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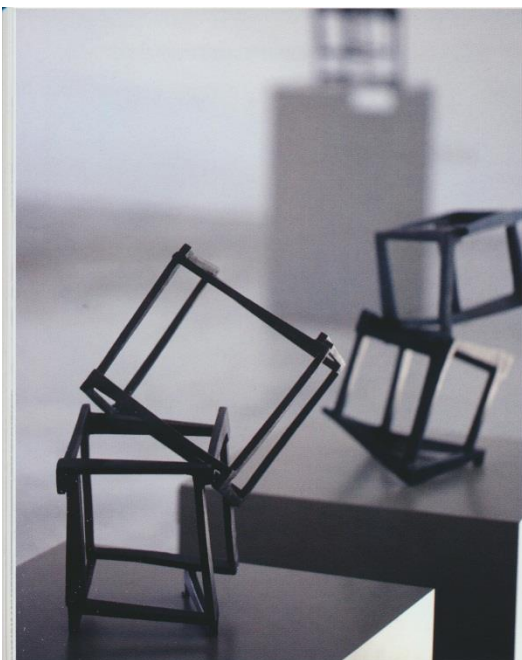
Clockwise from left: Installation view;
A portrait of Jedd Novatt.

**JEDD NOVATT CHALLENGES THE
LAWS OF PHYSICS.**

No Theory for Chaos

Minimalist art came to prominence in New York's art scene during the 1960s. It was a movement that sought to reveal the true identity of a subject by eliminating superfluous and non-essential elements. Various artists adopted geometric forms, most commonly the cube, and raw industrial material in conceptualizing and constructing their artwork.

Born in the birthplace of Minimalism, it is no surprise that Jedd Novatt's sculptures appear to be greatly influenced by the movement. Novatt employs the quintessential minimalist elements, such as the cube and the use of industrial materials like aluminum, in his works. However, the artist does not fully identify himself as a contributing artist of movement. "I am in no particular camp," Novatt explains, stressing his myriad influences include not only Minimalism and Abstract Expressionism but other periods of art history, including renaissance painting and sculpture. "I'm interested in and influenced by many things."



From top left: Installation views; *Chaos Frenetico*, 2014; *AUGUST 45*, 2009, all artwork by Jedd Novatt.

Indeed, Jedd Novatt is an artist who resists labels, imposing definitions and providing interpretations for his work. "What makes something 'art' is indescribable, often inexplicable," says Novatt. "It's more than one idea and I don't like to say what any of the ideas are. It's the work of the viewer to find the answer."

The artist studied literature and sculpture at Sarah Lawrence College before furthering his studies at the Lacoste School of the Arts in France. In 1982, Novatt set up his first studio in Manhattan's Tribeca and he held his first solo show in 1993. He then moved to Paris in 2002 and has been based there ever since, but also divides his time among his other studios in New York, the Basque region in Spain, and Normandy.

For the past decade, Novatt has been experimenting with gravity, weight and balance in his work. His sculpture series 'Chaos' is a culmination of his explorations. Earning Novatt international recognition, his large-scale series 'Chaos' involves sculptures constructed from cube-like forms. Each sculpture gives the appearance of a stack of cubes at the point of collapsing. Defying gravity, these sculptures capture the inherent strength and balance in a fragile situation. Structural tensions are emphasized within the form that is fixed in motion, resonating with the viewers.

Frédéric de Senarclens, Founder and Director of Art Plural Gallery, calls Novatt's sculptures "highly intelligent compositions" that require reflection and time. "The works are in a perpetual disequilibrium in equilibrium," he says. "You never know if they are rising to the sky or if they are in a state of collapse. They explode and implode in all directions and defy gravity."

The sculptures from his series have been installed and exhibited in various locations around America and France. Sculptures from his series are on permanent display in Bilbao's Campa de Los Ingleses near the Guggenheim (Chaos Nervion); in Yountville, California, in the heart of Napa Valley (Chaos Pamplona); at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Atlanta, Georgia (Chaos Mundaka); and at La Piscine Musée d'Art et d'Industrie in Roubaix, France (Chaos Vascos). Most recently, his large bronze Chaos Bizkaia and stainless steel Chaos SAS sculptures were installed in the garden of the Pérez Art Museum in Miami. Director of the Museum Thom Collins describes his installation as "twisting, slipping, seemingly unstable stacks of monumental open rectangles" that "activate" the landscape of the new sculpture garden. He notes

that the works stand as if "arrested in a process of being formed from the primordial state of disorder... in a perpetual state of becoming".

The title 'Chaos' seems somewhat paradoxical in nature. Despite chaos and instability being key themes in his sculpture designs, order and equilibrium also play significant roles. The tilting cubes appear to be resisting toppling over, fighting against a potential chaos and disorder.

When asked about the titling of his series, Novatt explains in an interview with Art Plural Gallery: "The title 'Chaos' represents an idea that encapsulates various aspects of the definition of the word chaos. Ironically, order is a large part of the idea; or rather the realisation that order might be random. I think about this word for different reasons, but in the end the title 'Chaos' best describes a response to many things, and full of contradictions." Perhaps the heart of the chaos lies in the sculpture being in an "unbalanced balanced" state.

Novatt's works are largely focused on material and space – specifically negative space. In terms of material, his sculptures are mostly constructed using industrial materials such as corten steel, aluminum and bronze. In the past, Novatt employed plaster, stone, wood, resin and clay in his work. He still uses plaster and wood to create models for his sculptures, but constructs the full-scale sculptures from steel and bronze. He chooses these materials because of his interest in the "durability" of material and "longevity" of an artwork. He uses bronze to create his outdoor sculptures because it "offers a choice of a changing patina". As such, the sculpture is "not static".

He explains in a video interview, "There is an organic quality that I like (about the changing patina) – yet you don't have to worry about the disintegration of the object... I like the idea of the durability of a material but I like the fact that it also changes." As for the smaller sculptures that he exhibits indoors, he uses steel to ensure that, unlike the outdoor bronze sculptures, the surfaces do not change, maintaining its heroic quality.

Negative space takes precedence in his explorations of different



structures and forms. Novatt is concerned with the “drawings” that the lines of his sculptures makes within space, and the infinite possible perspectives that could arise from observing both the void space between the form, as well as the space surrounding it. “The surface with this Chaos series has been secondary to the space that the form creates. This is partly the space within the limbs of the work, but, in fact, the form I focus on most is the inverse of the material of the work: the space that surrounds it, which I imagine as solid,” says the artist.

Each sculpture is never identical when it is looked at from a different angle. His work must be appreciated from different vantage points to allow the viewer to observe the interactions between the structure and the surrounding environment.


As for his process of creating these works, the artist does not give a definitive explanation. “I can’t begin to describe the process. It changes all the time,” says Novatt. While his small works are unique, his bigger sculptures are in editions of three, with each piece beginning with plaster and a pail of water or raw steel and a welding machine. As no molds are created, each edition of his sculpture is unique. “One work leads to the next and that line goes all over the place,” he says. This adds to the unevenness of his sculptures. Novatt is also unable to state an approximate time frame for creating these pieces. Hence, his personal experience creating each piece also constantly changes.

His body of work includes large-scale monumental sculptures (such as the bronze Chaos Bizkaia and stainless steel Chaos SAS) as well as smaller scale pieces. The relationship between size and

scale of each sculpture is dependent on the landscape in which it is being showcased. To him, the “monumentality” and “presence of power” in the sculptures goes beyond its size. He explains in a video interview with Art Plural Gallery, “Frequently, works that are called monumental are not monumental in scale, but are simply large... The concept of monumentality is not about size, it’s about finding a proper integration of a particular scaled work in a specific environment.” Novatt also states that natural lighting plays a significant role in enhancing his outdoor sculptures. Different aspects of the works are revealed at various points of the day, casting shadows that make the work interactive. At the same time, Novatt also wants his sculptures to stand on their own as bold monuments, independent of their environment.

“I remember liking making things”, says the 56-year-old artist. His fascination with sculpture started from a young age where he built stone sculptures using simple tools. Interested in the process, Novatt went on to carve larger stones when he moved to France, and has “kept on gravitating to sculpture” ever since. Before starting his work on the ‘Chaos’ series, Novatt lived in Manhattan until 2002 where he was recognised for his welded and painted steel sculptures, as well as his series of black-and-white collages.

“As I’ve often said, trying to describe or put into words ‘visual arts’ is, more often than not, futile. Even when I put a specific label, title or description on my work, it feels either limited or just not sufficient. I think about many ideas but they change fairly often, and I find myself simply compelled to make the next work. In essence, I follow my instincts and desires to represent or evoke a series of ideas in each work. They resonate with me in various ways as I make them and then lead towards some kind of completed state, though the ideas that are both contained within and generated by a sculpture develop each time you experience it.”

Novatt’s complex structures are groundbreaking – pushing boundaries in space and challenging laws of physics. His unique body of work and aesthetic stands as a monument in sculpture history. 

For any enquiries regarding the artist or his works,
please www.artpluralgallery.com or email info@artpluralgallery.com

**“DESPITE CHAOS
AND INSTABILITY
BEING KEY THEMES
IN HIS SCULPTURE
DESIGNS, ORDER AND
EQUILIBRIUM ALSO PLAY
SIGNIFICANT ROLES”**

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