

Artist Liz Glynn Tells the Story of LA Calder Sculpture Through Ballet Mecanique



Rehearsals of "The Myth of Getting It Right the First Time" by Liz Glynn, LACMA, 2013

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LOS ANGELES – In the fountain outside the Los Angeles County Museum of Art is **Alexander Calder**'s first large-scale kinetic piece, "Three Quintains (Hello Girls)." When it was installed in 1965, it was the pride of the L.A. art scene but is now a footnote to a campus that boasts works by **Rodin**, **Chris Burden**, and more recently, **Michael Heizer**'s "Levitated Mass."

Calder's sculpture is the subject of LA-based artist **Liz Glynn**'s latest performance piece, "The Myth of Getting it Right the First Time," presented last Friday at the museum's Bing Theater. It is the second in her series "[de]-lusions of Grandeur – Monumentality and Other Myths," which focuses on permanent sculptures from the museum's collection.

Glynn's latest is a ballet mecanique drawing from the work of Bauhaus choreographer **Oskar Schlemmer**. Collaborating with composer **Richard Valitutto**, Glynn dressed her dancers like sculptural elements to be moved and manipulated by choreographer **Mecca Vazie Andrews**, while a chorus of real-life docents read newspaper articles and correspondence between Calder and the museum.

The show's loose narrative chronicles the sculpture's commission, installation, and subsequent history. Early on, its movable parts were tied down for 10 years due to unanticipated wind currents. It was later placed in storage for five years and then loaned to Pasadena's Art Center College, where it was severely damaged, requiring a major conservation effort.

"I'm interested in looking at how these works are made, how they're maintained, and how there's this huge amount of human labor that goes into making them seem permanent and unchanging," Glynn told ARTINFO. "The idea that the artist makes this sculpture, puts it out, and it's permanent and perfect and done, it's just a myth."

The Calder commission coincided with Los Angeles's emergence as an arts center. **Andy Warhol** had his first west coast show at the Ferus Gallery in 1961, and two years later **Marcel Duchamp** had his first-ever retrospective at the Pasadena Art Museum. LACMA had just moved from Exposition Park to its present address on Wilshire Boulevard, and decided to mark the event with a major commission by Calder.

The "[de]-lusions of Grandeur" series began last January with a piece titled "The Myth of Singularity (after Rodin)." For that show, Glynn worked with sculptors to explore the process of replication, materials, and scale employed by Rodin for his works "The Burghers of Calais" and "Monument to Balzac," which adorn the museum's west lawn.

Though they remain untitled, three more pieces from Glynn are yet to come. One will center on **Richard Serra**'s "Sequence" on the first floor of the Broad wing, another on **Tony Smith**'s "Smoke," which she said would involve a real-life spelunker. The final piece is unannounced but according to Glynn, may involve digging a very large hole.

A Boston native, Glynn received her BA from Harvard College and MFA from CalArts. She considers herself primarily a sculptor but has lately branched off into participatory performances.

"I literally don't know what stage right and stage left are," she said about her latest work and the epic journey of "Three Quintains (Hello Girls)." "It's sloppy, it's not perfect theater, but the story is amazing."