

The works on view in this gallery date to the 1990s, a decade that began with an economic recession. For the art world, the financial situation meant the end of 1980s extravagance, but modest times and modest means also brought a new sense of improvisation on the part of both artists and art dealers. Exhibitions often took place in ad hoc spaces—restaurants, private apartments—and with less commercial pressure, artists felt more freedom to experiment. Harrison began combining everyday objects with content drawn from the media and pop culture, creating works with an air of excess and a deceptively casual feeling. She often used punning titles, adding a layer of humor and pointing to how artworks, like words, almost never have only one meaning and are largely up for grabs in the viewer's interpretation of them.

From the start Harrison worked across multiple mediums, combining them in ways that allowed her—and invited the viewer—to think about what modes of attention each one rewarded. It mattered to her, for example, that sculpture exists in the same space that our bodies move in—that it can reconfigure that space through investigations of mass, gravity, and form—and that a photograph is simultaneously a physical, three-dimensional object and a two-dimensional image. In its explorations of seriality, systems, and language, Harrison's work from the 1990s can also be understood as engaging with—if wryly commenting on—the legacy of conceptual art and examining the idea that art can serve as a vehicle for understanding the world.

With its black plywood floors and schematic map produced by a scene painter, this room functions as a kind of stage set enacting a dialogue among individual sculptures dating from the late 1990s to 2012. Here we enter the same theatrical space as the sculptures, offering the possibility that for a moment we might no longer be inside a museum. Many of the sculptures on view here display themselves, much like characters in a play. Some offer the idea of a sculpture being hidden—Harrison actually made one by obscuring a form with moving blankets—while others playact roles from history or film. Throughout the room are forms and objects that emphasize framing and display systems and ask us to reflect on not only what we are seeing but how we are seeing it. These include several photographic series that, in prioritizing perception and process over the individual image, draw attention to the act of looking itself. At the same time, as much as the setting integrates the sculptures, it also isolates them: each stands within its own outlined box, its own house on the street. The tension between the communal and the personal, the part and the whole, runs formally and thematically throughout, an echo of the larger dynamics of politics, religion, class, and celebrity in these works.

Between 2011 and 2012, Harrison produced a series of more than fifty colored-pencil drawings of Amy Winehouse (1983–2011), a British singer and songwriter, placing the musician in the company of modernist heroes—including Gustave Courbet, Pablo Picasso, Gertrude Stein, Willem de Kooning, Alice Neel, and Martin Kippenberger—as well as less famous historical figures, such as the seventeenth-century Dutch painter Margareta Maria de Roodere. In some of these works, Harrison combines these artists' pictorial styles with her own, occasionally setting up visual rhymes between her own sculpture and Winehouse's image. In others, Harrison fuses Winehouse with the themes and subjects central to their work—lovers, drinkers, images of the overburdened genius at work—allowing the singer to embody a reimagined art history.

Harrison has long been partly bothered, partly amused by the ways museums have of protecting sculpture, using what she calls “barrier methods”—roping it off, putting it on pedestals that take it out of our physical space—to prevent direct engagement. It is almost as though art is a bomb that could accidentally be detonated so we should be kept at a distance. The installation she conceived for this room reflects her “greatest fear as a sculptor.” At the same time, she has compared this assembly to a city: congested, always under construction, partitioned in ways that communicate the uses and meanings of space. As in a city, constriction and chaos create unexpected conversations, and perhaps moments of wishful thinking. *Al Gore*, a 2007 sculpture with a thermostat on one side, presides architecturally over the riotous group. “Too many sculptures,” Harrison has offered, “have too much to say.”