



a glimmer
Bijan Amini-Alavijeh

The Art House, 2024

'30.05.2024, 10am: Meet with meg'

Soft Geometry
Meghan Goodeve

I am sitting down to write this after a studio visit with Bijan at the end of May 2024. I have known Bijan for a long time, since I worked with him on a commission as part of Yorkshire Sculpture International in 2019, yet this is the first time we have committed our discussions to paper. I tried to reassure Bijan as I left his studio that words are no more concrete, no more final than a sculpture, but of course that made little sense as sculpture tends to be solid and static. We agreed that what I would write would reflect a moment in time and resist an idea of finality, something that is central to the concept of his new body of work, which embraces a lightness, a fragility. So, I want to impress on you, the reader, that today it felt like the right words but tomorrow perhaps not. This text is a glimpse into Bijan's thinking at a particular point. A point arguably dictated by me and my own fragility - as I grow my second child in my belly, an unknown deadline around the corner - than what makes sense in the trajectory of Bijan's work as he builds towards a solo show at The Art House, Wakefield, opening in August 2024.

In Bijan's studio a star form takes centre stage. It repeats across the space in different forms, arrangements, and in different materials, appearing from the floor, wall and ceiling. A drawing on the wall shows a series of circles side by side, repeated across the paper, and in the negative space where four circles meet a star emerges. Bijan has taken this form and put it into different situations, testing out presentations. He describes this as taking the concept of sacred geometry, found throughout history in references ranging from medieval churches to Persian textiles, and boiling it down to its simplest form. This star is tested in sheets of aluminium, recycled tomato puree tubes, tin foil, plaster, paper, cardboard - creating a series of sculptures that play with balance and delicacy.

Bijan has a drive to make sculpture on a monumental scale, yet he never has. Instead, his current work opposes the conventional process of making sculpture. Rather than making a maquette and then scaling it up in a more solid and precious material, he is staying in conversation with the maquette for longer. Sometimes never going beyond this stage and simply saying 'perhaps this is the work'. Paper plays a new role and relief sculptures protruding from the wall, which read like plaster or fabricated and airbrushed metal, are in fact constructed from folded paper and cardboard. These materials have always been used by Bijan but were used to make maquettes, not sculptures destined for the gallery space. In the process of taking the work from a maquette to an artwork ready to be viewed, there has been a realisation: can anything else be paper but paper?

Similarly, wire moves from existing in the interior of the work to becoming the work in its entirety. A sculptor often manipulates wire to create armatures, the skeleton on which an artist builds layers of materials, eventually masking the wire altogether. Like his use of paper, Bijan is taking materials that were hidden in the earlier stage of the making process and celebrating it as the actual work. In that sense, he questions our assumptions on the value of materials and celebrates the overlooked, the simple, the accessible.

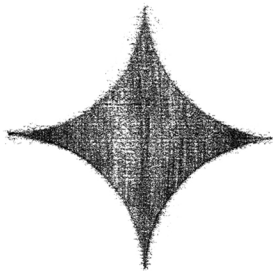


This way of working, to me, feels like a marked departure from Bijan's previous works. His solo show in 2022, *Harmony is Central*, included several works built up from clay and plaster and were very much in line with conventional sculpture materials and tropes. In this show and for years previously, he often constructed works making multiple bricks and bringing them together in various formations, as if building a house from the ground on which it stood. This connection to the ground was further explored through the placement of works on a surface that spoke to Persian carpets. In contrast to this, his current sculptures move towards the sky, through the lightness of material, the delicate wire they balance on, and their placement on the wall. I suggested that perhaps Bijan is going full circle, back to painting, navigating away from the idea that sculpture must be grounded, weighty.

However you want to class his work, Bijan is a maker. He would rather be the one making than to have somebody else fabricate. He discussed at length the idea that he is taking the 'longer route' to make something. Rather than buying more tools to shortcut or perfect something using a machine, he is embracing the hand and traditional ways of making, trusting in himself and his body. At first this might seem in opposition to the idea of geometry that is so central in everything he does, yet he has learnt to have faith in himself to know when things look and feel symmetrical. This exactness of the hand and eye is not an attempt to produce something as precise as a computer-designed or professionally fabricated object, but a celebration of the imperfection found in the notion of symmetry and balance.

It is impossible to predict how this will all come together in the exhibition space this summer and like anything I have omitted so many other elements we discussed - for instance, the growing significance of nature; the importance of light found both in nature and in sacred spaces. It is possible that this and more could emerge through the final stages of Bijan's making, however what is certain is his ongoing conversation with the materiality of the world and exploration of our bodily connection to this. This reaches back to before his art and before machines and will exist long after we and the work have returned to the ground. This work and this exhibition will remain as a chapter in this story, quietly exploring a softness in geometry and a fragility in making, materials and living.

Meghan Goodeve is a curator and educator, and is currently Head of Artist Development at Freelands Foundation.



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