The Event of Art

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When Form Becomes Attitude
Whereas I’d been taken up the sensual and tactile characteristics of the materials I’d been working with, letting their qualities very much dictate their shaping, I have now taken up a greater awareness of form, and am only gradually coming to see that I have been retracing many of the steps and attitudes of post-minimalism.

At the same time, this taking up is itself a performative practice of being and art. Through the consideration of form, specifically, I also consider my form of living and working, in the house and studio. Form and anti-form, being and commingling, being and social being. Here form becomes social form, family form, the forms of friendship and community, the taking up of life.

The being of living, my living and those around me. As the material work of art takes up for me its own expansive form, as we are moving more and more into a increasingly demonstrably authoritarian climate. Not just politically, but also in the so-called art world itself, whose strictures and rules of social climbing through capital and access (in a globalized market where artists can be sourced from anywhere) narrow conversation in a belief of increasing plurality and inclusiveness. An inclusiveness and critique blunted by its commodification and ready disappearance: on to the next! The artists, the academy, the galleries and institutions, the fairs—everyone is put on a never ending treadmill, of more, more, more, where those in are never secure enough on those out, clamoring to get in. Into what?
My expansive sense of form then, as art as a life practice, through the material and sensate—I sense this truly was Beuys’s proposition—continues working back and into Szeemann’s proposition of “when attitudes become form” in the sense of work, life, and being entwined, as the practice of life and art, by engaging not anti-form, but, for a moment, the notion of the solidity of form, even if it is anti-form. This seems to be me both retrograde and forward looking, or perhaps just a way of being, of taking possession of time, or being present. Yes, the Artist is Present. Yes, art as a presencing of the world. Even if it’s quietly and, for the most part, alone.
From radiant object or refractive object, from surface of variable transparency to more and more pleated or topological surfaces mapped onto volume, the object builds more and more character, more presence, more thingness. But this is a thingness, or a three-dimensional object, that is contingent, a possible shape that will inevitably not hold its shape. It is a thing to be shaped.

Soft as they are, the newer works enclose space, and there is the suggestion of a persistence of form. Of course, this is humorous to me, as it is very much anti-form (in the sense of “informe,” to find a form for formlessness, to show the form that has no form). But in today’s accelerating world of image disappearance, this might be as solid as you get.

It is the activity of art making, life making, that these forms have suggested to me. A kind of zen practice.