

When the Weather Gives You Snowmageddon, Make Art Snowmen

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Welcome to Snowmageddon 2015. (For readers outside the northeastern United States, this is all you need to know.) As we hunker down in anticipation of what will almost certainly be a less dramatic snowstorm than some are predicting and begin to formulate plans for the construction of snowpersons, we offer you this brief and necessarily incomplete survey of artists' snowmen for inspiration.

The Dirty Snowman

Tasset has crafted at least a half-dozen hyperrealist snowman sculptures over the past nine years — the extensive list of materials involved in the making of each includes glass, brass, resin, enamel paint, bronze, poly-styrene, and stainless steel. None has looked quite so creepy and unhinged as “Snowman with Yellow Glove,” which proved a favorite with Instagrammers at the 2013 Armory Show.

The Kitschy Snowman

A personal favorite from Koons's 2013 Gazing Ball show at David Zwirner, this snowman seemed to make good on the exhibition's titular conceit: all these elaborate gazing ball pedestals were never intended to be anything more than high-end front-yard baubles.

The Pop Art Snowman

Though not explicitly identified as a snowman, this doughy and cartoonish figure with a giant hole in its midsection from Musson's show at Salon 94 last spring would be very impressive if replicated in snow.

The Existential Snowman

It might sound like an exaggeration to claim that a sculpture of a snowman could engender a total nervous breakdown. But trying to find the front of Hume's “Back of Snowman” is liable to do just that by making plain the bleak truth of existence: that all snowpersons are simply accessorized stacks of large snowballs, and that any order we perceive in the world is artificial and constructed merely out of our fictitious, subjective, and highly fallible sign systems. Maybe don't try to re-create this one.

The Minimalist Snowman

As Constantin Brancusi's “Bird in Space” was to the image of an actual bird, so Haacke's “Ice Stick” is to that of a snowman: a pure totem of frozen water, stripped of all the superfluous, figurative bulk of the traditional snowperson.

The Neo-Classical Snowman

Created by the artists during a hike through the Zakopane Mountains in southern Poland, Fernandes-Halloran and Althamer's snowman is an ephemeral, alpine throwback to ancient Greek and Roman statuary.

The Old Master Snowman

The earliest known evidence of a snowman is a highly stylized drawing from around 1380, but it's clear that by the 19th century, snow-sculpture aesthetics had followed a similar trajectory as the rest of Western art history: in search of ever more convincing realism. In this 1867 illustration, Schulz shows a group of children putting the finishing touches on a snowperson with protruding arms and a sidelong gaze that's uncannily directed straight at the viewer.