JOFFE FRY BADER BUDDS

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN
ATHLETIC EQUIPMENT BECOMES ART?
WHEN GYMNASIUM
AND GALLERY OVERLAP?
TO CELEBRATE
THE CLOSING OF
WEEKEND TOURNAMENT,
WE INVITED JESSICA JOFFE, NAOMI FRY,
DARREN BADER AND DIANA BUDDS
TO REFLECT ON THE EXHIBITION
AND TO WRITE DOWN SOME IDEAS
ABOUT SPORT'S CONNECTION
TO ART AND DESIGN.
A CLOSING FOR SOMETHING.
AN OPENING TO SOMETHING ELSE.

07:31:2025

THE PROPRIETARY GYMNASIUM: ART, DESIGN, AND THE ATHLETIC IMPERATIVE

JESSICA JOFFE

Ninety years after Le Corbusier, Charlotte Perriand, and René Herbst unveiled The Young Man's Home at the 1935 Brussels International Exposition, Raquel Cayre and Ariel Ashe have written its sequel. Their exhibition Weekend Tournament, spread across sixty objects throughout Raisonné's 16 Crosby Street gallery, functions as both homage to and autopsy of modernism's "intellectual athlete"—that curious hybrid who believed barbells and bookshelves were natural roommates, that the gymnasium and the study could coexist in perfect harmony.

Where The Young Man's Home promised integration, Weekend Tournament delivers fragmentation with a wink. The original apartment-gym hybrid was dead serious about its mission: to demonstrate that modern living meant treating your home like a training facility for life itself. The medicine ball was a meditation prop, the rowing machine was kinetic sculpture, physical and mental cultivation were teammates rather than competitors. It was modernism at its most earnest, convinced that the right environmental design could manufacture better humans.

Weekend Tournament takes this premise and lovingly dismantles it, piece by piece. The curators frame their show as a "field of action," but it's a field where the game has fundamentally changed. Rachel Harrison's FCHEM (2016) exemplifies this shift

perfectly: a sculptural assemblage that incorporates gymnastic rings, jump ropes, and fitness balls alongside cement, burlap and heavy metal chain. Gym equipment or torture device? From a distance it feels tempting to use, but, upon closer inspection, its utility is illusory.

The exhibition's standout piece makes this ghostly absence literal. Richard Prince's rarely exhibited "Untitled (Backboard)" from 2008, on loan from the artist's personal collection, presents a basketball hoop attached to a disembodied, crudely painted car hood that leans precariously against the gallery floor. It's a masterpiece of dysfunctional sculpture— it carries the residue of its original function while being completely emptied of purpose, like finding a severed limb that still twitches with muscle memory.

This aesthetic of beautiful dysfunction runs throughout the exhibition. Michael E. Smith encases basketballs in urethane foam (Untitled, 2024), creating fossilized sporting goods that look like archaeological artifacts from a civilization that once played games. Fernando Marques Penteado covers tennis rackets in intricate embroidery ("Oleg Ivanhof [OI]," 2019 & "Enrico Carone [EC]," 2019) spelling out player names in ballpoint pen and thread—gorgeous objects that would disintegrate if you actually tried to hit a tennis ball with them. Charlie Koss arranges tennis balls in sculptural systems called "72 Unforced Errors," (2025) cataloging athletic failure rather than

celebrating athletic achievement. Each work carries that same quality as Prince's backboard: the memory of function wedded to the impossibility of use.

The exhibition's most telling contrast comes from placing a pommel horse attributed to Pierre Jeanneret (ca. 1960) from the Punjab University gymnasium in Chandigarh alongside contemporary works like Chadwick Rantanen's "Telescopic Pole" (2016). The piece was built for actual gymnasts within Le Corbusier's grand architectural vision—it embodies The Young Man's Home's earnest functionalism. Rantanen's work uses tennis balls and walker balls as adjustable sculptural components that you can reconfigure endlessly, but not for any athletic purpose.

Weekend Tournament reveals what happened to the intellectual athlete: he became the quantified self, then he disappeared entirely. The most striking aspect of the exhibition isn't what's present but what's conspicuously absent—bodies. In this sea of athletic equipment, the human form exists only as phantom, suggested by the negative space where flesh and bone once engaged with all these carefully preserved implements.

Two works make this absence playfully clear. Sam Stewart's "The Marty Cabinet" (2025) takes the shape of a striped shirt tucked into a pair of wooden trousers—a cabinet masquerading as a hollow athlete. Evoking the sensual flatness of Domenico Gnoli's sartorial portraits, it's also an homage to ping-pong champion Marty Raisman (who's having quite

a cultural moment, with Josh Safdie's biopic starring Timothée Chalamet arriving later this year), but more than that, it's a perfect metaphor for contemporary sports culture: all the gear, all the style, but the body has vanished into abstraction. Al Freeman's "Softer Dodgers Jersey" (2024) compounds this ghostliness—an oversized uniform suspended from the gallery wall like sporting goods from the afterlife.

The show treats athletic equipment like museum artifacts, and perhaps that's exactly what they've become. Vintage medicine balls and parallel bars share space throughout the gallery, creating an environment where bodies exist only in suggested absence. In our screen-heavy world, sports remain one of the few places where bodies still matter in straightforward ways. But Weekend Tournament suggests we've moved beyond even aesthetic appreciation—we've arrived at equipment designed for bodies that never show up.

The transformation from "The Young Man's Home" to "Weekend Tournament" tracks a broader cultural shift. The 1935 apartment promised that the gym's honest transactions—effort, improvement, measurable progress—could be integrated into daily life. Instead, daily life now operates according to the gym's logic without the gym's rewards. We have home gyms bristling with monitoring devices, boutique fitness studios that function like secular cathedrals, and Peloton bikes that transform exercise into aspirational media consumption. The intellectual athlete

evolved into something he probably wouldn't recognize: a figure obsessed with optimization data but increasingly removed from actual physical engagement.

But Weekend Tournament offers one fascinating exception to this pattern of dysfunction. Nestled within the gallery is a bespoke regulation size ping-pong table, painstakingly turned by Sam Stewart, perpetually in use, with scores covering the nearby backboard leading to a fictive pro shop, stocked and overseen by Vicente Munoz, the proprietor of New York's Pro Shop. Here, among carefully sourced vintage tennis uniforms, ceramics, and a magazine stand filled with niche sports publications from a bygone era, Muñoz turns the restringing of rackets into a delicate ballet. It's the only space in the exhibition where athletic equipment retains its functional purpose, where the promise of actual play remains alive.

The pro shop creates a strange temporal bubble within Weekend Tournament's field of action. While the rest of the exhibition presents sports equipment as aesthetic objects removed from use, Muñoz's corner preserves the ritual of maintenance and preparation. Here, function hasn't been aestheticized—it's been ritualized. This is what remains when the athletes disappear but someone still believes in the possibility of their return.

By treating most sports equipment as sculpture, the show reveals hidden formal qualities we miss

when we're focused on function. Cory Arcangel's "Three Stripes" (218) transforms the Adidas logo into pure abstraction. Will Gisel's "Bellwether" (2024) incorporates artificial turf into minimal sculptural forms that suggest playing fields without defining specific games.

The curators understand that they're not just exhibiting objects; they're staging the afterlife of an idea. The Young Man's Home believed that proper design could heal modernity's mind-body split. Weekend Tournament operates from the assumption that this split has become permanent, maybe even productive. Instead of integration, we get aesthetic appreciation. Instead of use, we get contemplation. Instead of the gymnasium replacing the museum, we get the museum absorbing the gymnasium.

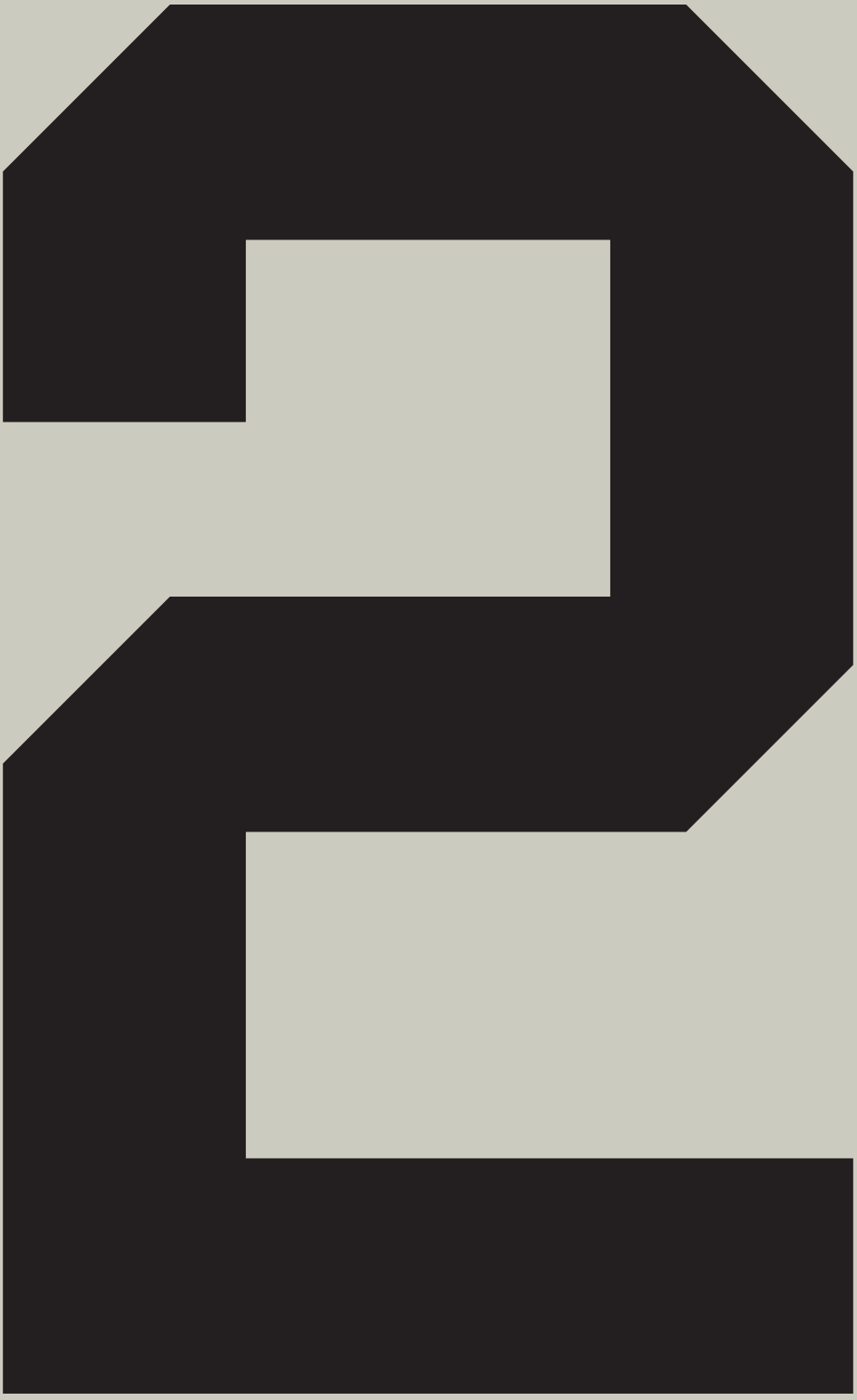
This might sound like defeat, but Weekend Tournament makes it feel like possibility. The show's "field of action" doesn't demand that we choose between physical and intellectual engagement—it creates a space where both can coexist without the pressure to synthesize. You can appreciate the formal beauty of a medicine ball without feeling obligated to lift it. You can contemplate the engineering elegance of parallel bars without attempting a routine.

Walking through Weekend Tournament, you encounter the archaeology of modernism's most optimistic dream: that we could be whole people in spaces designed for wholeness. The exhibition preserves this dream while acknowledging its impossibility under current condi-

tions. We can no longer imagine the gymnasium and the study as natural partners, but we can create gallery spaces where their artifacts converse across the decades, sharing stories about bodies and minds, effort and rest, play and work.

The intellectual athlete remains compelling precisely because the integration he represented now seems like science fiction. Weekend Tournament offers something different: not the promise of wholeness, but the pleasure of contemplating our beautiful fragmentation. It's The Young Man's Home for an age that's given up on the young man's earnestness but can't quite abandon his dreams.

The Proprietary Gymnasium:
Art, Design, and the Athletic Imperative
written by Jessica Joffe
on the occassion of *Weekend Tournament*,
organized by Raquel Cayre and Ariel Ashe for Raisonné NY.
06:04—07:31:2025



YOU WANT ME TO LIFT THAT?
SPORTS AND ENERGY IN WEEKEND TOURNAMENT
NAOMI FRY

In Weekend Tournament, presented at Raisonné's 16 Crosby Street gallery, co-curators Raquel Cayre and Ariel Ashe have assembled around sixty art and design objects that examine the ways in which energy can be captured in the athletic—and aesthetic—space. As I walked through the exhibition's rooms—practically teeming with objects, displayed as if to rub and push against one another, like so many sharp-elbowed players in a ball game—I felt the works' poignant attempt to transcend their own boundaries, to capture the swing and thump of athletic action, but also transmit it outward, to their viewers.

The exhibition groups together pieces from the wholesomely straightforward to the more slyly tricky, all linked in some way to sports. And while the show doesn't emphasize an expressly male perspective, it nonetheless immediately brought to my mind Philip Roth's 1969 classic "Portnoy's Complaint," with its protagonist's wild, masculine life force imprinting itself, any which way, on the things making up the world around him. There's something about the restlessness contained within the works in Weekend Tournament that calls to mind Alex Portnoy's central dilemma: where the hell to put all the energy roiling within him. (As a lover and, some might say, a bit of a scholar of Jewish masculinity, I'm always

attuned to these questions of channeling and displacement—the way energy converts itself, variously, into intellectual pursuits, worldly ambition, antagonism toward family and peers, or, naturally, into the realm of sports.)

Adam McEwan's Fountain (2008) is seemingly a readymade of a drinking fountain of the sort found in any school or gym but is, in fact, a graphite sculpture cast as a monument to uselessness, its dumb, gray denseness packing within it a frustrated energy. No one will be able to quench their post-game thirst using this fountain, just like no one will be able to play pickup using Richard Prince's Untitled (Backboard) (2008)—a blunted, vertically positioned car hood fitted with a basketball hoop that hovers a mere inch or two above floor level, like a monocle gripped in the hollow of a blind eye. The implement's thwarted desire, however, still resides within the work. In Rachel Harrison's sculptural installation FCHEM (2016), too, the polystyrene, cement, and burlap makings of an outsize orange kettle ball render it a kind of sick joke, an energy bomb with no place to go. (You want me to lift that?)

These pieces capture something essential about the relationship between athletic equipment and the body—the way objects can become repositories for both shame and aspiration. Roth understood this duality perfectly when he had teenage Portnoy slink into a burlesque house in downtown Newark on a Sunday morning to surreptitiously masturbate his way to completion, using his baseball mitt to catch his own

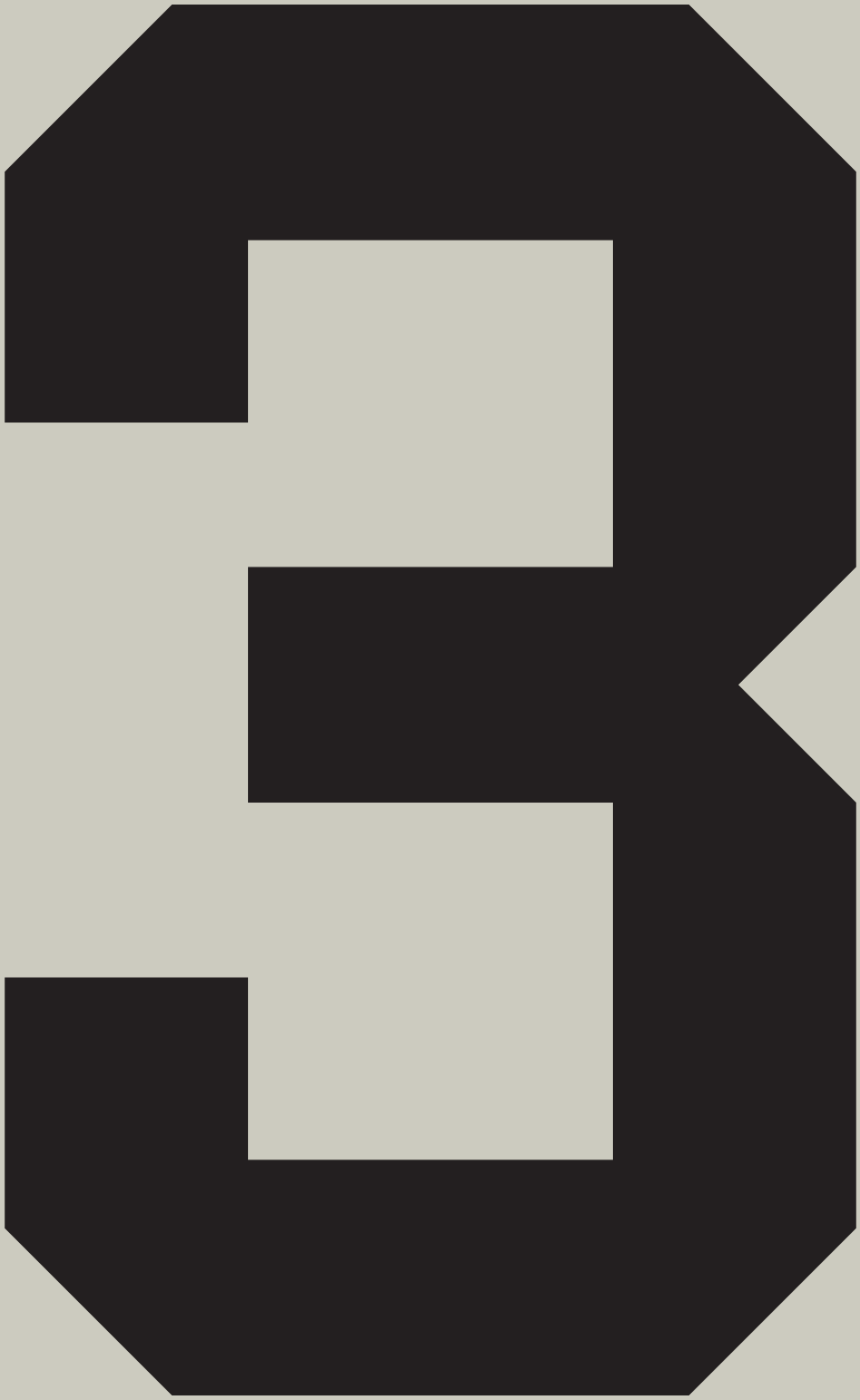
ejaculate. Here, sports equipment is made shameful for its role as repository for sleazy bodily activity. (“What misery descends upon me as the last drops finally dribble into my mitt,” Portnoy laments, neatly capturing that depressingly familiar post-jerk-off feeling.) But athletics, and athletic gear, can also take on a more wholesome quality in Portnoy’s world, as when, inhaling “that sour springtime bouquet in the pocket of my fielder’s mitt,” he sits in the bleachers watching neighborhood men playing softball, thinking: “I love those men! I want to grow up to be one of those men!”

The artists in Weekend Tournament seem equally aware of this push and pull between hope and frustration, between the promise of athletic transcendence and its inevitable limitations. Jasper Marselis’s Rachel (2024), in which a roughly whittled piece of wood is stuck brutally in a bowling ball’s gripping hole, enacts a kind of chakra-blocking within the sculpture itself, and the various vintage medicine balls strewn near it remind us that sometimes, the point of sports equipment is pain rather than ease. In Chadwick Rantanen’s Telescopic Pole (2015), adjustable aluminum pegs stretch from ceiling to floor, where they are rooted in tennis balls decorated with smiley faces. The balls’ grins read as long-suffering rather than game. How much longer must they withstand this pressure, this tension? In a series of small paintings by John Roman Brown (all 2025), each depicting a member of a high-school basketball team posing in his uniform, the players’

smiles, too, seem rictus-like. Looking at them, I was reminded of the immortal words of Drake, that present-day bard of Black-Canadian-Jewish masculinity, “I got enemies, got a lot of enemies / Got a lot of people tryna drain me of this energy.” The weight of portraying the role of “athlete” appears to be a thorny performance, laden with pressures. Sometimes the energy that sports promise to channel can become yet another burden to bear.

But the exhibition’s most poignant pieces may be those that pay tribute to Philip Roth’s approximate contemporary, the midcentury ping-pong champ Marty Reisman. In Sam Stewart’s Ping-Pong Table (2025), the artist models a functional bespoke table on Reisman’s own, which can be used by visitors to the exhibition, allowing actual athletic energy to be let loose, in situ. The Marty Cabinet (2025), also by Stewart, serves as that table’s counterpart. Fashioned out of plywood, in the shape of a life-size man’s torso and legs, clad in a striped button-down shirt and pants, the wall-hung cabinet opens to reveal a shelving unit, on which extra ping-pong balls are kept. What would we see if we were able to open a man up to look inside him? To judge by Stewart’s piece, we would discover a single desire: to always retain a bit more energy within, ready to be spent whenever the moment calls for it.

You Want Me to Lift *That*?
Sports and Energy in Weekend Tournament
written by Naomi Fry
on the occassion of *Weekend Tournament*,
organized by Raquel Cayre and Ariel Ashe for Raisonné NY.
06:04—07:31:2025



SIDELINE DIARY
DARREN BADER

For those of us (e.g. me) unversed in classical languages, puerile wordplay is ready at hand. A puerile query: are athletics and aesthetics akin? Let’s have a peek...

Two etymology apps regard the respective roots as prize (athletic) and perception (aesthetic). Isn’t art a prize, per se? And ostensibly a prize of perception? Are athletics an axiom of perception? Let’s turn to the exhibition...

01:04-31:46

- Walking into the exhibition I sensed scent-memory of school gym.
- And later at my keyboard, that subtle miasma of (over-)chlorinated swimming pool.
- Followed by mnemonic squeak of sneakers on the hardwood (presumably dampened by oil paint).
- Followed by a perfect cool spout for a mostly-parched mouth, courtesy of a pretty-ugly water fountain (its graphite likeness [courtesy Adam McEwen] appeals to eye and eyed-tactile not touching the tongue).
- On to indistinct apathetic multi-memory of golf course.

- Then to antipathetic memory of dew and cut grass defiling my schoolbound sneakers; and then to sympathetic memory of sledding down snowpacked fairways.
- Less sensory but not short on memory is tennis perennially shaming me.
- Could I conclude with an uncouth comment on conspicuous absence?
- Yes. But let’s end on an erstwhile endnote: a chance child’s painting in the exhibition gift shop, *Portrait of a Once-Gap-Toothed Demigod*.

36:19-44:24

- Form might be considered conspicuous anti-absence, not [and never] to be confused with the brutal, inscrutable, indescribable condition of presence.
- As presence, athletics nourish various biological appetites. Aesthetics nourish appetites as well, perhaps less various. Neither speak to form without naming form.
- If aesthetics is a category best known for beauty, there’s undoubtedly an aesthetic [formal?] cult within the [formal?] cult of athletics (perhaps this speaks to the axiom[atic] mentioned above).
- This relationship isn’t neatly inverted. Aesthetics as field of study often forgets feats (and follies) of locomotion—even as optical and auditory faculties are well-served by them.

- Is form a faculty? Arguably, spuriously, absolutely.
- Furthermore, form is always poised to provide—it just needs a primed and/or piqued eye to endow it. Form-hunt for fitness (art-swoon for sport).
- Thus the record, the purported form, the purported norm.
- And so—and yet—blent in daily eternity: we the species, we the forms of ourselves formalizing selves, however formlessly.
- Enough of this you say?
- Let’s get serious: game rhymes with shame, name, and fame—and came.
- Past or present, athletic rituals are consummately civilized. The art of appreciating art is perhaps too civilized, a false advocate (objects and images social surrogates) for the proper station of humanity, i.e. the embrace of *animate* presence.
- Of course *anima* means soul and that’s often thought to be bereft of body.
- So let’s move on to moving pictures...

Halftime

There’s an old film about young John Donne poking about inns, bins, dins, and sins, haplessly seeking the most majestic of the Muses. Soused in Saturn, he peers from his garret window: Behold,

a sublunary sublime of muddied men menacing a—
he squints to discern it—leather sphere. If this
be celestial motion, he cogitates, perhaps that
poignant poesy I poorly pursued, the “raging
respite in relentless ruin,” is here more
truthfully revealed. So Donne breaks his contract
with Calliope and joins the league of proto-rugby.
He later becomes an eminent theologian, after which
he retires to the Ft. Myers area to focus on his
golf game.

Second half

Undonne, there’s nothing true under the sun...

Art but begs to outwrite the spheres’ awesome might
while it helps us to steer our terrestrial here—
that prism of dear, fear, far, never-near. Again
it’s the game, all ever the same, and the game
clock crescendos, i.e. asks who’s to blame: *Is it
time erased by evasive space or that time erases
evasive spaces*? These asynchronous axes that motor
our minds, asking form to opine: *How to what gain
and who which person could*? Illusion’s retort:
Let’s quash quaint personhood. Perhaps sanest to
say: *would that would that would.* It’s good that
age isn’t without its enchantments.

So back to the old and into the nude...

Extra time

Gymnos = no clothes; gymnasium the place to be nakedly athletic together. I can’t recall being naked in gym class (and surely not the locker room), but I’m semi-certain youth moves about in senseless suites of sweat. All the while adults depart the rugged present for the simplicities, the base joys, of the past.

Shootout

Past presently, with future foreclosed,

The Sideliner™

Shout out

To all ye brave sculptors (brave designers included). May form never be the pure norm.

Sideline Diary written by Darren Bader
on the occassion of *Weekend Tournament*, organized by
Raquel Cayre and Ariel Ashe for Raisonné NY.
06:04—07:31:2025

DESIGN AS SPORT
DIANA BUDDS

The intersection of design and athletics represents largely unexplored territory, yet when these fields converge—as demonstrated in *Weekend Tournament*—something extraordinary emerges. Curators Raquel Cayre and Ariel Ashe have assembled an exhibition that examines how designers harness athletic culture to shape contemporary life, investigates the formal properties of recreational equipment, and applies craft and aesthetic consideration to utilitarian objects traditionally overlooked by such scrutiny. The exhibition offers an accessible entry point for broader critical engagement with our material culture.

The evolution from peach basket to basketball hoop neatly reflects design's entire trajectory from necessity to refinement. When James Naismith nailed peach baskets to the elevated track in his Springfield gymnasium in 1891, he was solving an immediate problem: how to train athletes indoors during Massachusetts winters. Those baskets—chosen simply because they were available—required a janitor with a ladder to retrieve the ball after each successful shot. The subtle variations in silhouette captured in Richard Prince's *Untitled (Backboard)* (2008), entirely useless in its floor-bound state, and Clay Brown & Ryan Kmieske's *Pecan Drop* (2025) with its single tiny Polo logo stencil and

heavy metal net trace this object's metamorphosis from agricultural surplus to precision-engineered equipment with standardized dimensions and nets that released the ball automatically. John Roman Brown's *Ten Feet* (2025) depicts that *decisive moment*: multiple players leap toward a ball whose trajectory remains uncertain, capturing how necessity's improvisation became spectacle's choreography. The peach basket's transformation mirrors every design evolution in the exhibition—functional objects refined through use, standardized through adoption, and elevated through conscious aesthetic consideration.

Design occupies a contested territory between art and engineering, between aesthetic contemplation and bodily engagement. Unlike painting or sculpture, which invite observation, designed objects demand physical interaction to fulfill their purpose—they are incomplete without the user's body in motion. This interdependence becomes most pronounced in athletic equipment, where design failures translate directly into physical limitation or injury. Objects evolve through use, refined by the very bodies that engage with them. Athletic objects crystallize this principle—they must perform under stress, adapt to human biomechanics, and improve through repeated testing. Where fine art might transcend function, sports equipment succeeds only through it.

While we readily appreciate a chair's sculptural qualities, higher-performance objects like

gym equipment often evade such formal consideration. Rachel Harrison's 2016 sculpture *FCHEM* subverts this oversight. Resembling a wood-framed fitness apparatus complete with calisthenics rings, barbell, jump rope, and oversized kettlebell, the piece requests appreciation for these everyday implements' formal qualities and their integration into modern domestic and commercial gyms. Calisthenics, rooted in Ancient Greece and once exclusive to professional athletes, reached broader populations through the 19th-century physical culture movement aimed at societal improvement—a project that accelerated within 20th-century modernism. The kettlebell, meanwhile, originated as a counterweight Russian farmers employed to measure crops. Its integrated handle and spherical mass facilitate easy movement—an advantageous quality for recreational weightlifting.

By assembling objects with legible functions, *Weekend Tournament* engages visitors through familiarity before introducing conceptual complexity. Objects and their users exist in constant dialogue—each reshaping the other through repeated contact. A well-worn pommel horse, attributed to Pierre Jeanneret, from the gymnasium hall at Panjab University, invites reflection on activities deemed essential for modern society's development, which Chandigarh (the Northern Indian city famously masterplanned by Le Corbusier) was designed to foster. Sam Stewart's regulation ping-pong table (2025), featuring handcrafted wooden frame and

turned legs inspired by 1940s and 1950s designs, functions equally as fine furniture and sports equipment.

We navigate a landscape of unexamined objects, each embedded with ideologies and assumptions about how bodies should move, what constitutes improvement, and whose needs matter in design decisions. *Weekend Tournament* reveals that our most mundane recreational tools—the kettlebell's agricultural origins, the pommel horse's modernist aspirations, the ping-pong table's domestic integration—encode entire worldviews about leisure, labor, and human potential. In recognizing design's athletic dimension, we discover that every object is already in competition: competing for our attention, our space, our bodies. The question becomes not whether we engage with this contest, but whether we do so as conscious participants or passive consumers.

Design as Sport written by Diana Budds
on the occassion of *Weekend Tournament*,
organized by Raquel Cayre and Ariel Ashe for Raisonné NY.
06:04—07:31:2025