

Left: Cara Despain, *Seeing the Stone*, 2016. Cast concrete, detail of installation. Below: Kristján Gudmundsson, *Olympic Drawing — Men's Ice Hockey*, 2016. Graphite, ice hockey goal, and mixed media, goal: 24 x 130 cm.

architecture; the installation was like an anteroom, leading to the great chamber of the Great Outdoors. It could also be described as a giant scavenger hunt, compelling us to locate the stones' secret twins and doppelgängers by using the gallery as a trailhead. But *Seeing the Stone* was more than that. At its heart, it was a machine for generating and collecting stories—past, present, future—about Utah. Most were apocryphal to mainstream accounts, for which we have the Utah Tourist Coalition and the Mormon Church to thank. In contrast, Despain highlighted the plight of heretics, eccentrics, and the disenfranchised—those who lost their way, who took the path less traveled, or who perished.

—Alexandra Karl

HELSINKI

Kristján Gudmundsson

Galerie Anhava

A strikingly potent, yet ultimately illusory air of reticence pervaded "Olympic Drawings," a show highlighting Kristján Gudmundsson's discerning series of recent sculptures and a carefully selected handful of related works. Their singularly reductive style evades facile interpretation. This frequently induces consternation in gallery-goers, who are faced with familiar objects situated in contexts that thwart expectations and offer

no obvious clues as to how they could or should be read. In this show, the sculptures neither shed light on the practice of drawing nor made overtures to one of the world's most popular athletic events.

Each *Olympic Drawing* consists only of a piece of sports equipment, such as a triple jump lift-off board, hurdle, and lifting weights, and four thick bars of graphite. Whereas the former stands touching the wall, the latter are screwed to the plasterboard directly above each piece of equipment. The bars, in each case, take the same arrangement. The pairings are unanticipated, and how the two kinds of objects relate to each other isn't at all clear. The composite parts, removed from their usual contexts, seem to epitomize stasis. Not only do they appear incredibly isolated and exposed, they have also been subjected to a suspension of use.

Standing before them positions viewers on a threshold—a nerve-jangling place—for the proximity conveys stark impressions of the events and how athletes mentally prepare themselves. It also lets us study the properties of the objects and become more familiar with their features. From them, we glean a comprehension of their size, shape, weight, and how it might feel to lift, throw, or leap over them. The work has the power to activate the imagination

and actuate recollections. We might wonder what it would be like to train on a daily basis or think back to noted athletes, recalling how they strived to excel or found a surprisingly creative way to approach their sport.

At the same time, there is an informational aspect to these sculptures. As visual entities, the graphite bars read as lines, calling to mind the look of a notebook or a printed page. Perhaps the bars represent all the words written about each sport, or they could represent something very compact—a caption, albeit in abstract form, that describes its subject in just a couple of sentences. The

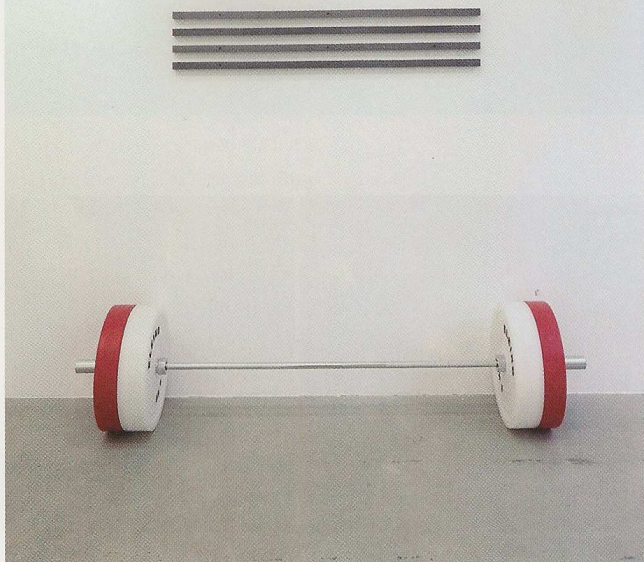
lines could also list a set of statistics charting an athlete's progress or state the qualifications that function as a filter through which potential contestants are sieved. In fact, incorporating textual references into compositions and playing with the meaning of words hold great import for Gudmundsson—such strategies work to counteract the notion that his so-called drawings are static representations.

After a short time, viewers start interacting with the sculptures and risk becoming preoccupied with all of the potential associations. Thoughts weave here and there, from object to image to idea, and back again. Drawing out numerous unexpected references, the work now subjugates viewers to an experience that completely contradicts their initial impression. In the end, they know that this work really does have much to say.

—John Gayer



TOP: COURTESY THE ARTIST / BOTTOM: JUSSI TIINEN



NEW DELHI

Himmat Shah

Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

Himmat Shah's recent retrospective formed one third of a three-part showcase at the Kiran Nadar Museum. Like the other two artists featured in "Abstraction in Indian Modern Art 1960s Onwards," Nasreen Mohammedi and Jeram Patel, Shah is associated with the Faculty of Fine Arts Baroda. His show, "Hammer on the Square," considered his prolific output from 1957 to 2015. The title work, *Hammer on the Square*, consists of an unpretentious cube and a hammer with no hand holding it. This composition capturing gravity at work shows how two forms can exist in suspended isolation.

Over the course of his career, Shah has experimented with numerous materials, from mud and terra cotta to bronze and paper marked with cigarette burns. He consistently demonstrates an ability to transform the mundane into the astounding. Monographs devoted to his work have been innovatively designed so that readers can feel the materials while looking at the photographs.

"Hammer on the Square" featured 300 works—215 from KNMA and the rest on loan from collectors—including Shah's iconic terra-cotta and bronze sculptures, as well as silver paintings. The burnt paper collages are among the most interesting examples of his work, though their

origin was itself mundane: while waiting for someone, Shah used the cigarette that he was smoking to burn a sheet of paper. The patterning resulted in a series of works outstanding for the absolute control that Shah maintains over the cigarette as tool. Though the invention may have been intuitive or accidental, the works themselves are remarkably deliberate.

Above: Kristján Gudmundsson, *Olympic Drawing—Women's Weightlifting*, 2012. Graphite, weights, and mixed media, weights: 24 x 130 cm. **Right:** Himmat Shah, *Untitled*, late 1990s. Terra cotta, 35 x 11.5 x 11.5 in. **Below:** Himmat Shah, *Untitled*, late 1990s. Terra cotta, 14 x 9 x 6 in.

The show also highlighted a number of seminal terra-cotta sculptures from the "Head" series, as well as vessels, objects, and containers in addition to drawings. The sheer range of Shah's works when seen together could not fail to convey the passion behind his exploration of materials, the drive to innovate, and his enthusiasm for experimentation. The wide-ranging nature of the work

reflects Shah's gypsy-like spirit. His travels to various sites of public projects and time spent wandering around Indian villages have fueled his interest in different ways of working. Perhaps because of the myriad influences and his nomadic lifestyle, there is a sense of joy and abandonment in his work.

—Chitra Balasubramaniam



TOP: JUSSI TIANEN / BOTTOM: COURTESY KIRAN NADAR MUSEUM OF ART