

Looking beyond

Our visual landscape is filled with patterns - tessellations of geometric shapes that appear in even the most basic of natural structures. Phoebe McDonald and Kenji Uranishi are two artists that take inspiration from such patterning, utilising this as a starting point to look beyond the surface of an artwork through the implementation of optical illusions. As purveyors of geometry, McDonald and Uranishi engage sculptural forms to create a sense of depth and movement - using light to expose or conceal shapes and patterns inside the work. Their expertise lies in the manipulation of patterns using tessellating, geometric forms to create structures that challenge the viewers sense of order.

The humble triangle is often used as a starting point for Phoebe McDonald. Employing the inherent structural strength of this geometric shape, McDonald has created a multitude of three dimensional works that sit within a two dimensional plane. Her 2011 series *Rise and fall, again* sees the implementation of this as she tessellates triangular prisms across a flat surface in order to create patterns that provide a sense of visual continuation beyond the border edge.

Likewise *Refraction and reflection* (2012) applies this optical illusion of a visual continuation of pattern tessellations, allowing the ambient light crossing over the piece to enact this. This use of light and its relation to visual perception is central to McDonalds practice. Her later *Spectrum selection* series (2013) sees the furtherance of this; however, in this case McDonald has created concave tessellations as a relief into the surface of the work instead of the convex patterning which appeared previously.

As a ceramicist, Kenji Uranishi utilises three dimensional forms to convey his interest and experimentation in geometric patterning. Unlike McDonald, Uranishi combines numerous geometric shapes in the construction of his work - often using a base shape to create a three dimensional construct of another. Uranishi's manipulation of lines and angles conveys a sense of movement within the static object. *Entwined 3* (2013) and *Incline 1* (2013) are particularly indicative of this as each creates a sense of diagonal flow across the piece as if the diagonally stacked rectangular prisms may fall over at any second.

Architectural structures are also referenced in Uranishi's work, particularly in the 2013 *Sanctuary* series. These hollow geometric forms are easily viewed as being apartment blocks or dwellings that provide the refuge that their name suggests. The clean visual lines of Uranishi's work creates a sense of reflection through which the artist encourages us to look beyond the surface of the work, as the changing ambient light highlights a new angle throughout the day.

Employing light in this manner, both artists create works of reflection that provide a visual refuge for the viewer. Yet through this manipulation, McDonald and Uranishi also encourage us to look beyond the surface of the object and consider the light illusions at play. The simplicity of their constructions engages viewers in a dialogue about space where the art object, light and perception can begin to be analysed.