

## REVIEW

Forget the Pedestals

Sculpture hangs from ceilings and off of walls



by Douglas Max Utter

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After the Pedestal Through July 25 The Sculpture Center 1834 E. 123rd St. 216.229.6527 [sculpturecenter.org](http://sculpturecenter.org)

More than almost any other visual-arts venue in Cleveland, the Sculpture Center consistently dares viewers to stretch their notion of what an art object might be. This is especially true of the annual exhibit of smaller works, which, under director Ann Albano, has evolved rapidly from a conservative regional sampling called *On a Pedestal* into another animal altogether.

Juried each year since 2005 by an eminent artist or curator, the show has moved decisively away from traditional materials and approaches, recognizing tendencies in contemporary art to expand the range of sculpture to include transient materials, sound, motion and ideas about the psychology and dynamics of space. This paradigm shift affects not only the nature of the works on view, but also the role of the show's juror. Rebranded in its fifth year as *After the Pedestal*, the exhibit provides a lively set of encounters for the eye, ear and mind.

This year's juror, Paola Morsiani (the Cleveland Museum of Art's new curator of contemporary art), has chosen works by 15 artists. In the main gallery, an open black umbrella hangs near the middle of the room, shading an area of carpeting from a bright light directly overhead. Called "*The Best of It (2009)*," the work by Cleveland artist Lauren Yeager extrapolates the absurd from the reasonable: Since an umbrella is a good thing to have when it rains, it must be even better when it doesn't.

Against an adjacent wall, Samantha Doan's "*Two Letters (2008)*" follows its own dream-like illogic. The Oxford, Ohio, artist places a vintage Royal typewriter, resting in its open case (like a casket), on a plain wooden desk. Maybe it's not dead but dreaming — somehow, white thread has replaced the black typewriter ribbon on its spools, as if it were morphing into a loom, spinning words. A heap of white thread is visible under the keys, from which two strands run up past the letters A and T to wind around the spools. Soon we become aware of a barely audible tapping; more than one kind of ghost inhabits Doan's poetry machine.

Two slightly more traditional objects are standouts in the Center's Euclid Avenue gallery. One, titled "*Autogenesis (2008)*," by Michigan artist Karen Bondarchuk, is a more than five-foot crow or raven's head thrusting into the room at eye level from a worn tire mounted on the wall. Feathered with slivers of rubber recycled from the margins of a Michigan interstate, the raven has a headlamp blazing in its beak. Inevitably reminiscent of Robert Rauschenberg's 1959 "*Monogram*" (featuring an Angora goat with a tire around its middle), Bondarchuk's work has many layers of reference, commenting on environmental issues and retelling a Native American myth in which Raven steals the sun.

Howard Tran's "*To-Tien 18, 2008*" is just as strong. Six ceramic heads are stacked in a crutch-like wooden frame mounted on two iron wheels. A narrow metal tube curves back, piercing the tongue of a severed ceramic head and neck lying behind the death cart on the floor. The black-painted work is like an ideogram for inexpressible existential depths.

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