

SHANE
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GALLERY

Art in America
December 2014

Lisa Williamson

LOS ANGELES,

at Tif Sigfrids

by Kate Wolf



View of Lisa Williamson's exhibition "People in Nature," 2014, wood, resin and acrylic; at Tif Sigfrids.

For "People in Nature," her first solo exhibition at this year-old, eclectic Hollywood gallery, Lisa Williamson produced seven carved wood totems. Brightly painted in acrylics and human-scaled (or "tree-hugging size," as described by the artist in the press release), with the tallest at just above 8½ feet, the sculptures rested on the floor in a grovelike formation in the gallery's front room. Their elemental forms and clean, spare lines were set off by the generous use of color, which animated each piece with a distinct personality, in some cases calling forth a particular object or landscape. From head-on, the sculptures formed a lively tableau. But moving through and circling around the group, one

noticed connections between them as well as their explicit relationship to the human body.

Standing in front of the head-size holes carved down the length of *Clearing* (all works 2014) allowed the viewer to catch sight of the two-toned, purple cylinders of *Barbell, Short (LW)*—which, at exactly 5 feet 4 inches, is the height of the artist—and the red and green *Barbell, Tall*

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beside it. The vertically oriented void at the center of the pink and blue *Long Stretch* begged for an arm to reach through and try to graze the green column with carved, bright white lines, titled *Hedges*, which appeared to be just beyond. From the other side of *Long Stretch*, its fissure perfectly framed *Lit*, a white totem with recessed rings in lucent yellow that resembled a sort of modernist torch.

These types of sculptural interstices and chromatic brushes established the sense of a network, like the shared root systems of redwood trees in a forest—of things growing in relation to one another. The poetic ambiguity of the show's title returned for interpretation: who, exactly, were the "people" in nature here, the viewers or the sculptures? But perhaps such differentiation was beside the point in a body of work where the idea of a figure (if not the literal representation of one) is embedded in every form. Williamson chose to work in the round; she carved gaps for arms and holes for heads; she even made one to her own height.

Having worked in a variety of mediums, including drawing, video, text and painting, Williamson seemed in this show to explore the idea of tipping the meaning of an object without ever pushing it all the way in any direction.

Through careful intervention, she undermined the solidity of the columns, while leaving their basic structures intact. She insinuated figures through an associative frame of reference. As a totem, each piece—sturdy, vital, immaculately sanded—stood with its own integrity and also stood in for something more.

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