

INSTRUMENTS OF JOY

Stephen Schofield

November 9, 2023
- December 16, 2023



Stephen Schofield, *Wheels of fire*, 2023

McBride Contemporain is proud to announce Stephen Schofield's second solo exhibition with the gallery, *Instruments of Joy*¹. Although instruments appear not to do much on their own, they are curiously active. They are part of this world, but they also propose to change it. Their initial purpose is, of course, practical —to perform a task, but they also invite us to imagine what else we can do with them, how we can put them into action and consequently, what changes can be wrought by their actions. Sometimes, they even encourage us to take pleasure in imagining the world differently. These four sculptures, these instruments of joy, propose four such new worlds.

Wheels of fire are made of plump rolled clay coils. Their loose and simple construction is both immediate and unpretentious. They issue from a folk branch of earthenware ceramics. On the one hand, their bright colours evoke our childhood, but on the other, their apparent effortlessness evokes the insouciance of long experience and old age.

Gideon is a plaster mould that becomes a sculpture. It is a piece that consists of a thin wall that defines four pale pink and white legs and a tail that reaches out tentatively to taste the water. As described in the biblical story of Gideon's men, the beast hesitates between cupping the water to drink and drinking directly from the river.

L'enveloppe is also a mould as implied by the title. Its outside shell is exuberantly coloured, but the intricate interior space articulated by soft indirect light suggests a hidden world. The empty space invites the viewer to imagine the original model.

S'élancer vers la nuit is a case of the dried flowers made from the simple materials of the artist's studio, paper, wood and soft chalk pastel. Like the maquettes that

occupy the studio, it occupies the spaces between idea and object, drawing and sculpture, proposition and completion. The soft dusty and muted colours of dry vegetation reveal the beauty of the end of a plant's life cycle.

The four sculptures which can be described simply as a wheel, a cup, a bundle and a bag are represented in watercolour drawings sharing the space in his studio in France with modelled sculptures of male figures. Two graphite drawings from forty years ago focus on baby hands grasping their first instruments of joy, a cube and a ball to fathom and mould their environment. Stephen Schofield has given us a beautiful vision of how instruments might change our surroundings in small, but consequential, ways.

Stephen Schofield (b. Toronto, Ontario) lives and works in Montreal. His work has been exhibited at renowned venues like The Power Plant, le Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, la Biennale de Montréal, the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, the National Gallery of Canada, the Dalhousie Art Gallery, and the CREDAC in Paris. Additionally, he has held solo and group exhibitions in New York at the Sculpture Centre, White Columns, and the Cue Foundation. Schofield recently created a series of porcelain sculptures during an artist residency at CRAFT in Limoges, which were featured in the Musée national Adrien Dubouché. He was awarded the Louis Comtois Prize of the City of Montréal in 2005. Schofield has also presented outdoor sculptures to notable locations such as the Toronto Sculpture Garden, Artefact on l'Île Ste-Hélène in Montréal, Parc Jarry in Montréal, Quartier des spectacles in Montréal, Allée de Création in Repentigny, and l'Agora des arts in Rouyn-Noranda.

1. The title is inspired by the lyrics of a song by Henry Purcell, *Sound the Trumpet*, one of six pieces composed in 1694 for Queen Mary's birthday.