

Conrad Shawcross

Escalations

Château La Coste is delighted to present an expansive exhibition of works by artist Conrad Shawcross. Situated at three sites spread across the grounds, the works on display explore the artist's continued relationship with geometry and philosophy, physics and metaphysics. United in their aesthetic, the abstract works appear akin to scientific models, further pushing Shawcross' enquiries into notions of time, entropy, order and disorder. For Shawcross, an aesthetic of the designed, scientific and the rational serves as a device to cloak more poetic and philosophical themes. Grappling with complex theories the exhibition challenges the very building blocks of our reality and pre conceptions.

The Patterns of Absence(c) Photo F. Deladerriere



In the Old Wine Storehouse Gallery, designed by French architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte, Shawcross will be showcasing a series of large-scale works that continue his ongoing experiments and investigations into the tetrahedron and its geometric and philosophical potential. The title *Paradigm* refers to the idea of the paradigm shift, identified by the American physicist and philosopher Thomas Kuhn – a leap of imagination that jolts scientific enquiry forwards and collapses pre-existing notions of what is true. Unlike other shapes such as the cube, a tetrahedron cannot tessellate with itself, therefore it cannot ever completely fill a space. Ascending and twisting into a variety of sequences that seem to defy logic, each of the *Paradigm* sculptures has a different finish - from solid, structural and chamfered iterations to the poetic, interference patterns in the perforations of **Paradigm Optic** (2019).

Distinct in their own right, the **Fractures** abide by the same geometric parameters and constraints as the *Paradigms*, but are far more ephemeral, seeming to disappear as they rise up and explode. They feature a central stem that supports a series of branches, each displaying a set of fragments, that echo the once solid surface of the *Paradigm* skin. Shawcross has stated that "a potential way to think of them is as some kind of complex scientist's model of a protein chain or amino acid that somehow also contains a sense of change; so a temporal element that conveys growth, collapse or simply the passage of time itself. They perhaps capture an instant after an explosion but before the collapse."

In counterpoint to these vertical works Shawcross has installed two new mechanical pieces as part of the installation. Nestled in the ceiling of the Old Wine Storehouse gallery sits **Slow Fold Inside a Corner** (2020). This 3 metre wide kinetic sculpture is comprised of a series of mirrored panels that slowly fold in on themselves, appearing like a fractured security mirror, but creating a changing and de-stabilising view of the space and the other works contained within it. As it slowly collapses in on itself it invites enquiry, forcing the viewer to question their own relationship to the space as they watch their reflection slowly fragment and shift.

The Patterns of Absence (2020) continues Shawcross' investigations into interference patterns and their effects on our perception. The suspended work is 4m across and comprised of two slowly counter-rotating discs, both perforated using a complex mathematical algorithm. The sum effect allows shifting dappled light to permeate through the voids within their surfaces. Working on the principle of a stained glass window, Shawcross has also introduced colour into the work, creating further tonal shifts and complexity between the composite layers.



Paradigm Optic. (c) Photo F. Deladerriere

On the grounds of the estate, Shawcross is creating a new permanent and monumental commission for Château La Coste due to be completed this spring. **Schism** (2020) again continues the research into the peculiar geometric, philosophical and even political potential of the tetrahedron. It consists simply of twenty tetrahedra arranged together to form a ball. This near-perfect polygonal form, standing over 6 metres in height, comes close to forming an icosahedron - a polyhedron with 20 faces and the largest platonic sibling of the tetrahedron. However the geometry fails to reconcile itself and a deep chasm dominates the form, appearing to rip the ideal apart. Realised at this monumental scale, the viewer is able to physically enter the form through the deep crack in its surface.



Schism (c) Vincent Agnes

Conrad Shawcross RA was born in London in 1977. He graduated from the Ruskin at Oxford University with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Fine Art in 1999, and obtained his Masters in Fine Art from the Slade at UCL in 2001. He has exhibited at institutions across the world, including Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, the Museum of Old and New Art in Tasmania, Wadsworth Atheneum in Connecticut, USA, the National Gallery in London, and ARTMIA in Beijing. Shawcross has completed a number of major public commissions across the world, including Paradigm outside the Francis Crick Institute at UCL in London, the 18-metre tall Exploded Paradigm inside the atrium of the Comcast Technology Center in Philadelphia, and the recently unveiled Bicameral at Chelsea Barracks in London.



Practical Information

Exhibition until end of summer 2020

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