

# SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

Artforum  
January 2015

## ARTFORUM

### Alma Allen

BLUM & POE | LOS ANGELES  
2727 S. La Cienega Boulevard  
January 10–February 28

These sculptures bend, loop, puddle, swirl, and arch in ways that are both exquisitely crafted and weirdly natural. Once I heard an earful of Alma Allen's story, plump with struggle and shitty luck, his artwork beginning as a homeless street hustle, I understood how his gentle and enduring will shaped these works with their sensual skins and gravitational force.

For years, starting in 1993, Allen made diminutive and odd shapes carved from wood and stone, only recently adding bronze to his materials and scaling up to the multiple-tonnage range. Easily plunked into a tradition of manufacturing essential or natural forms that includes Romanian modernist Constantin Brâncuși and Japanese artist/designer Isamu Noguchi as well as mid-century gallery cohort, Californian carver J. B. Blunk, Allen's work spaces out into another galaxy of desert psychedelia and Old West alien artifacts, that dusty weirdness that's both ancient and futuristic.

Though the artist has wandered many places, Allen's specific relationship to materials vibes distinctly California, the kind that only survived the hard angles of art movements after the collapse of '60s counterculture by hiding out in a place such as Joshua Tree, where the artist lives and works in a house he designed and made himself. The tree trunk in the gallery garden droops its long head (all works *Not Yet Titled*, 2014) while inside a hunk of black-and-red marble on the walnut table duckbills out from smoothed asteroidal skin, and a giant, funky, bronze pickle with the dangling eye all exude an earthy aura and stoned humor still happily living on in the alien landscape and spiritual planes of the Mojave Desert.



Alma Allen, *Not Yet Titled*, 2014,  
bronze, 17 1/4 x 18 1/2 x 7".

— Andrew Berardini

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