

SpRung - StiLL
DAVIS THOMAS

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RYAN RENSHAW PROJECT ROOM



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DAVISTHOMAS, *SpRung StiLL* (2010), spring steel, stainless steel & G clamps, 300cm x 160cm x 145cm

Sprung Still

This moment of equilibrium, of high tension, is “creation.” It is the fullness of all life, it is immortality. J. Krishnamurti

Entering an old shed perched on a hill, I can see an object suspended inside. The light in the space is dark and soft, like the eyes of a dog, and it smells of lumber and oil. Walking up the ramp I feel an unexpected sense of gentle reverence enfold me as an elegant form emerges from the shadows.

Silver edges create sharp lines; calligraphic shadows cast on the floor make for fuller lines. Striated metallic hues: blue, green, bronze all testify to the truth of the material – extruded metal. Yet this new work by collaborative duo DavisThomas, Sprung Still, is not a static sculpture cast in metal. These graceful arcs of sprung steel are clasped into scalloped curves, sometimes under great resistance, creating a closed system vibrant with unexpressed energy. Almost imperceptibly it sways in space, trembling with potential.

There is a compelling sense of abundance about Sprung Still, an almost palpable drive to expand beyond the containment the clamps impose. I find the urge to ‘undo’ this work compelling, and yet to do so would risk being cut to shreds. Under pressure the sprung steel is formidable and, in ribbon form, patently dangerous. At the same time there is a serene intimacy to the work, in the way some sweeps of steel nestle in the belly of others; their planes pressed together, not quite sliding against each other. The clamps serve to bolster an overall sense of incipient movement – at first glance the work looks like it is ‘in progress’ – not born yet (and who were you before your parents were born?).

This work stirred me as soon as I saw it. When I’m stirred my inclination is to talk about it – to enthusiastically share my intellectual and emotional responses. Yet talking (or writing) about art never quite manages to capture the nuanced convergence of form, perception, material and history, let alone the kernel of its reality – its intrinsic mystery. And still I try to do it anyway. I think about the lineage of the work, its context, and the work that inspired it – the masses of mechanically spilled paper that a previous work, UnRavel, produced. Like peeling an onion, I persist in my exploration: it’s not apparent where the work starts or finishes, and for me it becomes a symbol of infinity twisting upon itself; becoming richer, more convoluted and even less assimilable. Kant’s evocation of the sublime comes to mind and I become his disinterested observer, safe, yet able to apprehend the danger present. And in doing so I bump right up against the edges of my imagination, noticing that there is a limit and that, at the same time, I can conceive of something existing beyond that limit. Around and around I go, vainly trying to present the unpresentable. Like the work itself my musing takes a pattern and I’m reminded that the labyrinthine shape of a life can’t be seen while living it, only when we’re ‘completed’ so to speak - in death.

And with that thought something lets go and I just stop. Behind my conceptualisations, my agitation, lies a vast silence. A space without words, without interpretations. A space where, in a way, the work makes me.

And now you encounter Sprung Still in this room. It is different here, harder perhaps. The lighting makes the formal qualities of the artwork more apparent. Yet the paradox that I have described is still present – stillness coupled with tension. Stop. Allow the tang of steel to become your next moment.

Emma Cain