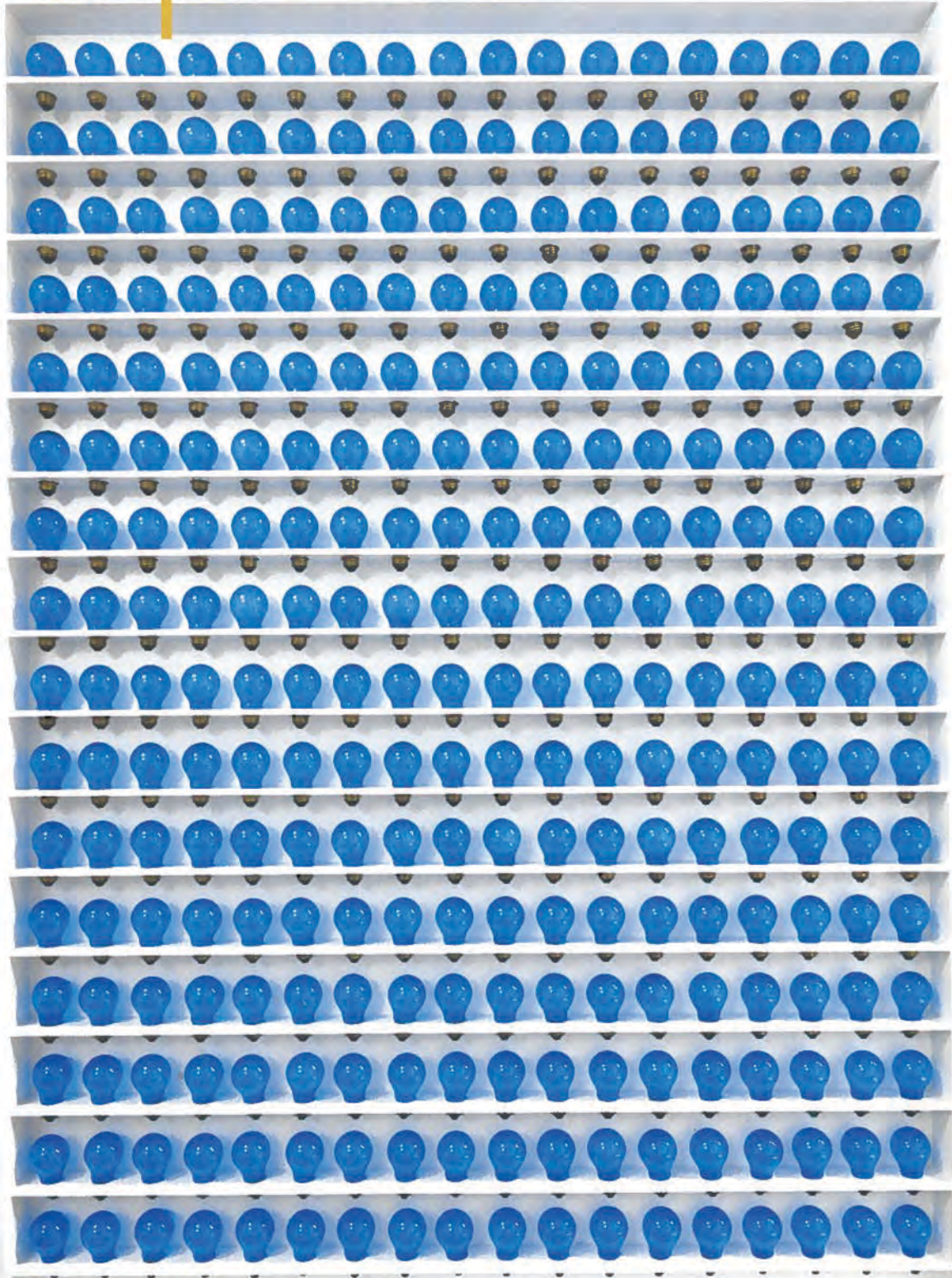


# sculpture

November 2014  
Vol. 33 No. 9

A publication of the  
International Sculpture Center  
[www.sculpture.org](http://www.sculpture.org)



\$7.00US/CAN



**Katie Paterson El Anatsui Alexandre Arrechea**



**Roberley Bell, *The Shape of the Afternoon*, 2014. Mixed media, 2 views of installation.**

Schmoo, called *For HM, for now*, pays homage to Henry Moore—inspired by one of his reclining figures, it would seem.

It's not immediately apparent that Bell is a passionate gardener, though she is, or that this work comments on the human habit of trying to impose our own predilections and notions of order on the impulses of wild nature. Yet two of the "Blobs"—Bell's term for her forms—function as planters for a pair of spindly, berry-laden saplings. These natural elements are overwhelmed and overshadowed by the blatant, all-out colors and shapes of Bell's artifices. At a time when food companies scramble to label their products "natural," Bell's work asks exactly what that word means in a world that increasingly copies, redesigns, chemically alters, and rubber-stamps nature.

Prior to this installation, Bell created a series of small "Wonder" sculptures, encompassing faux fauna and flora. A few kitschy objects, perhaps offspring of that work, appeared here: a pair of white plaster ducks, a sky-blue crow with a navy-blue head, a prickly orange and white object that may or may not represent a cactus. These details add something for the viewer who might have the impression that Bell's simple blob shapes can be apprehended with a glance or two.

Although these sculptures look like they arise from spontaneous whim, they are produced through a tedious process. Bell begins with watercolor sketches, then sculpts clay models and transfers their dimensions to a computer-controlled cutting machine, which turns out enlarged foam versions. She hand-works them at this point, coating them with fiberglass resin and adding details. Two of the forms are

covered in vine-like stuff that might read as "hair," and vase-like appendages hold fake flowers.

As if their jelly-bean colors weren't enough, the blobs are displayed on Astroturf mats in fearless chromatic combinations. The pink figure sits on orange and green, the green one on dark blue and fuchsia. Such coloration would never work if the hues were not fully saturated.

Rooftop gardens, as we understand them today, are supposed to provide a sustainable counterpoint to city living. At the deCordova, sadly, the rooftop deck can become Sahara-hot. And nowhere did this artificial environment—far removed from what we expect of a garden—offer shade or respite. Still, there is more to Bell's ostensibly silly shapes than wit and color. They ask us to ponder where our insistence on controlling nature is likely to take us.

—Marty Carlock

**NEW YORK**  
**Isa Genzken**

**Museum of Modern Art**  
Isa Genzken's recent retrospective, featuring a complex mixture of things with resonating presence, provided a 180-degree exodus from participatory art and its aim of eliminating the artist. While Genzken's work is neither imposing nor necessarily spectacular, it is very contemporary. As the show unfolded, viewers witnessed Genzken's ongoing creation of a new language of found objects. The 150 works on view spanned 40 years, and though sculpture dominated, paintings, photographs, collages, drawings, artists' books, and films, were also included. Genzken's bricolage accretions are inspired by a lifetime of experiences. For this child of postwar Germany, alienation, destruction, and reconstruction are natural, and commonplace, themes. Like the work of Franz West, Genzken's brimming assemblages and installations straddle the line between the

also the millennial churning of the earth before they came to it.

Pleasant's search for "essences" through an exploration of personal experiences might be likened to the musings of the 16th-century French philosopher Montaigne, who termed the exploration of his own psyche, "a thorny undertaking." But there, he found the keys to understanding the human condition, or in his words, "the opaque depths of [the mind's] innermost folds," in short, what is common to us all.

—Dorothy Joiner

**BOSTON**  
**Roberley Bell**  
**deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum**

Conflate the styles of Henry Moore, Jean Arp, and Dr. Seuss, stir in California slickness and cartoon colors, and you get Roberley Bell's *The Shape of the Afternoon*, which occupied the deCordova's rooftop with a visionary garden. The cheekiness of Bell's ideas can't fail to evoke a smile. A blue blob with an orange lid looks like a shoe; a pink one looks like a Schmoo (does anybody remember Schmoos?). The pink