

## Ode de Kort

I look at the work of Ode de Kort and a whole host of ovoid descriptors crowd into my mind: oval, ovate, oviform, egg-shaped, even elliptical. This is because the dominant motif of de Kort's work happens to be the oval or circle. It appears in and informs virtually everything she does, from her sculptures, sculptural installations, videos and photographs. Indeed, so consistently does it, as a form and a motif, invade and populate what she makes that it assumes, despite its sensual elegance, an almost antic quality. Slight, immaterial, linear, de Kort's work possesses an almost demure, self-effacing delicacy. And yet it does not lack confidence or conviction, nor is it coquettish (well, maybe a little?). There is nothing retiring about this work. It fully occupies whatever space it inhabits, despite barely occupying it at all. Take the sculptural installation, *OO* (2016) for instance. This work comprises seventeen small metal sculptures, which vary in size, ranging from a foot high to just a few inches, and which are placed primarily on the floor. Their thin, linear forms go from long, exclamation like ovals to low squat rotundities. Some are paired together, like eyes, while other lurk near one another in evocative proximity. They have a way of not merely occupying the space, but also mapping it, even activating it, like a constellation. Of course, given their varying characters, they take on almost human physiologies (tall and thin, short and fat), and as such, speak to this essential form's capacity to function as an anthropomorphic cypher, its utter simplify notwithstanding. This anthropomorphism does not stop there, of course, but goes on to extend to human systems, like, most notably, language. A key example of this is the video *Suspension of a Circle* (2016). In keeping with the stunning simplicity of de Kort's work, this video consists of a kind of rubber band perched on a stick which bounces on a small round shelf. Upon hitting the shelf, the rubber band twists and turns, bringing to mind a cavorting form, most specifically a human form, while occasionally evoking letters, as if it were randomly articulating some kind of alphabet. As such, this dance speaks to the human will to seek out and always if not invest significance where there is none, then to anthropomorphize. Elsewhere the understated, if improbable and moderately absurd sensuality of the work becomes more explicit. I am thinking of the photograph *Untitled* (2016), which depicts a kind of black floor mat raised up and partially folded such that its interior forms a kind of oval, which becomes evocative of a mouth. Again, the simplicity with which de Kort carries

out an act of evocation is all but disarming. This work, like others that formally rely on the circle, reminds us of how sensual the curve is, essentially by virtue of the fact of much we want to see the human body within it, drawn along its contours. For all its seriousness, de Kort's work wields a no less understated sense of humor. Incidentally, it is perhaps not a coincidence that there are so many circles in her name— as if the depictions of circles were but veiled self-portraits, when in fact that circle functions as a cipher, liable to contain anything and nothing at once. The artist is fully aware of how charged and potentially misleading these forms are. Their capacity for comedy seems as inexhaustible as their innocence is incontestable, sort of like, well, clowns— which they are not obviously. Just circles (which are never just circles).

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