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Publishing conversations with artists and curators.

097. Richard Stone



Richard Stone, *only in the ruins will you be free* (private collection), 2014. Statuario marble; 91 x 61 x 12 cm (ed. 1 + 1AP).

Artist Richard Stone shares his practice with *Traction Magazine*.

You work in classical materials: carving in marble, casting in bronze and painting in oils. What draws you to these methods and mediums?

I'm interested in the sheer potential and continued relevance of classical materials to express timeless as well as contemporary ideas. Naturally, there's weightiness, both physical and contextual to materials like bronze and marble, but the possibilities of bringing considered, ephemeral lightness is irresistible notwithstanding the complexity of realising a bronze or the simplicity of chasing light across a marble surface with a chisel and hammer, which is incomparable.

Recent works in particular represent years of thinking and making, but it's really now, that they've come together as a leap, both of faith and practice, in the form and mediums that best expresses them, of which classical materials are part, though not exclusively of course. I've always liked to draw out constellations of meaning between very different materials and works, It's an eclectic approach, but one that has gathered resonance over time.



Richard Stone, *i want to be heroic, but i'm just too romantic* (private collection), 2014. Oil on aluminium, float mounted, aluminium frame; 51 x 41 x 4 cm inc. frame.

So, whether it's a marble flag that describes it's physical, geological origins as well as exploring ideas of territories, or an antique painting with its surface partly removed to open out infinite, sublime spaces, the boldness and subtleties of my practice create a space I hope for broader meanings and readings which feels appropriate in our more fragmented times and how we access and read the world.

Your work explores the tension between reverence for our cultural heritage and the need to move forward and create. Why do you think it can be so difficult to align these interests in contemporary making?

Because it's difficult not to appropriate, unless that's your intention of course. And I genuinely think many people simply don't care, rehashing the old or in an endless pursuit of the new is all consuming, but I think we always have to look back to look forward, I have a recent work entitled *when history falls silent the future will fail* and I think, for me at least that it's there in everything I seek to do, in a discursive way.

I often think artists are at their best when they're mindful filters for their own as well as their cultural or art histories, it creates space for greater poetic alacrity that is open rather than telling viewers what they should think or confounding them in some way, which I think is prevalent in a lot of contemporary art and often shuts the work down or locks people out when that isn't or shouldn't be the intention.



Richard Stone, the rescuer (private collection), 2014. Bronze, patina; 57 x 23 x 23 cm (ed. 2/3 +2AP).

You often begin with an antique painting or sculpture, which you work into to subvert the form, giving it a new read whilst still referencing its history. Do you ever find yourself mourning these antiques as you alter them?

That's a very interesting question, there's a book: *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects* that has some interesting evocations of mourning, but for me, in this context, it's a delicate balance of re-presenting an object, that absolutely has to remain clear of what might be misinterpreted as nostalgia, which in itself isn't very interesting. Art emerges in the new object with the process of its transformation still present. In many ways, the original object is freed from its original purpose or function but still imbued with it that lends something much more evocative of loss or absence.

And in this sense, I think the original artwork caught between states of appearing and disappearing is much more interesting. In terms of subject, classical canons like the figure, landscape, nature and Englishness that recur across works have become much more clearly about working through representations or aspirations of the past, looking at a resonance left in fragments that has become much more present, much more powerful and indicative of where we actually are, so in that sense, that might begin to be described as a mourning.



Richard Stone, after (private collection), 2012. Antique oil on board, surface partly removed, lime wood moulding, waterwhite miroguard AR glazing; 55 x 40 x 3 cm inc. frame.

I guess there's romanticism inherent in that thinking, but ultimately it's the point of an ever-present departure that creates, not nostalgia, but a reverence of sorts, a longing.

You are currently included in the exhibition 'Nature Morte: Contemporary Artists Reinvigorate the Still Life' in Stavanger, Norway. How do you feel about the term 'still life' in relation to your work?

It's a fantastic exhibition, which will tour to Sweden in 2016, Belgium in 2017, returning to London in 2018. In terms of the still life, I like the connection that it brings, linking it to historical vanitas works, elements of which run throughout my works, which might not be obvious at first but looking back to my use of domestic materials and artefacts, earth, flowers and other delicate ephemera, particularly in installations based works, it becomes much more evident the more you explore.



Richard Stone, form (private collection), 2014. Bronze, patina; 65 x 45 x 35 cm (unique).

What is coming up for you next?

I'm currently thrashing out ideas in the studio towards a new series of works for a solo exhibition next year, some of which will include returning to studios in Italy, as well as working on other projects, which are currently in discussion, details of which I hope to announce soon.

For further information on Richard Stone's work, visit richardstoneprojects.com.

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