



CHRISTIAN BERNARD SINGER

PINS & NEEDLES

HEADBONES GALLERY

CHRISTIAN BERNARD SINGER

JUNE 1 - JULY 15, 2017

PINS & NEEDLES



Headbones Gallery - 2017, Pins & Needles Feathers & Fur- Christian Bernard Singer and Rose Sanderson

HEADBONES GALLERY

Artist Catalogue: Christian Bernard Singer - Pins and Needles
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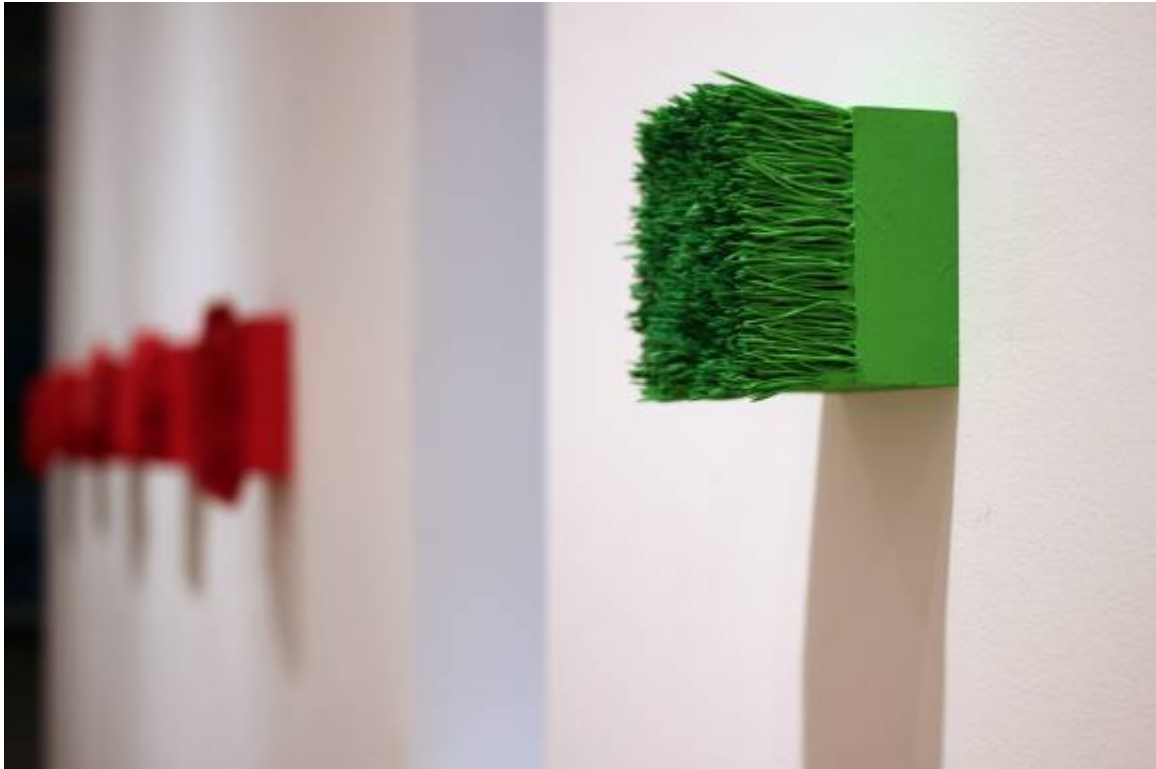
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Headbones Gallery - 2017, Pins & Needles - Christian Bernard Singer

COMMENTARY BY JULIE OAKES



Headbones Gallery, 2017

Dance, Singer, Dance

Christian Bernard Singer borrows from the preordained harmony that is endemic in much of the natural world to speak in whispers, communicating messages so gentle that they are heard visually, seen audibly, tasted through the fingers and smelt through the eyes. The world of Christian Bernard Singer is overwhelmingly poetic. And yet, as in the natural world, harmony is based in mathematics where an original idea spirals outwards only to be deconstructed so that a brand new visual arises from the preordained.

Christian Bernard Singer was born into a family of artists in Paris and raised in New York City where he began as a company dancer with Laura Foreman's Composers and Choreographers Theater, performing in *Spaces* and Foreman's seminal work, *Signals II* - a work that was eventually performed at the Museum of Modern Art. Singer has lived his life within the arts, feathering out from dancing into the visual arts where his list of accomplishments range wide. The intrinsic connection between the physical plane and the more ethereal worlds of concept and spirit, so evident in dance, have remained the core of his expression.

Nature outperforms man with her reputation for detailing, quantity and specificity. She displays her work at every turn of the path and it is there to be understood if the constant pull of distracting modernity was not also there to hinder perception. In nature, the individuality and uniqueness of each part is reinforced innumerable- each pine tree loaded with needles that do not remain static but are responsive to the changes of time and environment. It is such an overwhelming concept that it is too often taken for granted and passed by in naive security that nature's wonders will not disappear even if we fail to recognize her miraculous show of diversity.

Singer's pine needle pieces wrestle with this phenomenon. His practice- supported by stoicism and yet framed within delicate balances- is *the dance* and it requires technique, aesthetics, patience and a dogged resolve in order to produce these small art pieces where each needle is treated individually (glued into place to become a newly configured phenomenon, coloured in response to the artist's sensibility and then presented in a format that is backed by Singer's very informed artistic practice). Singer choreographs a visual performance.

The needles, which could have been crushed by a man's heavy tread, have instead been discovered, nurtured, and each needle is given a specific place. Some are coloured a deep red, the opposite colour to the



Runner - 2004, Fish Tank Gallery, New York, NY

viridian living tree. In nature, the pine beetle also changes the colour of the forest and when the rusty red dominates, it is a dire sign that the forest is dying. Yet in Christian Bernard Singer's latest pieces it is as if the forest clears and rejuvenates with the potential to grow once again. Singer has brought about a transformation with a heightened poignancy that is in tune with the finest aspect of man – his awareness of the 'other.' Singer's acknowledgment of simple pine needles, a tattered blanket upon the forest floor, enhances awareness. The re-alignment of his material (forest's shedding) matches the wonder of the natural world and then tops it up. The origin remains intact yet each needle is given a specific place and then dressed in a resonant primal tint. In Singer's work a stronger translation as ART begins cycles anew.

Singer's earlier moss works were a similar involvement with a material that is not traditionally associated with art making and it was the beauty of the material that Singer showcased in pieces such as *Runner*, 2004, when he laid a verdurous carpet of moss (ascending plush and tactile) upon the minimal construction of a white staircase. He has floated beds of moss, used moss as a support for clay works and painted in moss. With *Untitled #4 (Meandering Series)*, 2008, the crisp definition of architectonic space was broken by a visual mirage, a displacement of the unfamiliar upon the objective reality of the polished wood floor of the Varley Art Gallery as Singer's large triangle of moss changed the expected into the inspired. The outside had flowed into the inside to become a transition between the dwelling and the environment, the interior and the exterior.

Singer uses a form of culture shock, an objectification of sensibilities so that the subjective overtakes reasoning and the sensation becomes the prime means of understanding. Singer's installations are like other countries, foreign lands where ordinary juxtapositions create a 'trippy' feeling much akin to travelling. His installation works bring about heightened awareness of place- delightful, not jarring, a pleasant surprise akin to eco-tourism.

These precise small recent works made of pine needles underline the status of the phenomenal object- that piece of physical reality that steps above the ordinary into the extraordinary and in doing so reinforces the specialness of the human species in its ability to create art.

Man has exerted his dominion over the earth, carving out roads, digging, shaping and reinventing paradise in his own image. Too often the interception is abrasive and the earth suffers from the manipulations. Not so with Christian Bernard Singer's thoughtful relationship with nature. As Singer raises the otherness of nature to a more elegant plane through an obsessive process of arranging and ordering, he commands notice. His artistic layout is in contrast to the way that nature has asserted herself. Nature is blousy, casual, off-hand, prêt-à-porter: Singer's new pine needle works are a more formal line like evening wear made to turn heads when the entrance is made.

Christian Bernard Singer's collaboration with Nature is as rich as a patina on copper and as refreshing as a walk up a magic viridian staircase in a midsummer night's dream.



Karl and Helen Burger Gallery, Kean University, Union, New Jersey - 2016

Amethyst 1 - 2017

Pine needles, paint on wood base, 4.5"x4.5"x3.75"



Push - 2017

Pine needles, paint on wood base, 13"x12"x4.5"



Pull - 2017

Pine needles, paint on wood base, 13"x13"x4.5"



Amethyst 2 - 2017

Pine needles, paint on wood base, 4.5"x4.5"x3.75"



Amethyst 3 - 2017

Pine needles, paint on wood base, 4.5"x4.5"x3.75"



Red #1 - 2017

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 6.75"x7.5"x3"



Red #2 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 7.5"x8"x3.25"



Red #5 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 7"x7.5"x3.5"



Red #9 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 8"x7.5"x3.5"



Red #11 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 6.25"x7.5"x3.5"



Red #12 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 8"x8"x3.25"



Red #13 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 7"x6.5"x4"



Red #14 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 7.5"x7"x3"



Red #15 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 6.75"x7.5"x3.5"



Red #16 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 7.25"x8.5"x3.25"



Mary-Jane - 2017

Pine needles, paint on wood base, 4"x4"x4"



Red #20 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 7.5"x8.5"x3.5"



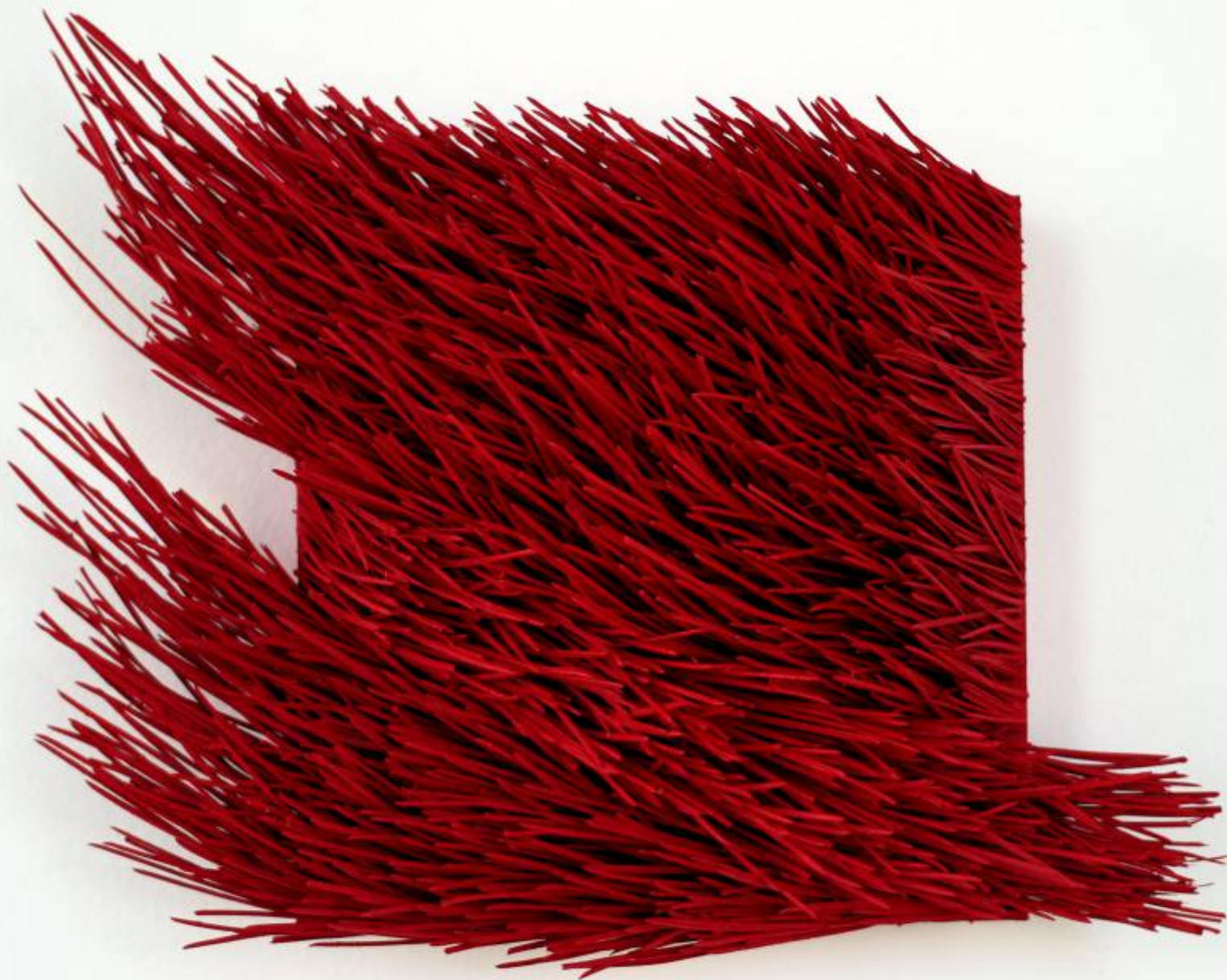
Red #21 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 8"x7"x3.5"



Red #22 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 10"x8"x3.75"



Red #23 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 10.25"x7.5"x3.75"



Red #25 - 2016

Pine needles, pigment, paint on wood base, 9"x8"x3.25"





Headbones Gallery, 2017



Headbones Gallery, 2017

Thoughts about Red II

For the last fifteen years, I have incorporated moss (both living and dried), pine needles and other organic materials into sculptures and large-scale installations that reference the living energy of the natural world, including my own.

I witness in nature, the miracle and fragility of my own fleeting life force mirrored back to me. This inspires awe and intensifies my awareness of being alive, of being a conscious individual within a larger interconnected whole. I am ecstatic by the beauty of life but terrified of stumbling upon traces of death. While carefully and respectfully collecting the mosses, the seductiveness of vibrant colours and complex textures occasionally gives way to revulsion upon realizing how much insect life they carry back to my studio. My relationship with the natural world is one of push-pull, a relationship that I am compelled to embrace. It frightens yet inspires me.

As in my earlier moss works, in this new work with pine needles, I sort, order and place my material with Baroque intention. These works are painstakingly laborious to make – a process that is contemplatively ritualistic. I edit and 're-create' my own incongruous feelings of chaos within an existing order that is beyond my comprehension. And yet, I know that I am a part of the natural world and the forest continues to share its life-affirming knowledge.



Christian Bernard Singer, Georgian Bluffs, Ontario- 2017

CHRISTIAN BERNARD SINGER

Canadian artist, curator and educator, Christian Bernard Singer was born in Paris and raised in New York City where he began as a company dancer with Laura Foreman's Composers and Choreographers Theater, performing in *Spaces* and Foreman's seminal work, *Signals II*. These were performed over several years in such venues as Judson Memorial Church, the Cubiculo Theater, and The New School, until the work was eventually presented at the Museum of Modern Art.

Moving from performance and choreography to costume design, he eventually headed the costume department for the Kawartha Festival Theatre in 1985 where he designed and produced over 100 costumes for 8 productions. He returned to school for formal training, spending a year at l'École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts in Paris (under Anne Rochette) and graduated from the Ontario College of Art and Design University (OCADU). This was followed by a Master of Fine Arts degree from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University in 2003.

Curator of over 50 exhibitions including three major retrospectives, Singer has always sought to champion artists who push boundaries, materially and conceptually, while opening pathways to meaningful and resonant experiences for viewers. He is Senior Curator at the Tom Thomson Art Gallery and for over five years, he served as Curator of the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery. Before this, he was Artistic & Executive Director of the 2005 Contemporary Art Forum – Kitchener & Area (CAFKA), Curator and Associate Director of Lehmann Leskiw Fine Art until he co-founded Rouge Contemporary Art Projects where he remained as Director and Curator until 2009, bringing Judy Chicago: A Survey of Important Works (curated by Virginia Eichhorn) – the first large-scale survey exhibition for Chicago ever to come to Canada. In addition to curating, Singer has written over 30 catalogue essays and has contributed numerous magazine articles to *Ceramics Art & Perception*, *Contemporary Canadian Glass*, *Fusion* and *Exile Literary Quarterly*. He currently sits on the board of the Ontario Association of Art Galleries (OAAG) and has served on numerous juries including the Canada Council for the Arts, The Ontario Arts Council and The Ontario Crafts Council. Singer has also been a featured presenter at the Montreal Museum of Fine Art, the National Council for Education in the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) in Seattle and twice at Gallery@ACTS (Craft Alliance Atlantic Association) in Halifax. As well, Singer taught sculpture for several years at both the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCADU) and the Toronto School of Art.

In his own work, Singer is best known for incorporating living plant life, glass, clay, bronze, found objects, and video into installation-environments and land art works that turn on notions of place, memory and time passing. Since 1997, his work has been shown in commercial galleries in Canada, the U.S., and France, and since 2004, he has been included numerous museum and land art invitational exhibitions including: *Three Canadian Artists Reflect on the Natural World* (2016), Kean University Galleries, Union, NJ; *Summerfires* (2009), Galerie Lausberg, Toronto; *Aligning with Beauty* (2009), Varley Art Museum; *Pass the Buddha* with Julie Oakes (2008), Galerie Samuel Lallouz, Montreal; *Cabinets of Curiosities* (2008) and *Tessellated Anamnesis: Patterns for Unforgetting* (2005), Canadian Clay and Glass Museum (Waterloo); *Revivified* (2008), Headbones Gallery, Toronto; *Mobile Structures: Dialogues between Ceramics and Architecture in Canadian Art*, (2007-08), MacKenzie Art Museum, Regina which also toured to the Surrey Art Gallery (B.C.); The Edward Day Gallery's *Kiwi Sculpture Garden Project* in Perth (2006-09); *The Shore/Lines Project: Responding to Place* (2005) at the MacLaren Art Centre; and *Second Nature* at the Fish Tank Gallery in New York City (2004). In 2012, he was a Visiting Artist at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD- Atlanta). His work is represented by Headbones Gallery, Vernon, BC.

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