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SUSAN LEYLAND - ELONGATED-TEKE – BIENNALE DI VENEZIA, TORINO 2012

The highly original work of artist Susan Leyland is defined by its sense of balance, both in its physical manifestation and in the cerebral ideology that drives it. As such she brings together pure, simple and brilliant geometric form, pieces of striking modern art, yet, through her use of the horse she is able to invest the pieces with energy and magnetism. Her horses emerge from the blocks as a series of planes manipulating space, of spare linear detail; they are not overtly sentimental, but with her inexorable balance, she makes them real. There is a narrative buried deep in these works, alongside a soul, but first and foremost they pieces of aesthetic acuity. Susan Leyland is not an equestrian artist; she is an artist who addresses horses in her work.

Her works are statements of pure, harmonizing form and of space – the space that the pieces take up, their visual reality, and the negative spaces they create. They have a timeless quality, merging a feeling of the ancient with a pathway to the future; a future not restricted to the physical realms of her work, but also in transcendental terms, seen particularly in the resonance of her Akhal-Teke block pieces. This rare and ancient horse breed, a precious remnant of the earliest horses, has been given longevity in clay and bronze, and challenges the spectator with boldness and unerring intelligence. Leyland's use of the Akhal-Teke is itself bold and underlines her philosophy. These are unusually conformed horses noted for their sharp angularity and the geometric quality of their muscle planes; they are largely unknown to the public but a perfect subject for an artist expressing an aesthetic ideology.

Not restricted to shape and form Leyland is, perhaps surprisingly, a sensitive colorist, seen to particular effect in her bronze works. Where her terracotta pieces are underlined by their coolness and purity, her bronze works are rich and beautifully diverse in the extent of their patina from icy, ancient blue-greens to lustrous, earthy red-browns. Most significantly Leyland's work is one of continual, subtle evolution, a journey of the senses and intellect that results in continually stimulating and thought provoking art works.