

Gloria Zein

Specific degrees of whiteness in a poisonous elephant

Allegedly, Siam kings offered white elephants to adversaries, who they wanted to financially (and politically) destroy. Unable to refuse the sovereign's giant gift, they had to provide for the animal while slowly falling into ruin.

What a deliciously elegant, sleeky and despicable gesture. Spitefulness and torture are maximised to become a polonium version of the refined French "cadeau empoisonné" (the "poisoned gift").

It seems we are surrounding ourselves with white elephants. Prestigious objects and projects, promised to boost economy, are in fact draining our private or public treasury: Mortgaged houses and cars, unused airports, football stadiums in the jungle, unvisited amusement parks or failing dams worldwide have lost the political asylum that stood at the origin of their promotion. Doomed and gluttonous, they resist to be buried in oblivion. For consolation, we buy and build more stuff.

Dealing with the life of objects, Gloria Zein's new works emanate from things and packing disposed of in the near vicinity of her temporal Amsterdam studio as well as from detritus of her own creative process.

Through a dialogue about texture, density and structure, one sculpture leads to another suggesting a choreographed thread. Like performers, they invest the studio space. Relating (sometimes very literally) to one another – when one sculpture supports a power supply for its neighbour – the work lingers between site-specific installation and sculpture in its own right.



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Addressing temporality as well as the qualities of the stuff that surrounds us, the work embraces the ambiguity of sculpture: The promise of the new form (as an event) and the very down to earth reality of this artistic practice.

Sculpture is almost an impossible enterprise: A reasonably sized studio is needed. There is hardly any market. And it's tenuously difficult to store large pieces. Choosing to be a sculptor can lead to financial ruin.

Zein's new set of works is a continuation of her project "sculptures to be sung at" – an exploration of music as a metaphor for an active relationship to (sculptural) objects. Dealing with questions of composition, chance and time, the work also addresses the fleetingness of hopes and expectations we hang on the material world.

Look at the amethyst: When exposed to UV-light, the crystal will lose its purple colour and become transparent white.