



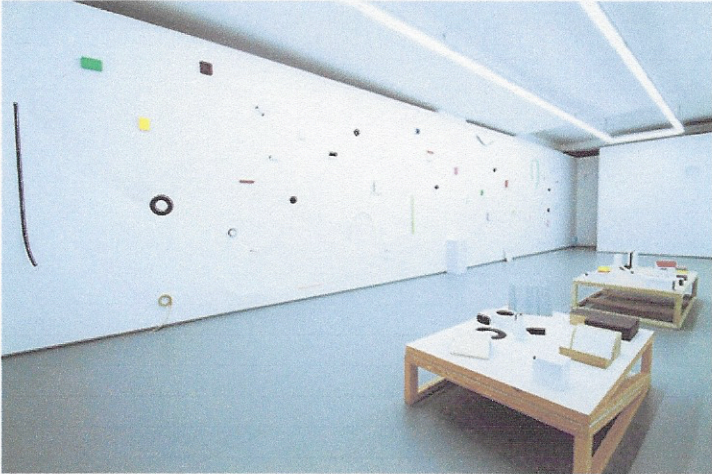
TORONTO

TERENCE DICK
ROULA PARTHENIOU AT MKG127

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Like 39

Every year I teach Plato's theory of Forms and every year I use a chair as my example – just like my philosophy teachers did, just like their philosophy teachers did before them. This year it finally occurred to me how stale the lesson was getting so I vowed to devise another way to explain the relationship between ideas (rational, perfect, unchanging) and objects in the world (empirical, imperfect, subject to decay). If only I could justify to my department chair the purchase – as a "teaching aid" – of one of **Roula Partheniou's** sculptures at **MKG127**, my problems would be solved. Her work sits intriguingly in the middle ground between the essence of something and the instance of it. Never so real (in the colloquial sense) to be the latter (they aren't readymades, despite being on first glance easily mistaken as such), they are also, for the simple matter of their existence in the world, greater – or, according to Plato, lesser – than the idea that purportedly birthed them.



Roula Partheniou, *Parts and Wholes* (installation view), 2013

I could go on, but suffice to say, as a means of eliciting a discussion of Platonic ontology, her work is dope. Further than that, it inevitably leads one to consider the role/function/meaning of sculpture in all its ever-questioned objecthood. Partheniou's affection for the quotidian strips away the spectacle of other bigger, noisier, more semiotically charged sculptures to ask, in its deadpan way, the most basic of aesthetic questions: "So, what about this thing?" Paradoxically, the obviousness of the thing as a thing makes the answer as to the thing as art harder to figure out. You might say Duchamp did it already with his found things, but, as I've already pointed out, these aren't those things. They are something else.

To make matters more intriguing, the objects are gathered in clusters or "constellations", and now must be assessed not simply in relation to the ideas and object they aren't, but also to the things they share wall space with. They become puzzles that, like the best brainteasers, generate complex conundrums from the simplest of elements.

MKG127: <http://www.mkg127.com/>

Roula Partheniou: *Parts and Wholes* continues until April 20.

Terence Dick is a freelance writer living in Toronto. His art criticism has appeared in *Canadian Art*, *BorderCrossings*, *Prefix Photo*, *Camera Austria*, *Fuse*, *Mix*, *C Magazine*, *Azure*, and *The Globe and Mail*. He is the editor of *Akimblog*. You can follow his quickie reviews and art news announcements on Twitter [@TerenceDick](https://twitter.com/TerenceDick).

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