NAIRY BAGHRAMIAN CREATES EXCLUSIVE INSTALLATION FOR
THE ART INSTITUTE’S BLUHM FAMILY TERRACE

French Curve/ Slip of the Tongue Now on View

The formal abstract work of Iranian-born, Berlin-based sculptor Nairy Baghramian (b. 1971) draws on the legacy of post-minimal art to investigate the conventions and expectations that commonly surround public sculpture. The Art Institute of Chicago is pleased to present the debut of Baghramian’s French Curve (2014) and Slip of the Tongue (2014), site-specific works commissioned for the Bluhm Family Terrace and Terzo Piano, part of the museum’s Modern Wing, on view May 14–October 5, 2014.

For Baghramian, the bodily experience of public sculpture is necessarily inflected by its surroundings. Recognizing that the spectacular view of Chicago’s skyline from the terrace is the most defining aspect of the space, she chose to emphasize the horizontal plane of the terrace floor. The artist said, “I did not want to compete with this impressive vertical backdrop; instead I wanted to offer a leisurely horizontal axis.” French Curve takes its name from a traditional drawing tool, and indeed Baghramian thinks of the work as a simple, elegant line that has become a three-dimensional form.

Approximately 55 feet long, the sculpture is composed of numerous handmade segments of cast
aluminum, approximately knee height. The scooped-out hollow spine on the interior side is, for the artist, analogous to the marrow of a bone. This intimate underside has a hand-sculpted, shiny finish while the outside of the sculpture is cast-aluminum matte.

Complementing this serene work on the terrace is a group of seven works by Baghramian titled Slip of the Tongue. Displayed in the sculptural vitrines in the adjacent Terzo Piano space, these fragile, speculative forms made of epoxy resemble flaccid sacks. They seem to melt and collapse against the glass and resemble in miniature what has been removed from French Curve. The separation of the inside from the outside encourages the public to consider the different purposes of the spaces in which these two related works are located and how they might cohere—all the while asserting qualities of contemplation and negotiation over spectacle.

The Bluhm Family Terrace is dedicated to site-specific works by leading contemporary artists, commissioned twice annually. Located on the third floor of the museum’s Modern Wing, the Bluhm Family Terrace has been the site of installations by Tomoaki Suzuki, Danh Vo, and Ugo Rondinone, among others.

About Nairy Baghramian:
Nairy Baghramian was born in Isfahan, Iran, in 1971, and she currently lives and works in Berlin. Baghramian’s numerous exhibitions include solo shows at the Kunsthalle Basel (2006); Studio Voltaire, London (2009); Kunsthalle Mannheim (2012); SculptureCenter, New York (2013); and the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco (2014). Baghramian has been included in notable group exhibitions such as the Akademie der Bildendenden Künste Wien, Vienna (2006); Tate Modern, London (2008); Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, Montréal, Canada (2010); Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City (2012); and the 8th Berlin Biennale (2014). This is her first solo exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago.

This exhibition is organized by the Art Institute of Chicago with major funding from the Bluhm Family Endowment Fund, which supports exhibitions of modern and contemporary sculpture.
Images:
Installation view of Nairy Baghramian: French Curve, on the Bluhm Family Sculpture Terrace. The Art Institute of Chicago, May 14 – October 5, 2014

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