

**Christine Corday** (b. 1970, Laurel, Maryland, lives and works in New York City) works with temperature, material states, elemental metals, and often creates additional media in artist-led collaborations with international scientists and science organizations. She is the sole artist among thousands of scientists from thirty-five nations involved in the ambitious energy project ITER, which seeks to prove the feasibility of fusion as a large-scale, carbon-free energy source—the same energy that powers the sun and stars. Among her many public works, a major commission for San Francisco's Moscone Center, *GENESES*, a massive sculpture of stainless steel, aluminum, and concrete, was installed in January 2019. In solo exhibitions, *Protoist Series: Selected Forms*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2015) and *UNE*, High Line (New York City, 2008) her works provoked an awareness of sensory stimuli. Following an astrophysics internship at NASA/SETI (Moffett Field, CA, 1991), Corday created *Foundation Civilization* (Seville, 2000) for projects exploring such intersections of art and science as *Instrument for the Ocean to Play* (2001). In Spain, Corday formulated a black pigment color later selected as the touch-focused color for the National September 11 Memorial (New York City, 2001). Corday founded her work studios in Tokyo (1999–2000); Seville (2000–04); Greenpoint, Brooklyn (2005–08); and Hudson Valley, New York (2008–current). Corday was nominated for the United States Artist Fellow in 2016. She is the recipient of the 2019 Pollock-Krasner Foundation's Brian Wall Foundation Grant for Sculptors. Corday spent part of her childhood in St. Louis and attended Washington University to study Cultural Anthropology.

*Christine Corday: RELATIVE POINTS* is organized by Lisa Melandri, Executive Director.

The exhibition and catalog are generously supported by Barrett Barrera Projects, Penny Pennington and Michael Fidler, and Alexandria and Peter Strelow. Additional support is provided by Ann Ruwitch and John Fox Arnold. The Artist Talk is generously supported by the Robert Lehman Foundation. Special thanks to Christopher Powers, Paul Henry McMahon, Jack Palmer, George Murello, and Jeff Hartz.

#### Related Programs

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**Artist Talk: Christine Corday**

Saturday, January 19, 11:00 am

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**Film Screening: 2001: A Space Odyssey**

Thursday, February 21, 6:00 pm

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**Dada Ball & Bash**

Saturday, March 2, 6:00 pm–midnight

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**Gallery Guide**  
Contemporary Art  
Museum St. Louis

January 18–  
April 21, 2019



# Christine Corday

## RELATIVE POINTS



Christine Corday, artist rendering of *RELATIVE POINTS* commission for CAM, 2018. Iron, metals, metalloids, sodium silicate, 53 × 49 × 53 inches. Courtesy the artist.

A 21st-century alchemist, Christine Corday plays with materiality and engages with the transformation of matter. Best known for her large-scale sculptures commissioned for public spaces, this is Corday's first major exhibition inside a museum. She presents two new bodies of work that combine art and astrophysics to explore matter and the universe. *RELATIVE POINTS* is an installation of twelve monumental, cold-cast sculptures, created by compressing 10,000 pounds of elemental metal and metalloid grit into a pointed cylindrical form. For her new hybrid painting series, *Primer Grey*, *Centers for Gravity*, the artist explores the materiality of paint as well as the effect of natural

forces upon those materials. Corday primes a metal surface and collects the grey primer in the lower corner of the rectangle, indicating the gravitational pull toward the Earth's core. The grey pigment is a literal



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#### Audio Tour

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concentration of materials directed toward a center, which we read instead as a corner, suggesting ambiguous notions of direction or center—a theme that runs throughout the exhibition.

Visitors to the museum are invited to induce change in the surfaces of the *RELATIVE POINTS* sculptures through the act of touch. In her earlier series, *Protoist*, Corday used industrial-scaled tools with temperatures hotter than the surface of the sun to inform the metal form. For *RELATIVE POINTS*, the industrial-scaled tools are replaced with the subtle heat and friction of the human hand. It is the heat of a visitor's hands, not the torch, that informs each sculpture's surface. Corday's work is deeply rooted in process, and she considers the transfer of energy from human touch to be essential to her final sculptural forms. Corday encourages us to consider the relationship of our bodies to the sculpture—and more broadly, our place in space and the cosmos. Central to Corday's practice is the notion that we are not separate from outer space, but rather we are "absolutely positively *in* outer space."

The artist has angled each sculpture toward the center of the universe, in what appears to be an arbitrary orientation. In designing this "non-random constellation" of sculptures, Corday underscores the

fundamental idea that the spatial center of the universe is everywhere and nowhere—that "center" is a relative notion. She offers a Zen-like riddle, "If we find comfort with the notion of center, then we must find comfort in a center found in every direction."

## UNE

Since 2008 Christine Corday has been producing monumental metal sculptures, which are commonly sited to intervene in public spaces. Her first sculpture, *UNE* (2008), is a three-ton arc of weathering steel alloy, towering at nine feet tall and spanning sixteen feet, which stood impressively under the High Line in New York City. *UNE* was meant to engender direct physical contact, to be worn down over time by human interaction. In this way, Corday considered the work to be a recording device of "conversations" with visitors. A two-and-a-half-foot melted void spans the length of *UNE*, inviting visitors to walk through the sculpture, and symbolizes the artist's hand or brush stroke in an otherwise mechanical process. Formerly a painter, Corday now considers herself a heat-seeker, replacing a paint brush with a 10,000°F plasma torch—her tool for manipulating metals.



Christine Corday, *UNE*, installation view, High Line, New York, 2008. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Tim Willis.

## Minimalism

Corday is often described as an artist working with the methods and formal vocabulary of such minimalists as Richard Serra, whose torqued ellipse, *Joe*, is situated in the Pulitzer Arts Foundation courtyard adjacent to CAM. Corday shows a minimalist preoccupation with notions of scale, gravity, and mass in relation to how we move in the universe. She also shares minimalist concerns for the purity of abstract form, yet her primary interest is in the minimalism of the material. Corday seeks to find the simplest form within the form—the elemental. "I am interested in reducing material to its medium, to its primary statement, to its raw signature that cannot be further reduced."

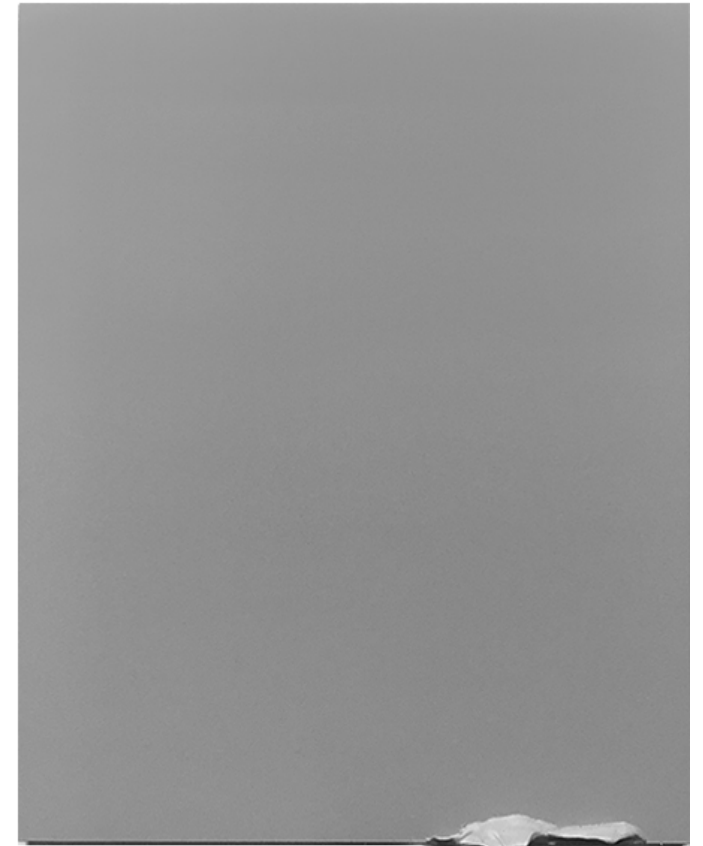
## Art + Science

Corday's fascination with the elemental aspect of materials is drawn from her background in astrophysics, having completed an internship at NASA Ames Research Center for a SETI extrasolar planetary project in 1991, when she was in her early twenties. The artist is compelled by the elemental materials of our universe: the sun, stars, and elemental particles. Corday believes that the material inseparability of humans and the cosmos is key. The artist underscores the idea that we are made of star material—iron and carbon, for example—by using these elements in her sculptures.

In creating recipes for the metal alloys that she uses—some inspired by the 17th-century science pioneer Isaac Newton—Corday recognized that four grams of iron exist in each human being, enough to cast a regular hardware nail; hence the use of iron in every piece she creates. Each of the twelve *RELATIVE POINTS* is made up of thousands of points of iron grit that orient in all directions toward a centerless universe. Toggling between the iron within us and in the universe, the micro and the macro, the individual and cosmos, Corday provokes us to momentarily lift definitions of center, hierarchy, and privileged view, and reposition our perception elsewhere.

## Primer Grey, Centers for Gravity

As Corday transitions from sculpture to paint and back again, she actively and physically engages in transforming elemental materials and surfaces through experimental alchemical processes. In 2010, Corday's black iron oxide color was selected by the architect Michael Arad and the committee overseeing the National September 11 Memorial at One World Trade Center. The artist spent nine months applying her blackening color with a plasma torch over the 15,000 square feet of the Memorial. She realized that in



Christine Corday, *Primer Grey, Centers for Gravity*, 2018. Primer paint on aluminum. Courtesy the artist.

making paint, she was suspending elements in material states rather than manipulating pigments. *Primer Grey, Centers for Gravity* is a series of sculptural paintings in which the artist has concentrated grey pigment itself as a medium. The primer is both a medium with a function, and a color. The same grey color is used across all the works, preventing privilege or hierarchy, a principal theme in Corday's practice.