



Window
Space

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Frank

James Gardner

November 22 – December 20, 2013.

James Gardner presents his most recent incarnation of *Frank*, a sculptural undertaking in its fifth year of development. Throughout *Frank's* exhibition history, *Frank* has taken on several sculptural manifestations. This version of *Frank* has been considered specifically for the window space, partially for its exposure to the sun. Here *Frank* appears as triptych, capturing an organism in momentary stasis, awaiting its next inevitable life cycle.

Gardner's formalist approach to sculpture and painting follows an accumulative process, where accumulation and reconstitution inspire ongoing production, and vestiges of preceding projects become the underpinning for new sculptural forms and thoughts. In his studio are layers of sculpted wood adhered to walls, thickly painted objects superimposed over prior paintings and dangling objects. In this way, Gardner's studio presents a space that feels both generative and stratified.

Similarly Gardner's relationship to the on-going *Frank* is an ambiguous one, where perpetual assembly offers an engagement with temporality and evolution. This phenomenon of transience situates *Frank* in a state of always 'becoming' rather than 'being' and prohibiting any conclusive state of completion. *Frank* brings to mind the early Greek thinker Heraclitus, who postulates that 'being' is merely a product of reasoning that has no ground in reality. Heraclitus explains that the term 'being' is more often an antidote used to rationalize the chaos that is reality. In this way, subjects, objects, and things are in a constant state of flux, or state of becoming. The abstraction of 'becoming', although daunting and unstable, more accurately represents objects and subjects in time. Returning to *Frank*, *Frank* embodies this notion through its material degradation and indeterminate finality. *Frank's* 'becoming' allows for an ongoing relationship and formal investigation into the material and its various possible forms.

By titling the sculpture *Frank* Gardner has personified the sculpture despite its non-representative form. This insinuation of sentience and biology is evident in the anamorphic quality of the shapes and texture. It also implies that these forms are responsive to states of both maturation and decomposition, where the present appearance is just one permutation of many. This sets up a clear relationship in Gardner having continuous dialogue with *Frank*. In this sense

Gardner's role is implicit in *Frank's* development. The process of making becomes performative as we know that upon departing the gallery, *Frank* will begin to take on a new manifestation through Gardner's regeneration of it.

The use of expandable foam is conducive to this ever-changing methodology where a state of chance and unforeseeable texture is countered by a reductive control through carving. In the way that a fungal growth accumulates mass and density, *Frank* is subject to a similar cycle of growth and degradation through the expandable foam and collapsing balloon armatures. The forms are carved and tunneled revealing a striation of colour, allowing for visibility into *Frank's* former past selves. Cavities formed by the erratic expansion of the material appear in the hollowed, balloon-skin clad interstices revealing intestinal passages as if having consumed the detritus of a birthday party. Through this reduction of material, *Frank's* expansion is mitigated, creating interplay between chance and control.

To compliment this dialogue of chance and control, *Frank* is positioned in the window allowing its photosensitive exterior to be exposed to the sun. There are traces of prior tanning or baking techniques visible in the details indicating *Frank's* previous retreats to sunny locations. This exposure indicates a state of evolution and adaptation to its present window environment, where it feels as if *Frank* is attracted to the light. This highlights Gardner's alchemical interest in pursuing the transformation of an essential material to form a potentially new patina through chemical reaction. Further, as traditional alchemy has been fruitless in its effort to convert elemental material into precious material, there is a humorous futility in Gardner attempting to achieve this solar-induced patina knowing *Frank* will soon undergo a new transformation. Throughout *Frank's* stay in the sunlit window, this solar modulation will transpire as passersby look onto the gradual change.

This gradual change places Gardner in a reactive position by having to respond to the indeterminable nature of the materials. *Frank's* present state of impermanence is the progeny of what has preceded it while simultaneously becoming the progenitor of future manifestations. This perpetual dialogue between past and present is the locomotion propelling this piece into its subsequent future state.

- Charlie Murray