

Art Now L.A.
April 23, 2021

Fin Simonetti
My Volition
Transforming the Ordinary into the Exquisite

Matthew Brown Gallery
March 25 - May 6, 2021

by Jody Zellen



In *My Volition*, Fin Simonetti has installed a wide, flat metal railing that zig-zags through the gallery. While this waist-high barrier disrupts the normal flow into and through the space, it simultaneously functions as a display shelf. Several hand-carved stone sculptures are strategically placed along its surface, leading viewers into the back room. Each object along the railing is a material marvel — carefully chosen pieces of marble or honeycomb calcite — intricately carved to highlight the nuanced colors and textures of the stone.

Though formally gorgeous, the subject matter (all works 2021) of some of these stone sculptures is disturbing. They depict body parts including dog limbs (*My Volition 4* and *My Volition 1*) and the top half of the animal's snout (*My Volition 6*), as well as beautifully carved trowels/spades. Seen together, it is impossible not to try to ponder the relationships between them. Are they the tools of excavation and the excavated, and if so, why?

What constitutes a tool rather than a weapon? Could the artifacts have been unearthed and are now preserved as all that remains of the whole animal? As presented, the objects call to mind classical sculptures that are often exhibited as fragments in metal display cases. Simonetti's disembodied animal parts appear both solid and vulnerable; her tools, dangerous but also useful.

To complement these unusual sculptures, Simonetti also presents a series of found barbershop posters that are framed behind hand-crafted, stained glass panels. These evocative pieces consist of faded or dilapidated posters with photographs of male models of varying ages and ethnicities sporting different types of closely cropped hair styles. The images are partially obscured by patterns in the stained glass that isolate specific aspects of the heads. For example, in *Cathedral 10*, lines of leading hold together white and yellow-orange, smoked and textured glass fragments. This uneven grid of rhomboid-shaped glass is interspersed with circular openings that fall over the ear of each model.

In *Cathedral 6*, lead lines define brown, gray, black and red irregular geometric shapes, as well as a pattern of small, four-petal flowers that partially cover the faces depicted in the background. The posters titled *Chapel* feature fewer haircuts. *Chapel 3* highlights the faces of four men with closely cropped haircuts seen through clear glass that form a quatrefoil pattern. These patterns abut opaque pieces of light and darker brown glass that obscures the rest of the image below. A

chapel or cathedral is a house of worship or prayer— places often filled with stained glass — and Simonetti's juxtaposition of stained glass and barbershop posters suggests what would otherwise be seen as instructive or commonplace can be something more sacred.

Volition or will is defined as the cognitive process by which an individual decides on and commits to a particular course of action. Simonetti's volition defamiliarizes. It takes the ordinary — be it barbershop posters or disembodied animal parts — and gives them new significance by transforming them into exquisite art objects. The exhibition touches on ideas relating to control, confinement, desire and balance while simultaneously alluding to the body and its vulnerability.

<https://artnowla.com/2021/04/23/fin-simonetti-my-volition/>