

ARTFORUM

Reviews - Milan

Becky Beasley

2015

By Marco Tagliafierro

REVIEWS MILAN

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Francesca Minini

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View of Becky Beasley, 2014. From left: *Fall I*, 2014; *Bearing III*, 2014; *Bearing II*, 2014; *Fall III*, 2014.

Three bronze branches, each suspended horizontally from the ceiling by a brass rod, slowly rotated in the main gallery of Francesca Minini for the duration of Becky Beasley's recent exhibition. Powered by small motors, the sculptures spun at one and a half rotations per minute—like disco balls in a dance hall. For this series, "Bearing" (all works 2014), the artist cast broken fragments of twigs in bronze, then recombined and fused them together to create longer forms. The branches incorporated into the sculptures here were collected by the artist's father in her hometown of Portsmouth, UK, following the St. Jude storm in late October 2013, which blew down many

trees throughout the region. Perhaps this occurrence inspired Beasley's preoccupations with both the autumn season and the idea of falling, conflated in this exhibition by the single word that formed the title of the show: "Fall."

In *Fall, Stand*, a fourth branch descends vertically from a shelf hewn from black American walnut. This material was echoed by three gelatin silver prints (comprising a series titled "Fall") that lined the gallery walls, each picturing a single walnut resting on a tablecloth. One of the walnuts faces front—its seam running down the center—while another is in three-quarter profile facing the right, and the third turns three-quarters to the left. The images are significantly enlarged and presented upside down, so as to extract and exaggerate the sculptural qualities of the nut.

In a second gallery sat a 1950s Italian table (purchased from a nearby antique shop) featuring a circular walnut top and dark metal legs with brass accents. The table served as a display for five triangular American-black-walnut objects, together constituting the sculpture *Camera*, 2014. In this configuration, support and artwork seemed to merge, thanks to their shared form and material, resonating so that the boundaries between them were unclear. The sculptures' form represents the volume of space enclosed by an open book standing upright on a table (specifically, the artist used a 1977 Penguin paperback edition of Saul Bellow's 1944 novel, *Dangling Man*). For each sculpture, the book was open to a slightly different angle, and each has been calibrated so that if conjoined, the sum of their individual angles would add up to 360. This circular geometry seemed to reference the cycle of life, especially when read alongside *Walnut Hand*, 2014, a photo placed behind the installation that depicts a pair of walnuts in the palm of a hand (an overt reference to male sexuality). Incidentally, the artist's 2013 work *Cucumber Hand*, not shown in this exhibition, depicts the same hand—belonging to her husband—balancing a cucumber on his flat palm. Mysticism, faith, and esotericism alternated in "Fall," a show that encouraged viewers' evaluation of reality as much as it stirred their imagination.

—Marco Tagliaferro

Translated from Italian by Jamie Richards.

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