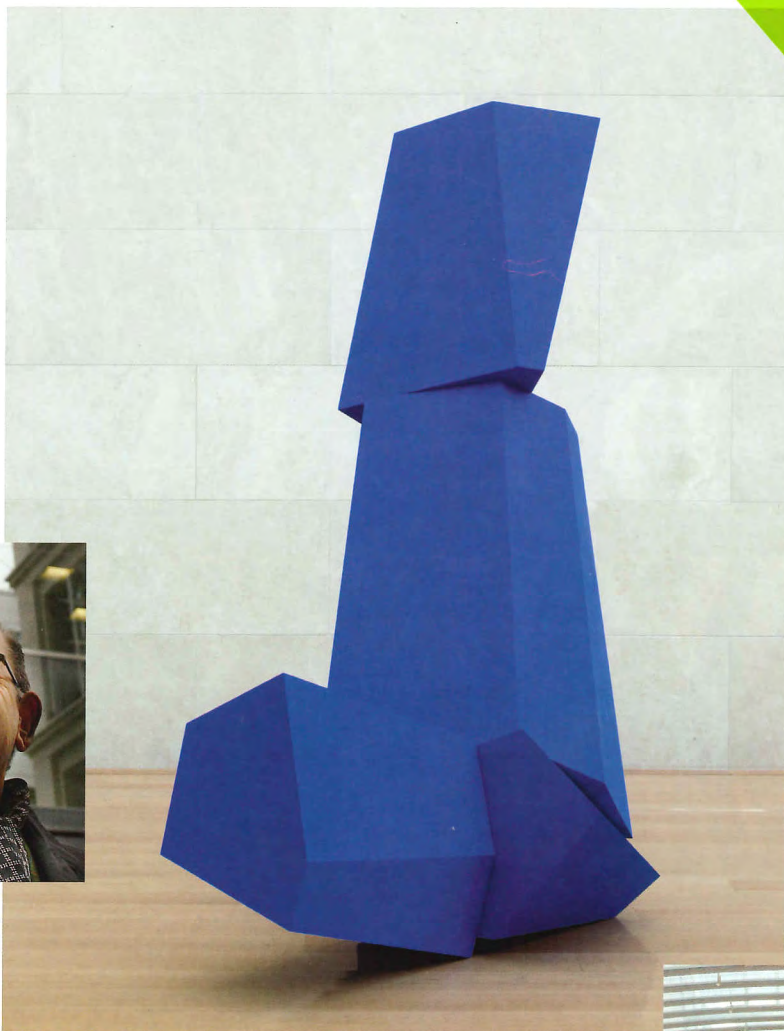
Visitors to the new installation at the Nasher will receive the gift of first-hand experience, as well as a new vision created by an artist who continues to work at the very highest level. ■



Joel Shapiro
Museum Ludwig, 2011

Really Blue (after all)
Wood and casein, 2016
Nasher Sculpture Center
photo by KEVIN TODORA

JOEL SHAPIRO in London
photo by ADRIAN DENNIS/
AFP/Getty Images



JOEL SHAPIRO's recent
model of the new
installation at the
Nasher Gallery

20 Elements
Wood and casein, 2004-05
Nasher Sculpture Center
photo by KEVIN TODORA

