

## Seven Enigmatic Sculptures—Editor’s Picks

*By Robert Ayers*

NEW YORK—Lately I’ve found myself enjoying a whole range of enigmatic sculptures in New York. Whether in the uptown museums or Chelsea galleries, there are some splendid exhibitions currently on view.

None of the works I’ve gathered here simply “sits on its ass,” as Claes Oldenburg once put it: They clamber up walls, spill across floors, or pretend to be furniture, playthings, or manuscript pages. What they have in common is that they are static objects, or arrangements of objects, that await our contemplation: That is, they are all good old-fashioned sculptures, something that’s become harder to find as enthusiasm for interdisciplinary and technology-driven work has grown. In almost every other regard, however, these seven works could not be more different.

### **Cui Fei, “Read by Touch” (2005–06)**

And finally, here is “Read by Touch” by Cui Fei, from her show “Manuscript of Nature” at Cheryl McGinnis on the Upper East Side through February 14. A couple of threads connect the works in this exhibition: written language and materials that are found in nature. This particular piece, one of a series, uses rose thorns on rice paper. It’s a delightfully eloquent work, framed and hung like a page of text, and suggestive of both a sort of spiky calligraphy and—given the title—a painful Braille. And, given that Cui Fei is a Chinese artist who works in the United States, it resonates with all sorts of meanings having to do with translating one language or culture into another. Apparently Cui Fei is being collected enthusiastically by Princeton University. I’m not surprised.

