views occurred during the last 15
days of the exhibition. As the sculpture
now stands, two small rooms
are bisected by yellow lines, whose
elementary placement results in a
charged expanse all the more mem-
orable for its ability to generate
sculptural tension with such modest
means.

The vertical black, blue, and yellow acrylic yarns of Untitled (Scul-
tural Study, Twelve-Part Vertical Construction) (ca. 1987/2012) form
both an open and closed structure
in which the cords establish —
momentarily — a fixed relation to
the space around them. The viewer’s
movement holds particular promise
in this work, since the lines change
as we make our way past them. In
comparison to the fine distinctions
of the cord sculptures, I found the
limbs, they rush toward exhausted
collapse and return to primordial
lumps.

In one sense, Schulnik depicts the
fashioning and dismantling of sculp-
tural figures, the continuity and cor-
rections of artmaking. Nothing is
permanent or real; everything is part
of an organic flux and entropy. On
another level, hers is a hermetic, nar-
rative of birth, human interaction,
and demise. With a studied lack of
finish, Schulnik’s work retains a fresh,
improvisatory air that belies the
paintstaking hours of fabrication, per-
haps spoiling the idea of artistic
permanence again, but without any
sense of deliberately poor materials
as in Arte Povera. Instead, oil paint-
ings are built up with thick layers
that reveal a single cenital image,
and ceramic sculptures, hand-built
with a vigorous directness, project
an enervating ineptitude common
to the art of the disabled.

The energy and stupefying banality of the sculptures offered the show’s
greatest strength after the video,
showing the building-up and tear-
ing-down of the characters in Mound.
A seated cat with raised paws,
Standing Gin #3 (2011), appears
in stark white, glazed porcelain
with black, hollow eyes. At 19 inches
high, it matches the size of many
19th-century European animal stat-
uettes, but with far greater infor-
mality. Perked up, alert ears seem
to serve as the blinded animal’s
only sensory organs. Startling in its
vulnerability, Standing Gin #3 res-
cues the kitsch cat figure from
tacky oblivion through an undercur-
rent of danger and damage.

Hobo Clown with Long Nose sug-
gests a ravaged Pinocchio in carved,
un glazed terra cotta. His open
mouth conveys panic or distress, and
the crude, urgent hand-building
underscores an uncanny, expression-
istic sense of defeat. Purple Cat-
Possum is seated like Standing Gin
#3. Nearly two feet tall, this being
could be an animal hybrid or weird
Pittsburgh
“Gestures: Intimate Friction”
Mattress Factory

It was no surprise that “Gestures: Intimate Friction,” guest-curated by Mary-Lou Arscott, a British architect living in Pittsburgh, included architects and designers in addition to visual artists. In her statement, Arscott explains, “Our physical reality bumps up against us and then disappears from view... The process of creating the installations in this exhibition will be collapsing, constructive, and collaborative.” “Intimate Friction” aimed to engage viewers on several levels, going beyond the visual to encourage physical experience and participation. Nina Marie Barbuto, Dee Briggs, Nick Durrant, Jeremy Ficca, Pablo Garcia, Jenn Gooch, Ling He, Matt Huber, Nick Liadis, Gill Wildman, Spike Wolff, and the collective Transformation were given several weeks, extensive support, and the freedom to produce new works.

Briggs’s “Art You Can Get Into...” If you have $12, an indoor/outdoor piece at the 1414 annex building, was both critical and lighthearted, motivated by the artist’s interest in public space and museum pricing and accessibility. Strikingly red, galvanized steel tubes made by Hoffz sheet metal, which resembled periscopes, wrapped around and scaled the two-story building before penetrating the walls. Portholes tempted visitors and passersby to seek glimpses of what was housed inside.

In the first-floor gallery, Ficca tore up a section of plywood flooring to create his latest work that addressed time, past and present, by exposing the building’s underlying structure. Three curved wooden planes hovering over the site resembled birds in flight. The exposed sub-floor (made of aged wood) set up an alternate story about materiality, function, and use. This elegant piece disjointed the flow of space and demonstrated how ordinary plywood can be a practical substance as well as a transformative one.

On the second floor, Ling He’s interactive Wish exchange dandelion consisted of a pristine white room housing a tangle of white helium balloons held down with small lead weights. Visitors were invited to write down a special wish and attach it to a balloon string. The pull of gravity and the loss of air created a cacophony of varying heights and forms. Participants not only left subsequent viewers with a glimpse of themselves, they also augmented the visual dimension of the setting.

Gooch’s Illusive Home Splice installations turned up unexpectedly throughout this former townhouse, interacting with the space in eye-catching ways. Home Splice: Doorway, for instance, made you think that you were seeing a woman on the other side of an open bathroom door. Descending the stairs from the third floor, Home Splice: Stairs offered a startling apparition. On