

Elizabeth King: Radical Small

The artist's largest-ever museum show takes on a two-story gallery space with micro-scaled works

Values become engulfed in miniature, and miniature causes men to dream. Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space.

... if there is no smallest point, every minutest body will be composed of an infinite number of parts, since a half of a half will always have a half and there will be no limit to the possibility of division. If this is the case, what will distinguish the whole universe from the smallest thing in it? Nothing, for no matter how fully infinite is the whole universe, the minutest objects will equally be composed of an infinite number of parts. Lucretius, On the Nature of Things



View of King posing her work: *Pupil*, 1987-90
 Porcelain, glass eyes, carved wood (Swiss pear), brass.
 Half life-size. Dimensions vary: eyes and all joints movable.

NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS — An ambitious new installation combining small sculptures and large videos, *Radical Small* is Richmond, Virginia-based artist **Elizabeth King's** most expansive one-person exhibition to date. Utilizing one of MASS MoCA's largest exhibition spaces on the museum's second floor, King examines the notion of radical smallness, or what French philosopher Gaston Bachelard has called "intimate immensity." The exhibition of sculpture and video animation opens to the public on **March 4, 2017**, with a reception to follow on Saturday, March 18.

"By starting with the smallest, most subtle of gestures," notes curator Denise Markonish, "King absorbs our full attention, drawing us into a world where the small engulfs us and allows us to dream." As the artist herself puts it, "In sculpture, when you represent a body at a size different from its own, metaphor rushes in." King combines precisely movable half-scale figurative sculptures with projections of stop-motion video animations in works that skillfully merge and confuse the boundary between actual and virtual objects. Intimate in scale — this is theater for an audience of one — and made to solicit close viewing, the work reflects her interests in early clockwork automata, the history of the mannequin, puppetry, and literature's host of legends in which the artificial figure comes to life. For MASS MoCA, King will test the power of small sculpture to articulate and command a large double-height gallery, staging an extended exchange of dimensionality and scale through the languages of sculpture, film, and animation. Additionally, King will

use the gallery as an animation studio for the first two weeks of the exhibition, producing a new film of her sculptures at MASS MoCA.

“King’s works, even when still, seem alive. They are animated in the most fundamental sense of the word,” notes Markonish. “They look back at us. Their uncanny humanness literalizes art’s ability to meet and confront our gaze.”

“I want a portrait, not so much of a person, but of a verb,” King says. “Maybe the sculpture is like a violin, and the pose is the sonata. Finding the pose and lighting it precisely — I’m amazed at the difference a few degrees of tilt make in how we read the position of the head. If I move the eyes so the gaze shifts away from face on, even just slightly, a thread of tension enters the pose. I love the visceral evidence of impermanence, not in the object itself, but in its pose at any given moment.”

About the Artist

Born in 1950 in Ann Arbor, MI, King studied sculpture at the San Francisco Art Institute (MFA 1973, BFA 1972). Her work has been exhibited at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville, TN; Flag Art Foundation, New York, NY; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH; Visual Arts Center of Richmond, VA (2007 – 2009 traveled to Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH; Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska at Lincoln; Brown University, Providence, RI; Telfair Museum of Art, Savannah, GA); Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY; American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, NY; SFMOMA, San Francisco, CA; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA; Exploratorium, San Francisco, CA; LACMA, Los Angeles, CA; The Hirshhorn, Washington, DC; and The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Her films and videos have been screened at MOMA, New York, NY, and the 12th Annual Black Maria Film and Video Festival, among others. In 2006, she was awarded the American Academy of Arts and Letters’ Arts and Letters Award, and in 2002 she was a Guggenheim Fellow. King’s writing has been published in *The Art Bulletin*, *Blackbird*, and *Genesis Redux: Essays in the History and Philosophy of Artificial Life* (Chicago: U of C Press, 2007). Her book, *Attention’s Loop (A Sculptor’s Reverie on the Coexistence of Substance and Spirit)* was published by Harry Abrams in 1999. From 1985 to 2015 she taught at Virginia Commonwealth University’s Department of Sculpture and Extended Media. She is represented by Danese / Corey, New York, NY. <http://thesizesofthings.com/>

Sponsorship

Principal exhibition support is provided by Pamela K. and William A. Royall, Jr. Major exhibition support is provided by the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, the Barr Foundation, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

Images

A collection of high-resolution images is available here: bit.ly/RadicalSmall

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is one of the world’s liveliest (and largest) centers for making and enjoying today’s most important art, music, dance, theater, film, and video.

Gallery admission is \$18 for adults, \$16 for veterans and seniors, \$12 for students, \$8 for children 6 to 16, and free for children 5 and under. Members are admitted free year-round. The Hall Art Foundation’s Anselm Kiefer exhibition is open seasonally, spring – fall. For additional information, call 413.662.2111 x1

or visit massmoca.org.

Hours

11am to 5pm, closed Tuesdays