

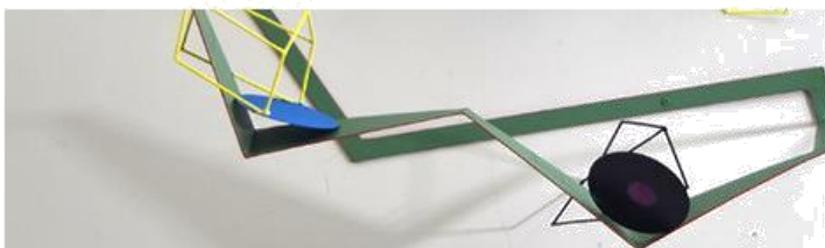
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In the Studio with Miriam Ancis

MARCH 7, 2018
By intsculpturectr
in IN THE STUDIO
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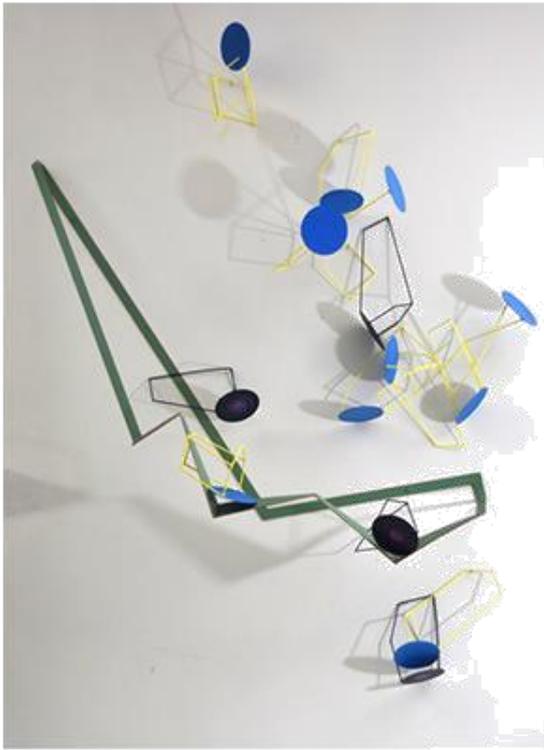
Round About (detail). Steel. Acrylic. 66 x 60 x 13 1/2. 2018

Miriam Ancis is among the dozens of artists whom curators and artists recommended to me in January. I first met Miriam at the New York Foundation for Arts in 2017 when she showed me abstract conceptual work she was developing. We exchanged twenty-seven emails as I also exchanged countless emails with other innovative artists. More on my artist selection process at the end.

Ancis, who has an MFA from Parsons, had her first solo show in 1995. Just prior to Parsons, she was ordained a reform rabbi where she focused on the anthropology of visual symbols. After years of intertwining sculpting with teaching and officiating at life cycle events, Ancis gave up the rabbinate and now works exclusively as an artist. Ancis's early art includes *Hearth*, a primal working fireplace in her studio with 13-foot-high ceilings and great natural and electric light. *Hearth's* sides are giant round coats of arms or breasts. Roots or hair-like protuberances sprout beneath the mantle, and a giant bone-shaped club rests on top. The fire-darkened void for wood gives *Hearth* further sexual nuances. Nearby, another early piece, *Spool*, 1993, spins fine mohair into a waist-high pear shape.



Hearth: Plaster, Metal armature over brick. 106 x 53 x 8. 2000



Round About: Steel, Acrylic. 66 x 60 x 13 1/2, 2018

friendly but also preposterous, unsettled, caught mid-step.

Most or all of my sculpture engages the body metaphorically through size and line. The flat bar draws lines in space, suggesting volume and creating an illusion of what's inside. By painting the pieces, the metal becomes something softer, like skin on bones. This work evolved from paintings I made from 2011–2014. I collaged painted elements that were abstract but also had recognizable symbols—fence posts, a heartbeat line.

Q: Could you talk about your steel construction process?

Ancis: My construction process begins with flat steel bar and sheet steel. The curves are bent through hammering both “against the grain” of the metal —the edge of the bar— and curved along the width. The round “wheel” elements are cut from sheet metal. The segments are welded and ground smooth. I work in a metal shop for this part of the process; then typically, I lug the pieces back to my studio where I resolve composition and color issues. Occasionally, I still use enamel, but mostly, I paint the pieces using various acrylic colors, gels and mediums I became familiar with during my residency at Golden.

Q: Any artists you've followed? Sandback?

Ancis: I look to many for different solutions: Sandback, yes— what volume he captures with a thread! Puryear for symbolic, single element sculptures; Gruber for his use of architecture; Murray for her uses of form, scale and color; Tuttle, for honesty and surprise, and Calder for comingling the sublime with fun!

Simplicity of form now is a goal of mine, as is a sense of play.

To create metal outlines that seem to climb walls or stretch to the horizon, Ancis photoshops her ideas and makes small steel or cardboard models which she scales up. Color plays an important role in each sculpture. In 2018, Ancis has been in group shows at Site Brooklyn and MC Gallery. *Round About* is on view at Artists Equity, 245 Broome St through March 31 and *Around Corners 6* and *Rust Houses* are showing at 100 11th Ave, opening March 11, thereafter by appointment.

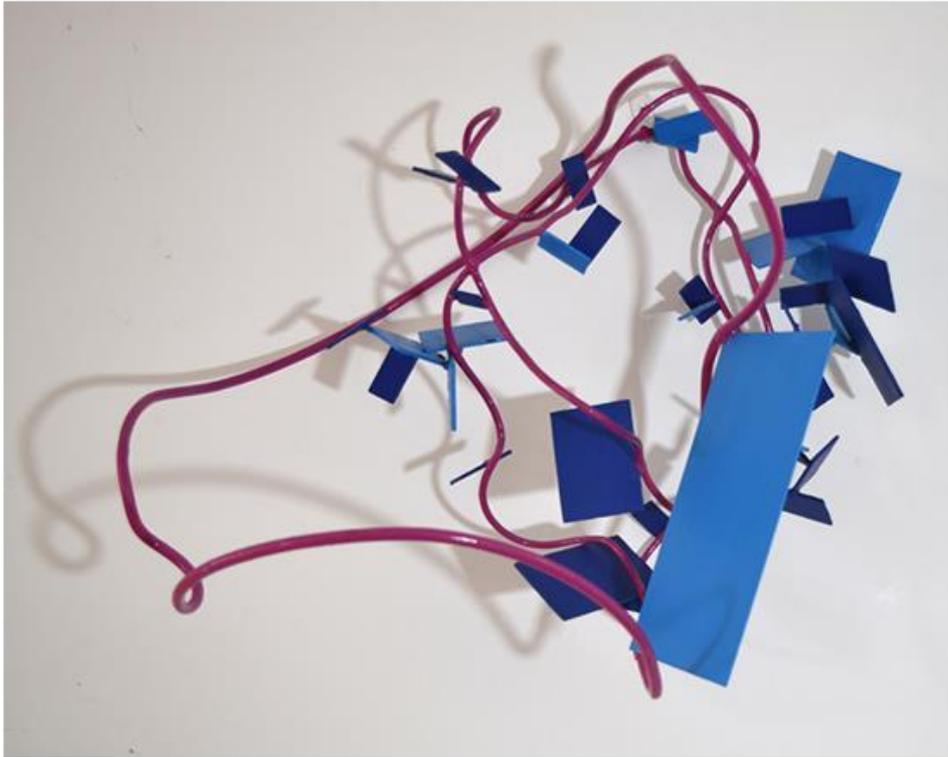
Jan Castro: Is there a unifying theme? How did you come up with this direction?

Miriam Ancis: It's always meaningful to step back and see the history. My overarching theme is playful engagement with geometric shapes and planes. My sculptures interact with architectural features— corners, planes of floor and wall. Some pieces include a wheeled element that refers to tools, machines, toys and hints of figuration. The wheels are not perfect; the surface can be pink or a bit mottled, suggesting the figure. In the here and now, everything we meet has contradictory elements. My sculptures meet the viewer in a manner that's open and



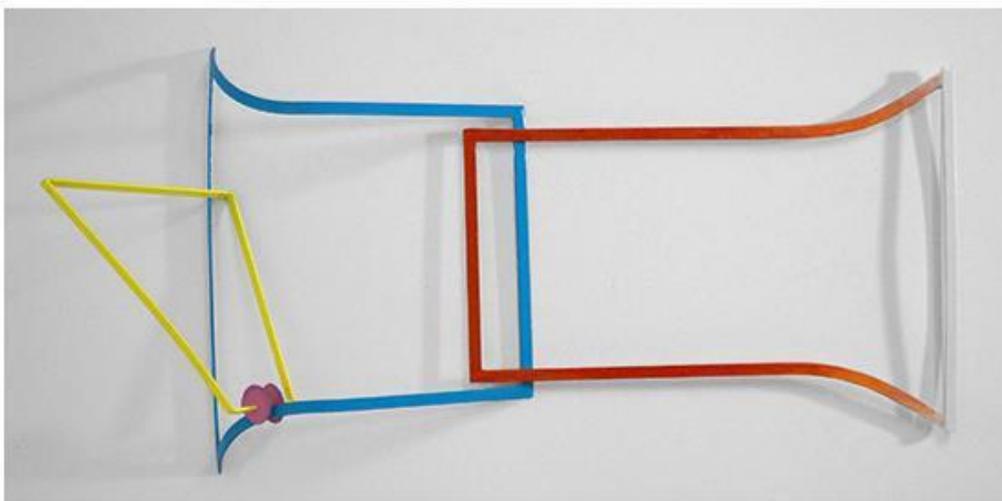
Spool: 35 x 17 x 17, Plaster, encaustic, wool, 1993

Jan Castro note: Ancis's abstract art somehow incorporates nature, human nature, industry, environment, and the figure.



Quantum Confetti 5: Steel, Enamel. 26 x 24 x 20 ½. 2014

I spent January having conversations with many artists. *I look for:* art being shown in public places made by living artists using innovative concepts, processes, and/or materials. It's important to physically see the work and, when possible, visit the artist's studio. For example, I met Magdalene Odundo at the Yale Center for British Art. I appreciated *seeing* the deep and nuanced physicality of her work; *talking* with her was also revelatory. My January post on Arte Povera was based on the historic importance of this movement's off-the-wall uses of common materials. My December post on Ai Weiwei differed from the subsequently-expressed views of four Artcritical experts; even though Ai Weiwei has some misses, he is a master at addressing contemporary issues. These are troubling times. Artists often lead us toward new ways of seeing.



Around Corners 6: Steel, Enamel. 36 x 17 ½ x 5 ½. 2015

What sculpture issues do you address or want to discuss?

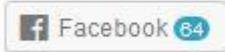
If possible, please add YOUR comments ONLINE after this and each post! I appreciate your views and news. In January, I received over 100 personal emails and no comments on my post! Thanks for reading and for posting feedback!

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[Jan Garden Castro](#)

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