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Valérie Andrianoff at Wellington Gallery

The challenge that confronts every artist working today is how to create something unique and meaningful, and how to give form to their thoughts. The task becomes ever more testing in a world saturated with images and a dazzling array of multimedia technology. French sculptor Valérie Andrianoff has confronted the challenge head on by cultivating a reductive process, which sees her simplifying the world around her into two units; the figure and the stage.

Her small bronze sculptures depict the human form in various guises within subtly rendered architectural platforms or frames. Effectively the artist has distilled the universal qualities of the world around her in order to let us confront the human condition. Despite the

apparent simplicity, at the heart of each work is a sophisticated balance between figuration and narrative, abstraction and pure form. In each energized piece Andrianoff seems to have stopped time and removed context, giving the viewer room to pause and reflect.

Andrianoff works almost exclusively in bronze and manipulates the surfaces of the sculptures, juxtaposing fluid lines and coarse textures. *Walking Composition* features five androgynous, roughly delineated figures seen as walking over an immaculately smooth floor. The contrast in texture adds to the sensation that the figures are somehow out of place. This does not feel like their natural terrain. They enter from one corner, and seem to head to another, where ultimately they will fall from the picture plane. *Walking Composition* is testament to the deep ambiguity in many of Andrianoff works: How are we supposed to read the piece? What is it saying? Ultimately the artist does not engineer any one narrative. In fact, her process is very unconscious and organic. The diverse viewer responses are therefore testimony to the complex psychological process of looking.

Andrianoff was born in France and having lived in numerous locations throughout the world, currently resides and works in Thailand. This is perhaps she focuses on the universal rather than the specific. Rather than being tied to any one culture, her works refer to wider human existence.

Despite their universal nature, many of her works include minute detail observed from life. For instance, the way a child holds a parent's hand in *Parenthood*, or the way the human form folds upon itself when in a crouching position as in *Crouching Man on High Pedestal*. The juxtaposition of the catalogue of human gestures, with the distilled simple platforms and architectural frames, give the artist endless compositional possibilities. Andrianoff also makes great use of shadow in her work, where it often adds another dimension.

For instance it is utterly intrinsic to *Loneliness*, a singular figure that stands in the middle of a range of thin circular lines. Both the human form and the circles radiate on to the wall with such direct purpose that the composition would be lacking without them.

Although not monumental in scale, and this is an area one would hope the artist would explore in the future, Andrianoff's pieces certainly capture a sense of monumentality in her regard for nature, human form, and the way we experience the world around us.

Kate Bryan

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Above left: Valérie Andrianoff, *Loneliness*, 2009, bronze, diameter 34 cm. **Above right:** Valérie Andrianoff, *Crouching Man on High Pedestal*, 2005, bronze, 124 x 22.5 x 16.3 cm. Images: Courtesy of Wellington Gallery.