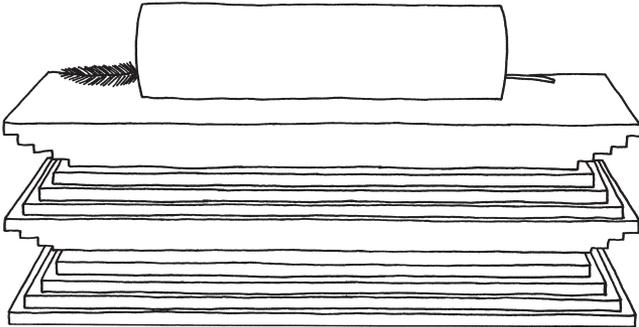


New Arrangements:  
Ned Colclough &  
Michihiro Kosuge





# The Above and Melting

Soft as tin,  
    Melting in the rain,  
Melting and dripping down,  
  
Soft as stones that are limp,  
    That can be bent into shapes  
And then stretched out,

Soft as bones,  
    Mashed into a paste,  
Mixed into a pale milk,

Soft as crystal,  
    Dug from the sweet soil,  
Slowly stirred,

It is soft as these:  
The moon on a warm wet night.

—Philip K. Dick



# The Melting and Above

There is art that seeks to complicate the world and there is art which hopes to define it. Then there is the work of these two artists, Michihiro Kosuge and Ned Colclough, which in an anarchistic gesture slices through the tyranny of too muchness in favor of an exchange of energy.

Kosuge was born in Tokyo, Japan in 1946. Colclough was born in Hudson, New York in 1976. Between then and now and there and here they both found that they could communicate through materials; for that, we can simply call them sculptors. I have placed their work together in one room and titled the exhibition *New Arrangements*. The title and the pairing come from a desire to see their work together, to create a new relationship. It was that innocent of an impulse. I could also tell you that I had a notion to reassess modernity, or investigate work that presented metaphysical propositions about the “void,” or that I was fascinated by the persistent conversation the work was having in my mind in spite of the artists’ intergenerational distance and regional pretense and lack of previous proximity. This would also be true. In the end I think that the exhibition endeavors to materialize the space between things and artists as a way to see the evolution of form.

Kosuge and Colclough’s works emerge from an unconscious place unique to each of them. They share a belief in the pre-disposed nature of their materials. They wait for the stone, the music stand, the bits of wood, scraps of fabric, and metal to speak to them with purposeful intent. That leads to concise actions in the studio, in the gallery, and outdoors: carving, gluing, leaning, balancing, arranging. The tranquility of the final pieces are in contrast to the physical and mental wrestling it took to create them.

Of course there is also the matter of (perceived) influence. In the months leading up to the exhibition, tip of the tongue references kept arising around Colclough and Kosuge’s work: Noguchi, Brancusi, Boccioni, Nevelson, Arp... and on and on and on. As it was, many of these artists were in direct conversation with each other; in fact, Noguchi found himself apprenticing in Brancusi’s studio. Colclough sees the same coiled and expansive energy in Boccioni’s bronze *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* from 1913 as he does in Kosuge’s *Morphic Figure 1* and *2* from 2011 as he does his in own sculpture as he does in 1980s-era BMW M5s. He explains that the cars, “showcase a sort of serene exuberance—something I’m always pleased to arrive at, if possible.

6 Quiet and fixed, but poised to move on in new directions. Finding new imagined spaces. What preceded this featured pause, and what's to follow?" Kosuge is more interested in the rubble of ancient Greece—"the broken thing," as he calls it—and the abstraction of impressionism and decomposing leaves, but he can appreciate the "speed and flexibility" proposed by Boccioni or Noguchi. He is trying to pry that same performativity and potential freedom from his stones.

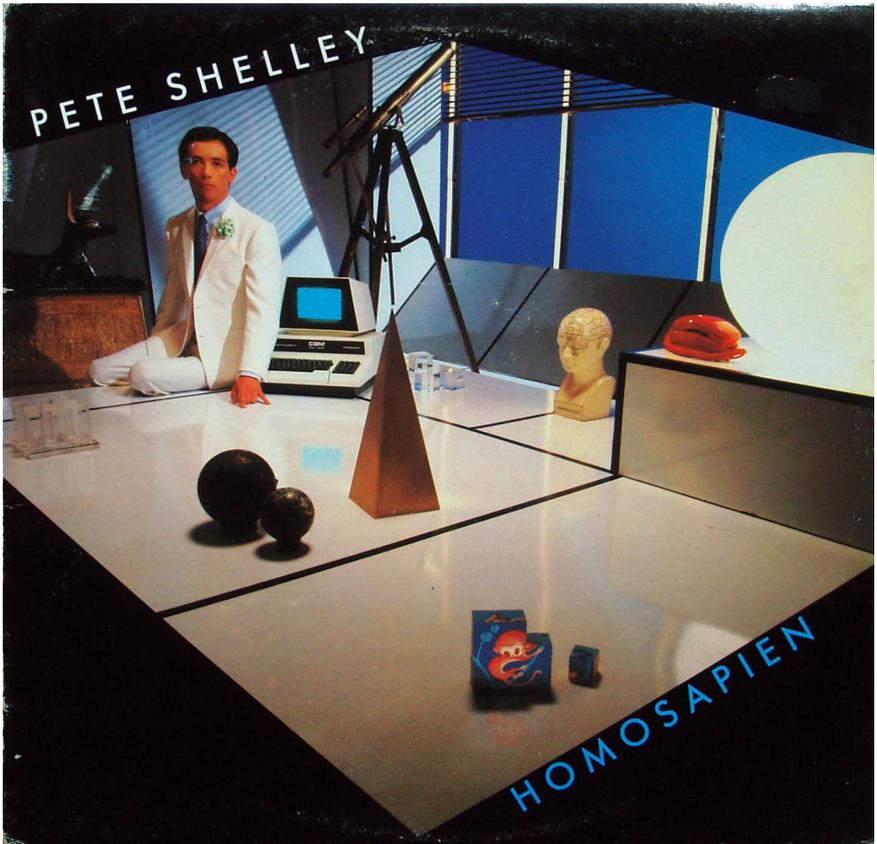
But to move beyond the crushing weight of art history, to convince ourselves of an undulating continuum of practice and not a fixed point of reference (they are called movements after all... let's all move along!), we must first accept that we are all speaking the same language, carving the same stone. If artists take influence from the smallest speck of dirt on a windowsill or a transcendent song or a cataclysmic event, why wouldn't they receive transmissions from other art or other artists?

Ideas often stand side by side like twin flames, even if they originated on different sides of the globe, in different bodies, and in different historical contexts. When they are reunited they stare at each other in disbelief as if to say, "How is this possible? Is there nothing new?" or, perhaps in awe, "We get each other! We need no words!" Surely there is more than modernist homage happening here, and there is more truth than artifice. Colclough offers that, "references to art history are inevitable. I think there is a certain collision between the economy of materials and gesture. I just work with what I have, which often by design is not very much. I'm happiest when a very simple and/or modest move can so succinctly broaden the umbrella under which a discussion may occur."

One day, while visiting Kosuge's studio, I asked him if he felt that he was still experimenting, to which he replied, "Not always. Perhaps not as much anymore with the materials. I know them very well, although at times the stone takes me someplace uncomfortable and charged." He went on to say, "Experimentation is an attitude, one that is lived. One that I live." In a recent correspondence I asked Colclough for his thoughts and he responded, "I agree with Michi's notion. I feel as though, and for myself, while wholly intrinsic, said notion of experimentation is largely unconscious."

Colclough fashions his assemblages from found material; an artwork often does not begin until he comes across something compelling enough to prompt a piece, so he spends a great deal of time waiting. "The thing is simply the trigger, or the thing that allows me to go forward, in its having a bit of life already." The stuff he is looking for is often found in hardware, fabric stores, lumber yards, or amidst the castoffs from his work in construction and residential interiors. Just as often, the material of his work is found in a litany of photographic snapshots, album cover art, feelings, and thoughts... but this is not the stuff we see, it only pushes at the sides of the work from within the artist's mind.

The famed modernist sculptor and designer Isamu Noguchi is quoted as saying, "Rocks are the bones of the earth." Quite recently, Kosuge revisited a shape from his very first sculpture: a smooth white bone made of plaster standing nearly five feet tall. He had stumbled across a photo of it in an old newspaper clipping; it was a forgotten moment that seemed to have foreshadowed his trajectory as a sculptor.



I have been obsessed with the music video for Pete Shelley's 1981 song *Homosapien* for quite some time. I can't tell you exactly why it is coming up now, but I will make no apologies for interjecting it. The exhibition looks and feels a bit like the space of the video, in which Shelley wears a white suit in a white cube of a room, scattered with objects: a sculpture of Anubis, a spinning wheel, a computer, a statue of a soldier, a slim pyramid, and other artifacts. He sings: "And the worlds built of age are a stage where we act out our lives, and the words in the script seem to fit 'cept we have some surprise." -KK



While he does not often return to what he calls “old forms,” the silhouette of the piece persisted in his mind. This coincided with Kosuge’s renewed interest in the figurative aspect of his work and a shift from listening to what the stone told him to asking himself, “How do I feel?” In the studio, Kosuge fashioned a new set of bones from an earthy granite: they sit one on top of the other, a knobby column, and beside them lies a white cloud of stone. They both look light, soft, and hollow, but are in fact impossibly heavy. This peaceful resolution of a form years later feels representative of a compression of time, its weight both physical and psychological. The work stands still, but it still moves you.

Colclough believes the symbiotic life of objects is at once perplexing and wholly obvious. His unfixed, rearrangeable, component parts are seeking what mathematicians call “elegant solutions”—a rejection of the fussy and an acceptance of solving problems in the most natural way with what is at hand. On Kosuge’s land in Scappoose, Oregon, sculptures dot the sides of sloping hills, lie together in fields, and sit on stone plinths in small familial arrangements. When I remarked on their perfect placement, Kosuge remarked, “That is accidental.” When I exclaimed, “But, they look so beautiful together!” he replied, “That is no accident.” Now that these artists’ works are together (finally) in the room, my mind can rest and the conversation can begin between objects and viewer, piles of stuff and balanced things, artist and artist, exhibition and intuition. There is beauty in this method; there are no accidents.

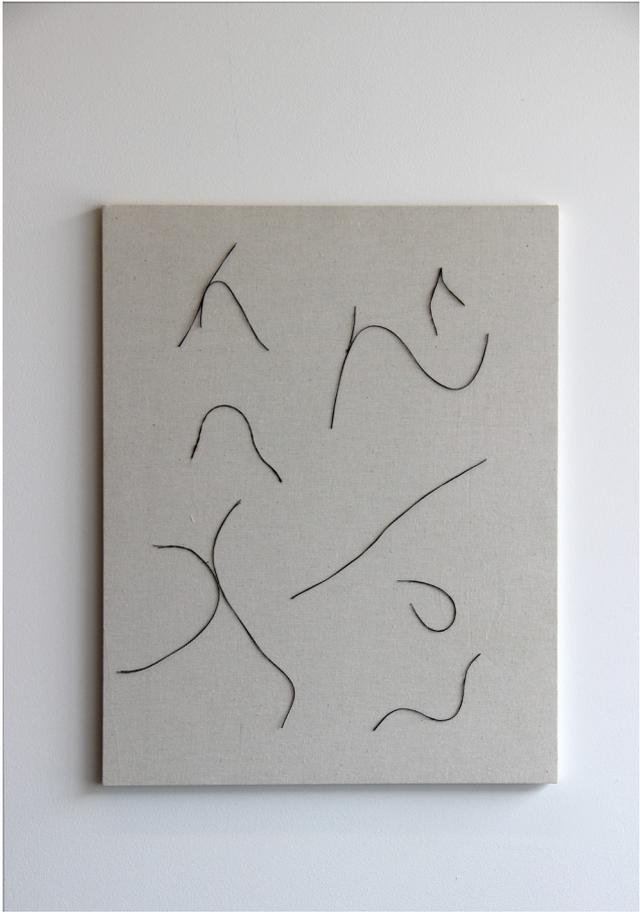
—Kristan Kennedy  
Visual Art Curator, PICA











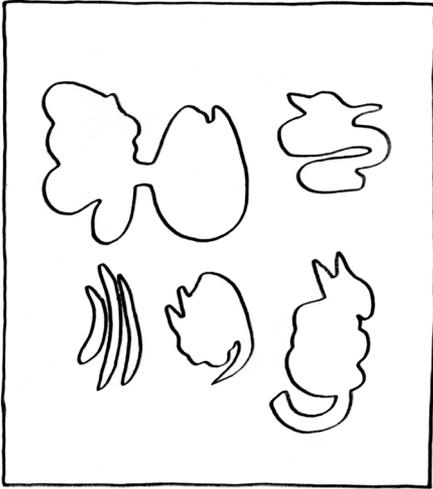
# Image List

- Front Cover: Ned Colclough, *Calendar Study*, 2012.  
Wood, plaster, spray paint, metal, fountain grass.  
Courtesy of Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York.  
Illustration: r-w-h studio
2. Ned Colclough, *Chauffeur*, 2011.  
Wood, stone, fabric, rope.  
Courtesy of Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York.
4. Michihiro Kosuge, *Bones*, 2011.  
Brown granite, salt and pepper granite.  
Photo: Aaron Johanson. Courtesy of Laura Russo Gallery, Portland.
7. Pete Shelley, *Homosapien*, 1981.  
Art Direction: Paul Henry.  
Graphics: Bruno Christian Tilley. Photography: Trevor Rogers.  
Island Records, LTD.
8. Umberto Boccioni, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, 1913 (cast 1931).  
Bronze. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art.  
Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.
- 10/11. Michihiro Kosuge, Installation view, Scappoose, OR.  
(from left to right) *Smoke*, 2005, black and red granite;  
*Untitled*, granite; *Wa*, 1999, red granite; *Poise*, 2001, granite; *Untitled*, granite.  
Photo: Kristan Kennedy. Courtesy of Laura Russo Gallery, Portland.
- 12/13. BMW M5 circa 1980.  
Photo submitted by Ned Colclough.
14. Ned Colclough, *Untitled*, 2012-2013.  
Wood, fabric.  
Courtesy of Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York.
- Back Cover: Michihiro Kosuge, *Cats*, 2013.  
Acrylic on wood panel.  
Courtesy of Laura Russo Gallery, Portland.  
Illustration: r-w-h studio.

This exhibition was made possible in part by: **The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts**

Acknowledgements: Nicelle Beauchene, Nicelle Beauchene Gallery; Katrina Woltze and Martha Lee, Laura Russo Gallery; Kent Richardson; Daniel Glendenning; Tim Stigliano; Rob Halverson, r-w-h studio; Jeff Forbes; Andrew Emard; Heather Donahue; Bill Boese, Morning Becomes Electric; Derek Franklin; Gary Robbins, Container Corps; Renwick Fine Art Services; Patrick Brennan; Mami Takahashi; Adam Sorenson; Kristy Edmunds; Allegra Jongeward; Rachel Peddersen; Sam Korman; Nic Tammens; Dick & Lori Singer, Magnolia Properties; Acanthus; James Marlow; New York State College of Art and Design at Alfred University; Matthew Scvechenko, Tom Lacagnia, David Knowles; Jake Scheffeld, Monica Schiavone, and Christopher Israel, Grüner; The Mark Spencer Hotel; Prints for PICA Artists; and PICA staff, board, members, interns, and volunteers.

Published by Portland Institute for Contemporary Art on the occasion of *New Arrangements: Ned Colclough & Michihiro Kosuge*, March 16–May 11, 2013. Edited by Patrick Leonard. Designed by Jamie Edwards.  
© 2013 PICA.



PICA