Joel Perlman

The Color of Metal

Joel Perlman

The Color of Metal

MAY 2
through
JUNE 1 2019

LORETTA HOWARD
GALLERY

Since the late 1990s, Joel Perlman's sculptures have featured dynamic interwoven circular and coiled configurations, which evoke the dynamic forces of machines. Their overlapping annular spirals, broken by ragged triangular shapes, suggest explosive energy, yet that energy is simultaneously controlled within tightly organized abstract compositions.

In part, Perlman came to his recent helix-like forms through his long time passion for motorcycles, which he has ridden since his youth. On one level, his sculptures suggest wheels, gears, and mechanical parts in motion. Titles such as *Machine Age* (1998), *Top Gear* (2004), and *Turbine* (2004) confirm this association. Yet, Perlman's works do not so much picture mechanical devices as evoke the characteristics of speed, durability, dynamism, rapidity, strength, delicate balance, and precision that we associate with machines. Philip F. Palmedo, author of *Joel Perlman: A Sculptor's Journey*, (Abbeville Press, 2006) described Perlman's work: "Built like a Swiss watch, hits like a Mack Truck"

opposite: Roundhouse, 2018
Stainless steel
15' x 12' x 8' feet
Commission for 52 Lime Street, London EC3
Property Group Partners

above: Maquette for Roundhouse, 2018
Stainless steel
17 x 16 x 6 inches

The relationship between art and machines has a rich history. For the ancient Greeks, the word "techne" meant both art and technology. Aristotle wrote in *Mechanica* that mechanical devices could be used both practically and as "objects of wonder." Leonardo da Vinci's marvelous machine drawings are more often flights of imagination than practical contrivances. In the modern age, one recalls the Italian Futurists' romantic obsession with speed as inspired by the new machinery of their age. The Russian Constructivists dreamt of a utopian society based on marvelous machines. One thinks of Vladimir Tatlin's fantasy for the *Monument to the Third International* (1920), his planned angular, two-thousand-foot tall, spiral tower that would house the Soviet government in three geometric cubicles that rotated at different speeds. The relationship to Russian avant-garde art is particularly relevant to Perlman. As a young faculty member at Bennington College in 1971, Perlman was so taken with Russian Constructivist art seen in American museums that he managed to join a group of Danish Young Communists travelling to Moscow. Perlman continues to admire the Russian avant-garde's commitment to abstraction, experiments with materials, and their belief in the social relevance of art.

As an artist whose oeuvre centers on creation in metal, Perlman has also been appreciative of modern masters such as David Smith and Brian Wall. However, Smith's cut-out steel Circles (1961-63) are frontal and pictorial; they do not suggest movement. Wall's welded sculptures are substantial, sitting boldly in the environment, but they do not have the tightly packed energy of Perlman's works. Joel Perlman has clearly forged a unique and compelling identity among the metal sculptors of our age. ∎

Robert S. Mattison

Black Wheels, 2016
Bronze
18 x 14 x 6 inches

Copper Raw, 2018
Copper
24 x 24 x 7 inches

Circle and Square, 2015
Bronze
28 x 23 x 11 inches

Big Boy, 2019
Stainless steel
30 x 25 x10 inches

Copper Brown, 2018
Copper
26 x 24 x 9 inches

Copper Gray, 2018
Copper
22 x 26 x 8 inches

Copper Blue, 2018.
Copper
18 x 13 x 7 inches

Energiser, 2019
Stainless steel
19 x 14 x 6 inches

Silver Gear, 2018
Stainless steel
21 x 17 x 7 inches

Saw Tooth, 2019
Stainless steel
27 x 22 x 7 inches

This catalogue published on the
occasion of the exhibition

Joel Perlman
The Color of Metal

May 2 – June 1, 2019

Loretta Howard Gallery
525 West 26th Street
New York NY 10001
212.695.0164
www.lorettahoward.com

Essay © Robert S. Mattison

cover: Big Boy, 2019