

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

### VISIONAIRE

#### Nancy Rubins's Friend Fluid Metal

Lars Byrresen Petersen



*All artwork © Nancy Rubins courtesy of the artist and Gagosian Gallery. Photography by Erich Koyama*

“At first, you think you’re looking at a big fluffy cloud and then you realize it’s 20,000 pounds of these cast aluminum objects and there’s something really beautiful and fascinating about it,” says the American artist Nancy Rubins, when asked about the contradictions in her new sculptures. The three massive sculptures—the biggest measures a whopping 17 x 42 x 24 feet—are all part of her new show “Our Friend Fluid Metal,” which opens July 17th at the Gagosian in New York.

Known for her large-scale, site-specific installations, Nancy Rubins has transformed industrial, manufactured objects—such as mattresses, appliances, boats—into the building blocks of her physically commanding monumental sculptures since she started scavenging Salvation Army and Goodwill stores for old TV sets after graduating college in 1974. “If you go to the art supply store and buy two blue paints, you pay a lot for it. But I could collect thousands of blue electric hairdryers and have a massive quantity of blue. So I kind of was seeing that as a great perfusion of things that were rich and evocative,” she says, describing what initially attracted her to “mass quantity things.”

The new sculptures, which are created in her studio in Topanga Canyon, California, are made from hundreds of repurposed aluminum playground animals. “This particular body of work has taken a little over two years to develop and it’s unusual for me because I built it at my studio and it came apart in pieces so we were able to ship it here and reassemble what I initially built in my studio,” says Rubins, describing how her work is normally built on site. “My engineer would

design structures that were extraordinarily flexible so that I could go to a space and start responding to it.”

“In this case, I drew out the space of the Gagosian gallery on my sculpture pad and I made a small model of how the pieces—in particular this very large cantilever piece—would work in space. I showed this model to my engineer and we started weighing the little playground animals to figure out how much each one weighed and test how strong the aluminum was. He calculated pretty much the weight and how the cantilever would work in space. Then he made drawings and we would talk about how to make this thing work for us. Initially this cantilever is made of a series of five foot long truck sections so that they can sit on a truck that is seven or eight feet wide so that we could use a 48 or 50 foot truck to ship it,” she says.

Rubins and her engineer would normally have used bolts to reassemble the different sections, but this time the spacing between the cast objects was too little to fit both tools and hands. Instead, they solved the problem by running bridge cables through the center of the objects. “You know, everything that you do is kind of new so you got to solve those problems along the way,” she laughs.

For more info on Nancy Rubins’s “Our Friend Fluid Metal,” [click here](#).