



**DRIP-DROP
TICK-TOCK
HERE +
NOW**

HOUSATONIC MUSEUM OF ART
HOUSATONIC COMMUNITY COLLEGE

2021

SCULPTURE AND PAINTINGS BY JOSEPH FUCIGNA

Drip-Drop, Tick-Tock, Here + Now

Joseph Fucigna's long-awaited exhibition follows three years of near-biblical blights. First there was a fire, followed by a flood at the Housatonic Museum, then disease—everywhere. During our mass melancholia, as most people marked their empty pandemic calendars with dread and glimmers of hope, Fucigna was wrestling lengths of unwieldy hose, draping sheets of obstinate metal fencing and chicken wire, and twisting thick plastic cable ties, defiantly proving that life goes on. The *Drip* and *Drape* forms anticipated in the original show are now answered by his *Hose* series. It was well worth the wait.

Now the show is fully realized, with new works that expand the artist's sculptural vocabulary and venture further into a voluptuous, if not erotic arena. The unplanned isolation in his studio and the luxury of extra time allowed Fucigna to hone tendencies borne of his early training as a ceramicist and his ongoing fascination with industrial and gardening supplies. From clay to water hoses, Fucigna has maintained a process-driven practice, now articulated with a level of confidence that seems celebratory.

Particularly exhilarating are *Black Hose #2* and *Black Hose #4*. Like much of Fucigna's work, they both hang on the wall, parallel to the viewer's standing body. Their human dimensions (72 and 60 inches long, respectively) and sense of movement demand a corporeal interpretation. Both undulate toward the room, back to the wall, and into the interstices of the manipulated matter, with the hose functioning as graphic directives, guiding the eye through the layered elements and defining the shapes. *Black Hose #4* alludes to body parts—head, torso, buttocks, breasts, while *Black Hose #2* is a scarlet apotheosis of soaring, looped and winglike appendages. Fucigna has flayed open the dense structure of earlier works, such as the wonderfully ponderous *Yellow Black White Drip*, laying bare the inner workings of the shapes, rendering the seemingly obdurate materials of *Black Hose #2* and *#4* almost weightless. Though the two pieces conjure bodily contours, they also suggest skeletal frameworks that contain and restrain, rendering each work simultaneously interior and exterior.

The pull of gravity is evident in the molten and draped motifs of the works on the original exhibition checklist. Those included melting putty works and layered, heavily woven pieces, many of which, like the *Black and Blue* or *High Five*, feature intense color. Fucigna's recent palette is almost monochromatic, his compositions more airy, making them more akin to drawings. *Veiled Threat's* suspended drapes and hoses emphasize the weight of the materials. The blue line of the hose acts as a counterpoint to the pale yellow of the gathered netting, recalling the iconic drapery of art history. Here Fucigna liberates his materials, giving them the latitude to function as a dialogue between volume and line. He counters stasis by letting the folds hang loosely from languorous loops of hose, creating effect of casual ease. Like the luxurious robes of Pontormo's *Visitation* or the fabled satin of Ingres' *Princess de Broglie*, the drapes of *Veiled Threat* add to art's long affiliation with the light and shade of fabric.

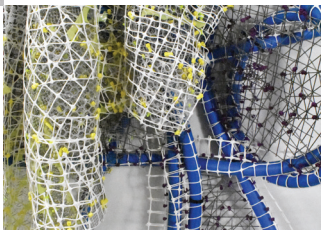
Cubist Drapery comprises square sections of overlaid fencing and wire mesh that form a cubistic volume. On the surface of this multifaceted construction, Fucigna strategically places white squares of the gridded material to function as illusionary highlights on the three pendulous orbs along the lower section and two pointed projections that jut above. The spiked, protruding extremities are subtle comments on the Cubist mandate to challenge painting's two-dimensional limitation, while the rounded breast-like forms counter the ubiquitous female nude by suggesting anatomical shapes rather than overtly objectifying the female form. Such witty passages appear throughout the exhibition as nods to art history, often subverting the traditional male gaze.

The temporal references in the exhibition title are manifest in this twice-postponed show which has finally come to pass. Time presides as a creative element, as a marker of the artist's evolution, as an essence of the human condition, and as a measure of our stamina during the pandemic. Crafted and elegant, serious and amusing, formal and poetic, Fucigna's sculpture contributes to the modernist tradition of the body as a foundation for expressionism, placing him firmly within the canon sustained by artists like Pablo Picasso, Louise Bourgeois, Philip Guston and Eva Hesse.

Daphne Anderson Deeds
October 2021



Veiled Threat, detail, 2020, plastic and metal fencing, 65 x 55 x 16"



Black Hose #4, 2020, plastic and metal fencing, rubber hose, 72 x 42 x 21"



Black Hose #2, 2019, plastic and metal fencing, cable ties, rubber hose, 60 x 55 x 20"



Cubist Drapery, 2021, plastic and metal fencing, 60 x 52 x 27"