

Watch Your Step: A group exhibition of floor works on view at The FLAG Art Foundation



Michael Phelan, Tomorrow's a new day... (No.5), 2009-2011. Glass, 90 in x 72 inches. Photo Courtesy the artist and The FLAG Art Foundation, NY.

NEW YORK, NY.- Traditional sculpture on a pedestal depicts either a person, a place, or an event, so there is always an allegiance to the theme of the representation. Once you take the work off the pedestal, it's in the same behavioral space as the viewer walking around it. Once that happens, time and space come into play, in terms of how you experience the sculpture in relation to the context and the field and your bodily movement. -Richard Serra

[The FLAG Art Foundation](#) presents Watch Your Step, a group exhibition of floor works on view through August 24, 2012.

Watch Your Step surveys a series of floor sculptures by 21 artists in a diverse range of media including found objects, handmade materials, and traditional mediums such as bronze, steel, and marble. The exhibition recalibrates the viewer's perspective, moving it from eye-to-ground-level and, in some instances, forcing the viewer to literally watch one's step upon encountering the works. The featured works address themes such as repetition, the relationship between the part and the whole, the human form, and nature.

The evolution of the relationship among a sculpture, the floor, and a viewer plays an

important role within this conversation. Constantin Brancusi redefined this paradigm in the early twentieth century with his treatment of the pedestal. Breaking from Renaissance tradition of using the pedestal to elevate and isolate sculpture, Brancusi instead incorporated hand-carved bases into his works, highlighting the point of connection between our reality - the ground - and the ideality of art. Carl Andre drew inspiration from Brancusi and made the horizontal plane his primary focus with an array of materials directly flat on the ground in different formats in his Minimalist sculptures. This seminal shift redefined how sculpture is perceived and displayed today.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Julianne Swartz and Patricia Cronin utilize the floor as a surface to express poignant manifestations of love and mortality. Gonzalez-Torres' *Untitled (Corner of Baci)*, composed of a pile of Italian chocolate "kisses," and Swartz's *Flood*, an unsuspecting cherry wood box that plays a chorus of voices saying "I love you" when opened, invite viewers to slow down and activate their senses. Cronin's bronze sculpture *Memorial to a Marriage* depicts the artist and her partner lying in bed embracing.

Polly Apfelbaum and Lynda Benglis challenge traditional relationships to the ground and blur the distinction between painting and sculpture. Apfelbaum's flower work *Rihanna*, named after the pop star, is a toxic fluorescent yellow that captures the contradiction between toughness and unbridled beauty. Benglis' *Untitled* recalls the painterly and gestural Abstract Expressionist artists with colorful vicious pours of polyurethane on the floor.

Richard Serra and Corban Walker highlight the presence and absence of the ground in the presentation of their works. Serra's *Even Level* - a six-foot, half-ton sculpture, with two pieces of hot rolled steel in a tilted T-formation - rests precariously against the gallery wall and is only anchored to the floor by the small edge. Walker references his height in relation to the average male height with a series of stainless steel cables strewn across facing walls; viewers over four feet must walk underneath it to pass through the corridor. Though the installation does not have any contact with the floor, it increases awareness of one's height in relation to the horizontal plane and the architecture.

Richard Long, Michael Phelan, and Wolfgang Laib incorporate organic materials while Mona Hatoum, Tara Donovan, and the Ladd brothers combine found objects. The floor becomes the nexus between the earth and the developed world.