

Presentation - Ask the Dust - Danan Lake

**what is it:**

ask the dust is an essay by Massimiliano Gioni in the publication, Unmonumental: The Object in the 21st century. This publication is a catalog that complemented the exhibition of the same name at the New Museum in New York City in 2007.

Unmonumental was curated by Massimiliano Gioni, Richard Flood, and Laura J. Hoptman and included works by thirty artists.

The exhibition was a survey of artists working within an "Attitude" used assemblage, found objects, and layers of social reference, and was characterized by a cacophonous collage-like aesthetic.

**Summary of the text:**

The text starts out by outlining the inconclusive shift that took place over the 20th century. Stating that sculpture traditionally has been a celebration of permanence, both remembrance and contending with the future. This moment at the turn of the 20th century of removing monuments from their plinths disrupted the permanence of the monument.

The text then goes on to explain that modern Sculpture contended with the disappearance of the monument. It did this by the removal of the plinth or a combination of sculpture and plinth. eternal materials such as stone and bronze were shifted to that broke away from funerary and monumental traditions.

Modern sculpture such as land art, however rather than being unmonumental creates a new monumental language that contends with geologic time, think stone henge.

Minimalism though formally different, attempts at a timeless immortal purity falling into the immutability of the monument.

The text also describes installation art as monumental based on its chaotic grandiose experiences that contain the same grandiose that is associated with the monumental. From here we move into a discussion of the work in the exhibition the text describes it not as a cohesive movement but more as an attitude and an aesthetic that has gathered steam and begun to coalesce, citing David Hammonds as an important influence in whom many of the themes of this body of work can be found.

With messy multitudes of references to social activity and landscape, this work is born out of the social, not an art of manifestos but of personal struggles. The social and physical (mostly urban) landscape not only make up the content of the work but also the formal qualities.

Much of the work is made out of garbage or mimics the discarded forms of a society of excess. This work is described as permeable, the work inhabits a “modest space undivided from the audience” that is “within arms Reach”.

It is messy and deskilled, and while being permeable it is also violent and cacophonous. Many of the materials degrade over time and many of the works are set on wheels signaling their impermanence.

Go through slides that work

### **My gripes:**

The description of installation art as monumental is very flimsy and seems to contradict much of the argument that is used to describe the work in this exhibition as unmonumental. Just a few paragraphs later the text discusses the permeability of the work in the exhibition saying that the work inhabits a “modest space undivided from the audience” that is “within arms Reach” I think that it is important to note here that the permeability of installation art is one of its defining features.

It seems to me that there is an attempt here to relegate all previous sculpture to the monumental while situating the kind of work represented by this exhibition as unmonumental

“being truly unmonumental means not taking up unnecessary space” unnecessary space is undefined here but i feel that there is an argument to be made that none of the space being taken up is necessary, rather it is useful or important. Also taking up the space of a monument can be an incredibly powerful way of undermining monuments.

I think that some of the work in this exhibition is monumental for example the Urs Fisher sword in the stone piece.

There is no mention of anti-monuments such as those that came after the second world war or the Vietnam war. This is essential to talk about when talking about the “Unmonumental”

The Urs Fischer candle piece is talked about as a reverse monument, breaking down the monument into a puddle. However, there is no mention of the fact that this is literally burning a woman. This is made even more prominent by the fact that the bread house is included in this essay, which wasn't even in the show as far as I can tell. The witch connotations of both the burning woman and the bread house are very present, it is strange to gloss over this.

They talk about not wearing their politics on their sleeve but there is alot of very clear politics in this work

Go through gripe slides

### **Slide 1**

intro give context

### **Slide 2**

start summary david hammonds ability to take something small and turn it to gold as they say, social and cultural reference

### **Slide 3**

Interesting work good examples of what they are talking about as unmonumental. Made from found materials implies movement

**Slide 4**

More also an exemplar of the violence and permeability. Found materials and assemblage some how more eternal?

**Slide 5**

Multitudenus reference, ducamp, hans hacke, wheels ie impermance

**Slide 6**

Takes on monuments and minimalism succinctly and intelligently, small bronze on wheels and cant be transported as a set of plans.

**Slide 7**

Feels very monumental, but i love it, it pokes fun at its self, has political readings.

**Slide 8**

Not in the show but in the essay, situates fishers work around majic and witch craft, takes on architecture more that monument.

**Slide 9**

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**Slide 10**

Counter-monument, Micha Ullman's *Bibliothek*, beneath the Berlin Bebelplatz, in Mitte next to the law buildings at Humboldt University and the State Opera House. Nazi book burnings that occurred on that site on 10 May 1933. Its 'negative-form'[1] hollowed interior extending six feet into the ground amid the cobblestones. empty set of bookcases that could hold all of the books burnt on that location that may 10th, it sits behind hermetically sealed glass

## Slide 11

<https://www.vulture.com/2020/06/nicholas-galanin-shadow-on-the-land.html>

statue of Captain James Cook, the 18th-century British Royal Navy captain who landed in what is now Australia in Sydney's Hyde Park, and artist Nicholas Galanin has dug it a grave. made for the 2020 Biennale of Sydney, excavated the shadow cast by the statue. The work is in sydney but not in hyde park

As he wrote in his artists statement: "By creating a hole large enough to bury the statue, the work's excavation (along with its title) suggests the burial of the Cook monument itself, along with the burial of destructive governance and treatment of Indigenous land, Indigenous people and Indigenous knowledge."

Notes:

starts talking about the iconoclasm at the opening of the 20th century, the destruction of the Vendome column

the sculpture is a celebration of permanence both a remembrance and contending with the future/time

think monuments connection to the funerary

substitute for life

modern sculpture removes sculpture from the plinth and joins them together

land art and sculpture in the expanded field creates a new monument that contends with geologic time think stone henge

minimalism timeless immortal purity almost inevitable thus monumental

installation of chaotic grandiose experiences that contain the same grandiose that is associated with the monumental

installation is for those with short attention spans

the unmonumental in this context work that inhabits a modest space undivided from the audience is "within arms Reach"

not a cohesive movement

made of garbage but the garbage of excess not of scarcity

born out of the landscape both in material and content

constant and multitudinous reference

not interested in bringing people together

define themselves through traumas and fights

while inviting and permeable they are also violent in the way and cacophonous

not an art of manifestos but of personal struggles

intimate relationship to the art object dethrones any sense of authority

impermanence wheels and materials that deteriorate

messy and deskilled

women candles act as reverse monuments(also a burning effigy)

Their impermanence reformulates memory and remembrance

they are "lost in time"

reforming rather than celebrating history

being truly unmonumental means not taking up unnecessary space

forgotten excessive destructive forms as loose beauty

1. Alexandra Bircken
2. John Bock
3. Martin Boyce
4. Tobias Buche
5. Carlos Bunga
6. Tom Burr
7. Urs Fischer
8. Abraham Cruzvillegas
9. Aaron Curry
10. Sam Durant
11. Claire Fontaine
12. Isa Genzken
13. Rachel Harrison
14. Elliott Hundley
15. Gabriel Kuri
16. Jim Lambie
17. Nate Lowman
18. Sarah Lucas
19. Matthew Monahan
20. Kristen Morgin
21. Manfred Pernice
22. Anselm Reyle
23. Marc André Robinson
24. Eva Rothschild
25. Lara Schnitger
26. Gedi Sibony
27. Shinique Smith
28. Nobuko Tsuchiya
29. Rebecca Warren
30. Carol Bove