

THOMAS J PRICE

Gareth Harris, *Please do not climb: Frieze sculpture park returns to London*,
Financial Times, 6 July 2017



Thomas J Price, *Numen (Shifting Votive One, Two and Three)*, 2016. Installation view at Frieze Sculpture 2017, Regent's Park, London. Photo by Stephen White. Courtesy of Stephen White/Frieze.

"Please do not climb". This polite directive is clearly inscribed on a sign implanted in the ground in Regent's Park, London; the labelling is linked to Ugo Rondinone's spindly-limbed, patinated white sculpture called "Summer Moon" (2011).

Visitors criss-crossing the park are huddled around the aluminium tree, wondering where this ghostly foliage comes from.

The Swiss sculptor's installation is part of Frieze Sculpture 2017, a free al fresco display of 23 works organised by Frieze Art Fair that will be on show in the park until October 8. For the past two years, the exhibition has coincided with the start of the Frieze fairs in October; the sculptures remained in situ until the following January.

"It's been so popular, we thought it would be wonderful to extend its presence into the summer months," says the display's curator Clare Lilley, who is the director of programmes at Yorkshire Sculpture Park. For this project she has worked closely with The Royal Parks, the charitable body that manages the hallowed green space, and which evidently has faith in the Frieze initiative; it allowed 90 tonnes of parkland earth to be shifted to accommodate the art. Miquel Barceló's upturned bronze elephant piece ("Gran Elefandret", 2008), which at dusk looks

like a gnarled, centuries-old tree, stands in a two-metre-deep hole, now neatly covered with turf.

Other standout works include Alicja Kwade's "Big Be-Hide" (2017), an objet trouvé installation comprising two boulders separated by a mirror in a way that tricks the eye (one of the rocks is real but the other stone is an aluminium cast).

Stately busts depicting majestic black men in the mould of Roman emperors by Thomas J Price — "Numen (Shifting Votive One, Two and Three)" (2016) — are another draw. Getting up close and personal pays dividends; Takuro Kuwata's thickly glazed oozing protuberances (Untitled, 2016), repellent and delicious in equal measure, turn out to be monumental ceramics. Works by Tony Cragg, Emily Young, Magdalena Abakanowicz and Reza Aramesh are also included.

Who benefits from the project? "The galleries are working to sell the pieces, of course," Lilley says, highlighting the commercial shopfront aspect of the display. "Aside from that, this is an exceptional central London platform for the artists." High transport and installation costs do not seem to deter dealers: Lilley reports that more than 40 galleries applied this year. Caroline Worthington, the director of the Royal British Society

HALES LONDON NEW YORK

of Sculptors, is impressed. As she points out, “thousands of people are going to see a world-class sculpture exhibition for free”.

The Frieze brand also profits from the summertime stint. One London dealer comments: “The sculpture park always felt a bit tagged on during the winter run, and was slightly sidelined. This launch comes at the end of the current fair season; it makes sense.” A Frieze spokesman tells me: “We will definitely be applying for summer opening again next year.”

Crucially, the joggers, dog-walkers and curious tourists are lapping up the art (individuals are defying the edicts and touching

the works; public art can mean, after all, public ownership). Context is everything, argues Lilley, adding that this “access for a wide public, through such a high-quality landscape, is markedly different than through a gallery or museum”.

As she speaks, a flock of schoolchildren sidle up to Kaws's humongous toy-human figure, “Final Days” (2013), and a Frisbee flies slowly over Bernar Venet's jutting, giant steel work, “17 Acute Unequal Angles” (2016).