

**Visual Arts****Frieze Sculpture Park opens its doors to nature**

An upbeat free-to-wander exhibition combines playfulness with serious concerns of contemporary realities and metaphysics

**Jackie Wullschläger** YESTERDAY

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Autumn in Regent's Park: no tent, no booths, no crowds, but yes, an actual, physical presence for art. In this year of a largely online edition, Frieze Sculpture's annual exhibition is the high point of the 2020 fair. It is hard to overstate how welcome this free, outdoor, wander-as-you-please contemporary art exhibition is for London: tangible, tactile, liberated from the impositions of masks and time slots.

Arriving at the Park Square East gate, you confront the pun that is Gavin Turk's oversized trompe l'oeil bronze of a half-open peeling wooden door, "L'Age d'Or". It is placed to frame the park; to walk through it is to enter a crazy out-of-scale world where the human and the natural by turns converge and disrupt one another. The range of sensibilities is extreme: from the mystery of time and space, form and formlessness, memories of the body moving through landscape, in Richard Long's intricate/casual granite and marble "Circle for Sally", to Sarah Lucas's prosaically absurd, massive concrete slab "Sandwich", already soggy with puddles, an ungainly, austere interloper among graceful lawns.

"L'Age d'Or" resonates with current concerns about home, security, inside/outside, barriers, borders, how we negotiate space and other people. But Turk was inspired by a more abstract idea — Magritte's 1939 painting "La Victoire" depicting a door occupying an empty beach: a surrealist game proposing intersections between different realities.



Sarah Lucas's 'Sandwich' (2011-2020) © Stephen White/Frieze

This seems to be what curator Clare Lilley is striving for with some dozen large-scale works, more than half made in the last year, dotted across the English gardens. Some by acclaimed names, others emerging, they present a snapshot of sculpture's conceptual trends and celebrate the medium's materiality and resilience.

Turk injects Alice-in-Wonderland playfulness; elsewhere, a shiver of pleasure at fairytale menace is the initial response. Two new Frieze commissions loom here. To the west, a neon beanstalk: spiralling aluminium sheets rolled into cones, welded section by section and painted fluorescent pinks and purples, mimic the lupin plant — bright flowers in dense whorls on erect spikes — as an outlandish triffid, nature soaring out of control, in Arne Quinze's three-metre "Lupine Tower".





Arne Quinze's three-metre 'Lupine Tower' (2020) © Stephen White/Frieze

To the east, a taut steel twist of Rapunzel hair stands paradoxically upright, hard, at monumental height, competing with the trees: Kalliopi Lemos's "The Plait", long sinuous loops cut off at top and base, representing, according to the artist, "a gesture of disobedience . . . against beauty stereotypes".

Combining doors and fashionistas, Lubaina Himid's inventive "Five Conversations", created last year for New York's High Line, connects to both Hume and Lemos. On five reclaimed wooden doors from Georgian townhouses, Himid painted life-size portraits of elegantly attired women, of different skin colours, cut as silhouettes, talking to each other, confidently posed at the bizarrely dislocated thresholds to affluent homes. A circular door knocker is one woman's madly enlarged gold hoop earring; a letterbox forms a bold rectangle design on the dress of another. "Patterns are not neutral. They are words, signals and whole sentences, signing different moods, saying different periods," Himid says.



David Altmejd's 'Untitled 1 (Bronze Bodybuilders)' (2015) © Stephen White/Frieze







Kalliopi Lemos's 'The Plait' (2020) © Stephen White/Frieze

Her sparkling graphic images speak style, power, inclusiveness, co-operation, with the metaphors — opening the doors of art, women stepping out from the domestic sphere — piquant despite their obviousness. The placement of the black figure in this context — with references to the billboard clean-lined portraits and cut-outs of sophisticated New York women by Alex Katz, and beyond to luxuriant French depictions of female leisure and pleasure, Renoir, Matisse — is radical and important. Himid, in 2017 the [first black woman to win the Turner Prize](#), is essentially a painter; in “Five Conversations” she has co-opted historic allusions into freestanding sculptures, which are also joyous paintings.

Sculpture’s enduring yet shifting concern with the human form, its anthropomorphic impulse, is the show’s broadest theme. American painter of awkward bodies Eric Fischl displays an affecting bronze female “Torso”, sagging breasts, chunky thighs, rough-hewn, variegated surfaces, which despite its clumsy vulnerability is the most classical offering. Chief deconstructor is David Altmejd: his white-painted figure, from a distance glowing like a marble statue, is called “Untitled 1 (Bronze Bodybuilders)” — an unfinished body building itself. It sprouts extra hands, on a leg, at a shoulder, which grab and mould material scooped up like ice cream from its plinth to become the substance of a body layered with furrows and grooves, face featureless — a grotesque self-portrait of the process of sculpting.





Eric Fischl's 'Torso' (2010) © Stephen White/Frieze







Gianpietro Carlesso's 'Torre di Saba' (2009) © Stephen White/Frieze

Cousin in cartoon energy is Rebecca Warren's "Aurelius", a blobby obelisk just implying head, neck, torso, plinth, with bodily protuberances — thumbs, breasts, buttocks, eye sockets? — cast in bronze and hand painted in scumbled pinkish-cream flesh hues. Warren's title references stoic emperor-philosopher Marcus Aurelius: "Whatever this is that I am, it is flesh and a little spirit and an intelligence."

Fabio Lattanzi Antinori's ladder of flashing LED Google advertisements "Ad Keywords", a critique of how online personal algorithms govern and polarise behaviour, suggests a new 21st-century man, increasingly shaped by the power of technological giants. The 24-part reclaimed lead and mirrored heads — shark, pigeon, monkey, dog — some nosedived into the grass, others glinting in the sun as they stare up uncannily, of "Humans-Animals-Monsters" by Patrick Goddard, the show's youngest contributor, underlines by contrast our animal characteristics; garrulous and comic, it is the playground hit.



Fabio Lattanzi Antinori's 'Ad Keywords' (2020) © Stephen White/Frieze







Lubaina Himid's 'Five Conversations' (2019) © Stephen White/Frieze

At the opposite end of the formal spectrum Gianpietro Carlesso's "Torre di Saba", the show's most beautiful, purist work, is a metaphysical tour de force, alert to modernist sculpture's concentration on void/matter, interior/exterior, figuration/abstraction. Carved as a continuous flowing line from a single piece of Lebanese cedar wood into a column of open geometric shapes, surging with internal rhythmic energy, "Torre" stands among the park's great trees, a visual marriage of the man-made and landscape, calling to mind at once the human form — jagged head, gently curving back, jutting feet — and a tower. It belongs to Carlesso's "Decostruzioni" series, founded on the belief that from destruction comes creation: a vital, hopeful message to take away from an upbeat show.

To October 18, [frieze.com](https://www.frieze.com)

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