

# London exhibitions: James Ensor's carnivalesque paintings crackle at the RA while Anselm Kiefer offers an awe-inspiring gloom-fest at White Cube, plus much more

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10th January 2017 00:00 GMT



Paul de Monchaux's *Volute V* (2013) and *Volute IV* (2016)

## Paul de Monchaux: *Ten Columns*, Megan Piper (until 20 January)

*Ten Columns* is small yet utterly satisfying show consisting of two recent bronze sculptures and a line of eight small carved limewood works from one of our most thoughtful and quietly significant sculptors. Paul de Monchaux has devoted some six decades to a rigorous but never austere investigation into the nuanced and complex ways in which invented forms can be made to generate an emotional response, and here we see the outcome.

The shapes of his sculpture are crisp, lucid and non-representational. Yet at the same time they are absolutely steeped in the human body, in the same way that all great architecture, whether ancient or modern, always has human physicality and experience at its core. This deep understanding of the structures and parameters of human space is why his larger public sculpture is so successful. His steel memorial to the Second World War slave workers of the Jersey tunnels; his granite memorial to Wilfred Owen in the grounds of Shrewsbury Abbey; or the horribly neglected but still glorious stone benches outside Euston train station, are just a few of his public works.

The longer you look at these sculptures the more subtle, complex and rewarding they become, whether the voluptuous but also tautly contained curves of his two *Volute* bronzes (2013 and 2016) or the subtle curves, angles and straight lines of his carved wooden *Eight Studies for Male & Female Columns* (2016). For at the same time as their forms appear resolved almost to the point of inevitability, both physically and conceptually these most human and humane works also remain open to myriad points of view.