

# ARTFORUM

## "Formes Simples"

CENTRE POMPIDOU-METZ

1, parvis des Droits-de-l'Homme

June 13–November 11

Dividing its broad conceit across seventeen thematic subsections, "*Formes Simples*" (Simple Shapes) juxtaposes artworks and artifacts whose provenances span approximately five thousand years and thirty countries based on their formal similarities. The first room of the exhibition, however, showcases works related by their formlessness. Diverse examples of art informel, to use French art critic Michel Tapié's 1952 coinage, include a gloppy cement sculpture by Anish Kapoor (untitled, 2013), a barely figurative terra-cotta study for Auguste Rodin's famous portrait-sculpture of Balzac (*Balzac, robe de chambre* [Balzac, Dressing Gown], 1897), an anonymous sixteenth-century Italian drapery study in oil, and a trio of Hiroshi Sugimoto waterscape photographs from the 1990s. Presented under the heading "Before Shape," this motley mélange of two- and three-dimensional objects attunes the viewer to how each artwork's physical presence is defined, to a certain extent, by its medium.



View of "*Formes Simples*" (Simple Shapes), 2014.

Another section, titled "Who Could Better This Propeller?" (a quote attributed to Marcel Duchamp in a conversation with Fernand Léger in 1912, the year of the fourth International Exposition of Aerial Locomotion in Paris), draws somewhat obvious formal comparisons between modern masterpieces such as Constantin Brâncuși's *Bird in Space*, 1936, and elegant feats of twentieth-century engineering. Elsewhere in the exhibition, geometric abstractions by Ellsworth Kelly and Tony Smith are likened to scientific and quotidian implements ranging from an ancient Egyptian eye-shadow palette to an eighteenth-century set of terra-cotta crystallographic models (which, given their context here, could easily be mistaken for part of Allan McCollum's series of unique silhouette-like forms, "The SHAPES Projects"). The most surprising links are in the "Shapes-Forces" section, which features a curved moldboard designed by Thomas Jefferson to make plows turn over sod more efficiently and a photograph of modern dance pioneer Loie Fuller during a signature spinning performance at the Folies-Bergère.

— Mara Hoberman

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