

# Raphael Hefti

## Galleries 1, 3 & 4

Raphael Hefti has a novel approach to his experimentation with materials. He has a fascination with processes and often invents his own in order to achieve new results. His work blurs boundaries between natural and industrial, abstract and representational. Hefti frequently collaborates with technicians, scientists, and even dogs, in order to reveal unexpected beauty in ordinary materials. His approach is experimental – he likes to think through the physical and chemical dimensions of an industrial material to reveal new potential in them as an artistic medium.

Hefti, who divides his time between London and Zurich, first trained as an engineer in his native Switzerland before turning to art. As a sculptor he is fascinated by the hidden transformations materials undergo in industry before becoming specific, identifiable objects. A new series of work often comes from observing an unintended by-product of a manufacturing process. Working with his collaborators, he extends this effect by experimenting with what caused it. The results are enigmatic, beautiful and other-worldly – an abstraction that seems related to the substance of the earth and the physics of the universe.



Raphael Hefti, Quick Fix Remix, 2013.  
Courtesy the artist, Ancient&Modern and RaebervonStenglin

Hefti's iridescent glass panels from his Subtraction as Addition series began this way – when he observed the coloured sheen of non-reflective glass. In making these large minimalist panels he collaborated with a factory producing museum glass, commonly used to protect artworks and intended to be invisible. By multiplying the anti-reflective coating many times, Hefti renders the invisible visible. After a lengthy research phase in a workshop he intervenes in the process of manufacture to create what is “his” product.

Three new versions are included here – a very dark example and two pale, milky glasses – the lightest and darkest versions to date. Each glass changes its appearance depending on where the viewer is standing. Their reflections in the glass draw the viewer's attention to their own presence in the gallery. Viewing is thus an unfixed and variable experience.

At home in factories, metal mills and workshops, Hefti is drawn to what happens in these spaces. He has a scientist's curiosity and training, grasping how things work, through questioning and observation. Into Deep are made from cast pieces of copper, zinc and aluminium. Various industrial processes have revealed their micro-crystalline structure. During casting, the speed at which the hot metal is cooled determines the size of each crystal, whilst its shape is determined by the growth of its neighbour. This leads to curved and rounded crystal shapes that jostle up against each other, forming irregular, organic patterns, visible in some of the metal sculptures. Further processes of milling and etching after casting reveal the unique structure of the metal.

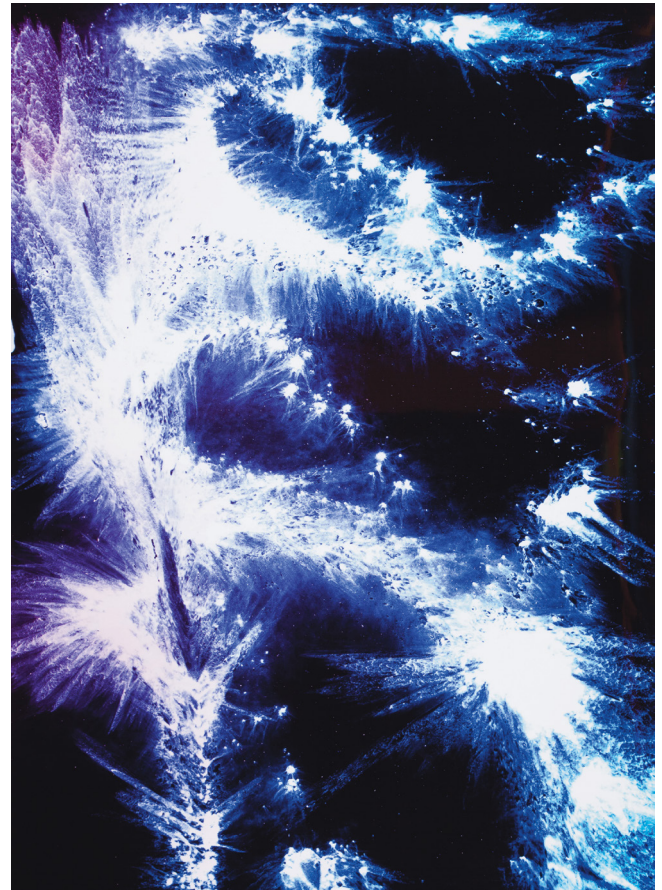
For his solo exhibition at Nottingham Contemporary Hefti visited a series of industries in the East Midlands. A visit to the Rolls Royce factory in Derby triggered his interest in the composition and treatment of metals in different states. In this coming together of high tech and heavy metal, Hefti references processes that otherwise remain invisible, but which form the crucial substructure of contemporary culture.

In Various threaded poles of determinate length potentially altering their determinacy, a series of sculptural tubes use the transformative qualities of heat on various metals. Rainbow-like spectrums of colour, stripes of tonal variation and raised patterns, like lichen-growth or molten eruptions, cover the surface of the metal, giving the tubes an alien appearance.

Hefti started his artistic career in photography, and he still works in the medium. For his photographs he dusts photo paper with “witch powder” or Lycopodium – flammable moss spores that combust when they are lit, directly exposing photosensitive paper. To create the work he spends up to five hours working in pitch black conditions, moving awkwardly around giant sheets of photo paper fixed to the floor, composing images whose outcome can be only half controlled. The finished results are compellingly beautiful, displaying explosions of colour that look like images of the cosmos – the fabric of our world.

*A catalogue produced by JRP Ringier will accompany the exhibition.*

*On Wednesday 5 November, Bonfire Night, Hefti will present a performance in The Space at Nottingham Contemporary.*



From the series Lycopodium 2013. Photogram on photographic colour paper using the gently burning spores of the moss plant Lycopodium. Courtesy the artist, Ancient&Modern and RaebervonStenglin