

What to make of the strange, idiosyncratic and yet perfectly familiar sculptures of Oscar Enberg? The list of materials, for say, *Creative Therapy Table-read* (2013), alone is enough to bewilder even the most distracted viewer in a fit of poetic reverie. Behold: American ash, copper plated cast aluminum, sunglasses, cuttlefish bone, gold plated brass, permanent marker, powder coated steel, sterling silver, oil paint and permanent marker on powder-coated aluminum, oyster shells. How does all this fit together? How does it even come to occupy the same time and place?

Governed by narratives stitched together from "high and low" culture, Enberg's frame of reference is known to include everything from Thomas Pynchon to The Simpsons and citations of the 12 Step Recovery program, Alcoholics Anonymous. These disparate elements are Frankensteined together as evocatively improbable narratives and then transmuted, by way of some esoteric process, into sculptures. These works, however, are not rebuses, which the astute viewer must crack, penetrating Enberg's logic in order to apprehend the message encoded in their motley parts. The mystery they compose has every intention of remaining inscrutable- not out of arrogance, but rather for the sake of sculpture, and the mystery without which it cannot exist. Such an observation is, of course, anything but new, and is perhaps better expressed by one of Oscar Wilde's more memorable (and oft-quoted) epigrams: "The secret of life is in art." An aesthetic philosophy, which Enberg seems to approach backwards, or maybe better yet, obliquely, by withdrawing it from everyday life and inserting it back into life via art.

For all its apparent idiosyncrasy, I am inclined to characterize Enberg's sculpture as refreshingly classical, in the 20th century sense of the term. By which I mean, it seems to effortlessly, if a little awkwardly, expand the material vocabulary of what is allowable in sculpture. If I reluctantly write 'inclined', it's because this inclination doesn't seem to be the primary motive behind his selection of materials. This classical expansion seems more like a byproduct of something altogether more personal and objective at the same time- if that is possible (and which is a conundrum that informs the overall mysterious quality of the work). I would also like to qualify my use of awkward by subtracting from it its negative valence, and investing it with something if not more positive, then more ambiguous. For Enberg's sculpture seems to revel in awkwardness the way, say, the geek, accepting his or her irremediable geekness revels in it, or say, the way Pynchon's prose is liable to burst into lyrical gambols of egregiously doggerel.

Indeed, if this work were language, a whole new syntax would have to be invented to accommodate it. Things, ranging from oyster shells to chrome-plated steel, are made to go together in a ways that, upon first glance, might strike one as counterintuitive and obstacle-driven, but a certain fluidity nevertheless courses through it. Take for instance the conjunction and mirroring of an outsized, wooden pretzel and the arcing, intertwined necks of two swans in *Storyboard for The Sunset* (2013). Or say, how the weird wire form jutting out of Pynchon's monstrous-looking head is mirrored in the shape of the table upon which it is placed in *Thomas Pynchon as 'The Sponsor'* (2013). Not so much mise-en-abymes as they are motifs, these repetitions speak to how this sculpture delicately collides together, splits apart, loops back into itself, and ultimately exists in a sustained fit of unwieldy grace.