

## Citations

## Sculpture Inside Outside

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
10 December 1988–5 March 1989

Reviewed by William F. Stern

"Sculpture Inside Outside" presented a survey of work by 17 emerging American sculptors. Organized by Martin Friedman, director of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the sculpture was selected for an exhibition that opened the Walker's new sculpture garden. In judging the results, it is clear that the curators sought new work representing directions in sculpture that have not received nearly the close critical examination they deserve. Given the depth and diversity of this exhibition, it is unfortunate that outside of Minneapolis, Houston was its only stop.

There is a common ground to the work, which is guided by a traditional sense of craftsmanship explored in a language of new materiality with a highly refined sense of texture. The work tends more toward abstraction than representation, though abetted by implied representation and symbolism. A link to the Minimalism of the sixties and seventies is also evident in much of the work. Where that movement sought absolute definition through reductive representation, the minimalism of these artists is more broadly directed, concerning itself as much with illusion, symbolism, fantasy, and humor as with the purity of idea and form that absorbed the earlier generation.

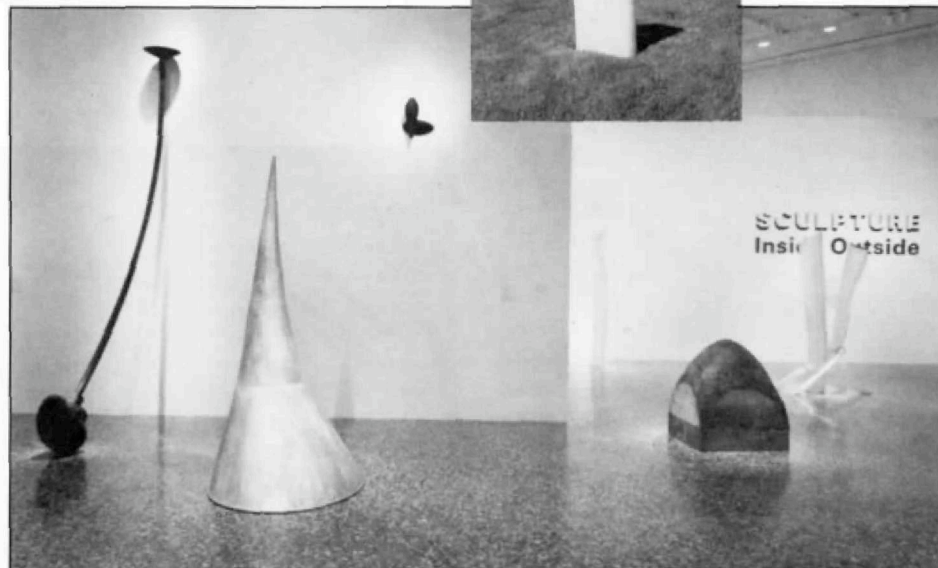
At first glance the work of Robert Therrien, Jene Highstein, and Martin Puryear seems most closely allied to the previous generation of Minimalists, through its reductive qualities and apparently pure use of material. But closer examination shows a divergent strategy. Therrien's 1986 untitled piece is made from mixed media on bronze. The mixing of media represents a break from the purer treatment of a single material favored in the sixties and seventies. The piece consists of three differently sized spheres stacked, snowmanlike, in allusion to the human body. Martin Puryear's work has a singular minimalism to its forms that is not derived from mathematical purity or repetition but rather is totemic in its use of odd shapes and forms. *Noblesse O*, 1987, is fashioned in the form of a twisted cone. From a distance the piece appears to be made of tin, but in reality it is constructed of red cedar with aluminum paint, as though alchemy and magic were at work. Jene Highstein plays with gravity by making objects that appear heavy out of lightweight materials. His 1986-87

untitled piece appears to be made of a polished, molded heavy metal when in fact it is of plaster on a metal armature. Both abstract and figurative in its evocations, the piece provokes paradoxical responses.

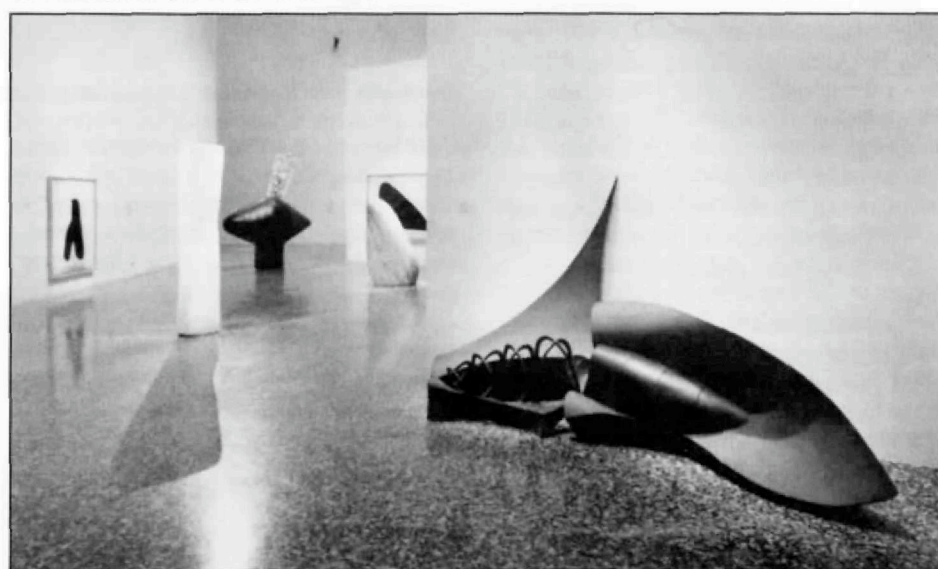
The illusion of weight and of material transcendence is elegantly explored in the work of Robert Lobe and Tom Butter. For his 1985 wall piece, *Killer Hill C.W.*, Lobe hammered sheets of anodized aluminum around a rock and a tree stump he found in the northeastern woods. While what was left in the woods has great bulk and weight, the replicated form is actually a lightweight "cast" of the rock and trunk, sectioned in half and attached to a wall. The viewer is caught between the reality and the illusion – the forms of nature opposed to the sculptor's play of material and abstraction. Tom Butter also explores the idea of sculpture as a shell. His 1987 *Fleece*, a translucent flow of fiberglass, resin, wire, and wire lath, directs the eye through the wire mesh and thick fiberglass to an internal center from which light seems to emanate.

The weightlessness of Butter's and Lobe's work is contrasted in the work of John Newman, whose 1984 floor piece, *Slow Commotion*, was manufactured from treated steel and combines geometric, shell-like shapes to make a work of organic abstraction. Of all the work in the exhibition, Newman's sculpture harks back most directly to a modernist's sense of geometric abstraction, in this case also linked to botanical and biological forms. Newman's work, like that of many of the artists here, is accompanied by large exploratory drawings, richly colored and skillfully drafted. Phoebe Adams's work is fabricated in the traditional method of cast bronze. *Bilge*, 1987, made of bronze with patina, appears to be part of the wall it is attached to. It has a slack, slinky quality that contrasts with its true bulk and weight.

*Cloud Hands Ritual Series 1982-83*, a sculpture by Michael Singer, is among the most arresting pieces in the exhibition. A fragile framework made of slender pieces of wood supported by bits of rock and sticks, it is bound together by natural structural forces without any adhesive material. It has the quality of a fantastic city from another time or universe – a miniature world of elegant fragility. Jin Soo Kim's untitled installation creates instead a dark and lugubrious world that the viewer walks through, a strange, compressed Hades of twisted branches, moss, and human artifacts. Michael Singer's world we



Left to right: Martin Puryear, *To Transcend*, 1987; *Noblesse O*, 1987; *For Beckwourth*, 1980. Tom Butter, *S.C.*, 1985; *Orbit*, 1986.



Foreground: John Newman, *Slow Commotion*, 1984. Background left to right: Jene Highstein, untitled, 1987; *Eolith 1*, 1986; untitled, 1986-87; *Blondie*, 1985. Far background: Brower Hatcher, *Starman*, 1985-88.

observe from a distance with abstract detachment, Jin Soo Kim's we enter and experience its earthiness.

Brower Hatcher, Donald Lipski, Robert Gober, and Walter Martin move far away from pure minimal abstraction, adding illusion, fantasy, and humor. Hatcher's 1985-88 *Starman* commemorates the 1986 appearance of Halley's Comet. The telescope form is made of a wire lattice in which bits and pieces that allude to archaeological relics are caught. Lipski deals with sculpture as parable, altering the found object so that its meaning expands. With *Passing Time #502*, 1980, red-tipped matchsticks wedged through the toe of a woman's shoe, vintage 1920, transform the suggestion of red nail polish into an insidious torch. Robert Gober's work is starkly minimal but

makes direct reference to real objects. His 1986 untitled piece is unequivocally a painted wooden bed complete with sheets and blanket. The piece was constructed by the artist, not bought or found, and has the lonely, dreamlike quality of an Edward Hopper painting. Walter Martin's *Of Bodies Born Up by Water*, 1987, a grandfather clock sharpened like a pencil at its base, bears a strange relationship to Barnett Newman's *Broken Obelisk*. Like Gober's work, this piece is not a found object but constructed as sculpture.

Judith Shea and Peter Shelton use the human form and clothing or allude to parts of the human form in their work. In Shea's *The Christening*, 1987, a hollow bronze torso stands between two fallen marble columns. The forms are direct, reduced and abstracted, but suggest

We're big on small business...

Patricia Sins Frederick  
BOOKKEEPING SERVICES  
2472 Bolsover • Suite 385  
522-1529

## D. Clayton &amp; Co.

welded bronze & aluminum frames  
handfinished hardwood frames  
gold & metal leafed frames  
sectional metal frames  
archival preparation  
textile preparation  
acrylic boxes

by appointment:  
880-4405

1422 Yale Street, Houston, Texas 77008

ancient art – an example of the recent trend toward historical allusion and figural representation. Peter Shelton mixes anatomy with illusion in *Bigflat-sack*, 1984-86, which suspends a large sack of rusted iron from the ceiling.

Steven Woodward uses materials normally associated with architecture and building, things he has salvaged from old houses or bought from the lumberyard, as in an untitled work from 1986 in which a portion of an aged slate roof hangs behind a small slate chair. Meg Webster's *Moss Bed*, 1988, is a rectangular box three feet high made of chicken wire, filled with moist earth and topped with a

layer of varied mosses. Fondly reminiscent of the earthworks of the seventies, it is nevertheless a contained structure, more object than setting.

It is encouraging to see museums seeking less celebrated work that has a cohesive relationship born of its own vision and integrity, here installed with intelligence and care by Alison Greene, the MFA's associate curator of 20th-century art. "Sculpture Inside Outside" gave audiences in Minneapolis and Houston a summary view of a bright, maturing group of sculptors and shows the fascinating range of possibilities in contemporary sculpture. ■

## Dallas—Ft. Worth Guidebooks

Discover Dallas—Fort Worth, by Virginia and Lee McAlester. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988, 97 pp., illus., \$9.95

The Park Cities: A Walker's Guide and Brief History, by Diane Galloway and Kathy Matthews. Dallas: SMU Press, 1988, 256 pp., illus., \$10.95

Cowtown Moderne: Art Deco Architecture of Fort Worth, Texas, by Judith Singer Cohen. College Station: Texas A&M University Press and Fort Worth Chapter, American Institute of Architects, 1988, 206 pp., illus., \$29.95

Reviewed by Stephen Fox

Until recently, architecture exercised little claim to popular attention in Texas. For those who follow the subject, and especially for those who believe that buildings and places constitute important cultural resources, it has been encouraging to see the growth of interest in architecture that has taken place here since the 1970s. Three new publications, all intended for a general audience, contribute to this trend.

*Discover Dallas—Fort Worth* is the first in an anticipated series of guidebooks to American cities by Virginia and Lee McAlester of Dallas, who logically began the series with the cities they knew best. What will recommend this guidebook especially to architecture aficionados is the extent to which the McAlesters feature architecture as the critical medium through which visitors can experience a city – axiomatic perhaps for the great cities of Europe and Asia, but a startling proposition for all but a handful of American towns. It is therefore amusing to see a capsule illustrated history of the Dallas skyscraper and a time-line cartoon depicting the succession of Big D's tallest buildings function as implicit metaphors for the city's evolution. Poor Fort Worth: it has to settle for an overview of the cattle industry.

For both cities a number of "sightseeing districts" are identified and their major architectural attractions profiled and ranked in terms of relative significance. Detailed, color-coded maps are provided for each district, with axonometric projections of the two downtowns and other densely built precincts. The guide also directs visitors to districts with concentrations of cultural institutions (with sidebars on the major museums and their collections, including building diagrams), established inner-city neighborhoods, and the glitziest suburban shopping and office districts. Brief histories of economic development and urban expansion preface the city sightseeing chapters. In addition there are very comprehensive lists, for the most part annotated, of accommodations, specialty shops, restaurants, and entertainment, all keyed to separate sets of color-coded maps. Dr. and Mrs.

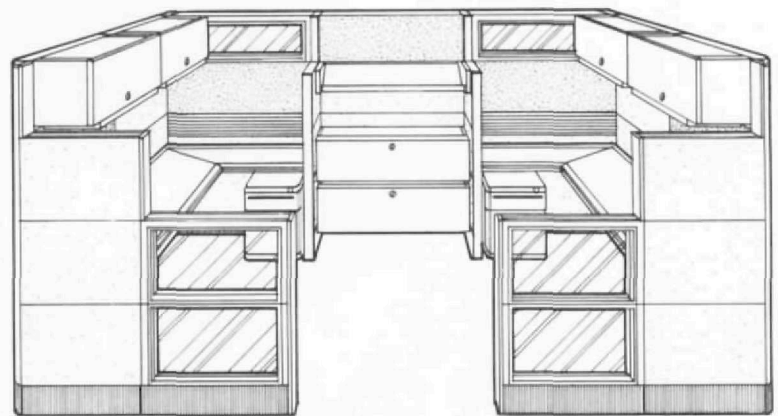
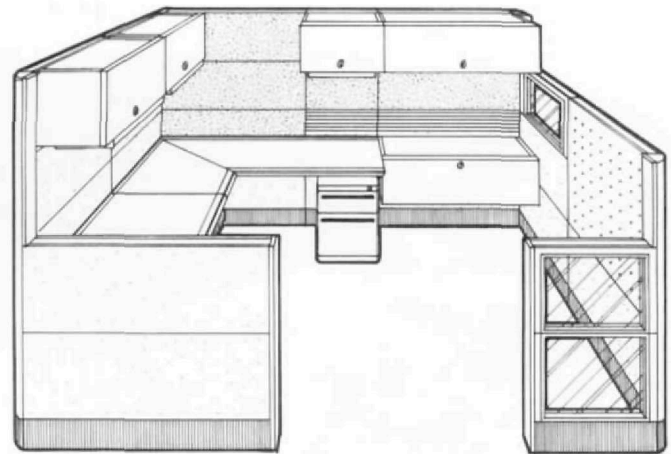
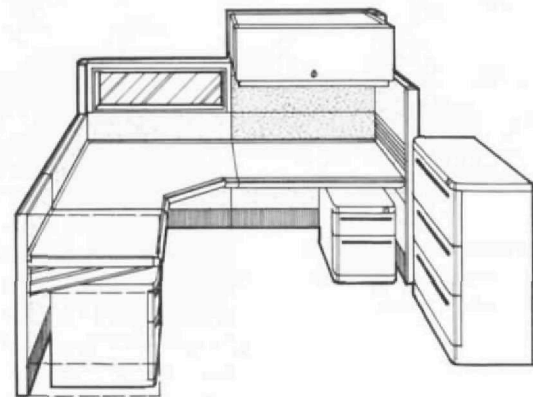
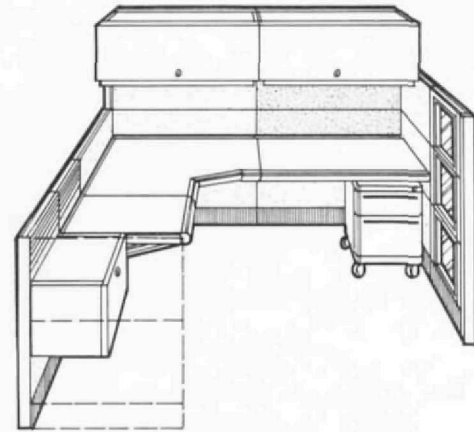
McAlester and the book's designer, the Sarabande Press, have packed in an extraordinary amount of information. The writing is lively and concise, while organization – how to find one's way around both the city and the guidebook – must have been given considerable thought. The only serious lapse is the poor color photo printing; images tend to be dark and colors are oversaturated and garish.

*Discover Dallas—Fort Worth* is a superior guidebook. By taking their subjects seriously as places, rather than as fields randomly dotted with unrelated destinations, the authors persuade us that these cities might actually be interesting to visit. The challenge that will confront the McAlesters is to sustain this level of enthusiasm and insight as they move on to other cities.

*The Park Cities: A Walker's Guide and Brief History*, by Diane Galloway and Kathy Matthews, contains a series of walking tours of Dallas's two most elite residential communities, the suburban towns of Highland Park and University Park. Buildings are called out and architects identified, but discussion of the designed environment tends to get submerged beneath extended anecdotal accounts of past and present residents and obscure events. Individual entries are too long and digressive for a tour book. Although routes are clearly delineated, individual sites are not marked, and both the choice of illustrations and the quality of printing are poor. *The Park Cities* lacks the sparkling tone of *Discover Dallas—Fort Worth*; consequently, it makes you doubt whether you would really enjoy taking one of the tours, a fatal flaw in a guidebook.

The Fort Worth Chapter of the American Institute of Architects sponsored publication of Judith Singer Cohen's *Cowtown Moderne: Art Deco Architecture of Fort Worth*, an extensively illustrated catalogue of the major works of modernistic architecture built in Fort Worth from the late 1920s through the 1940s. Mrs. Cohen's account is so engaging that one wishes she had written a full-scale architectural history of Fort Worth between the wars. She perceptively discusses the stylistic preferences of Fort Worth's principal commercial architects, Wyatt C. Hedrick and W. G. Clarkson, and their respective designers, Herman P. Koeppe and Charles O. Chromaster. Photographs by the author's husband, Donald M. Cohen, are especially useful in illustrating the ornamental detail through which these preferences were given form, and they handsomely supplement a wide array of archival images. *Cowtown Moderne* makes one want to know more about the architectural heritage of Fort Worth. It is to be hoped that Mrs. Cohen and the Fort Worth AIA will continue their collaboration in future volumes. ■

You could stand  
to be more flexible  
with your employees.



WE SELL OFFICE SYSTEMS THAT ADAPT TO CHANGING NEEDS. FROM ETHOSPACE® INTERIORS TO NEWHOUSE GROUP® FURNITURE. AND, AS A HERMAN MILLER DEALER, YOU CAN COUNT ON US FOR PERFECT INSTALLATION AND GUARANTEED ON-TIME DELIVERY. CALL US TODAY. THE ONLY THING WE'RE NOT FLEXIBLE ABOUT IS QUALITY.

DOWNTOWN/GALLERIA  
713 621-6288



© 1988 HERMAN MILLER, INC. ZEELAND, MI

# Photographs by Catherine Wagner



American Classroom  
 Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
 10 September–27 November 1988

Changing Places  
 Farish Gallery, Rice University  
 17 October–25 November 1988

Reviewed by Joanne Lukitsh

Houston audiences this past fall had the opportunity to take a considered look at some of the recent images of Catherine Wagner, a young California photographer and a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship. The Farish Gallery exhibition featured Wagner's 1979-81 photographs of the construction of the George Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco and of the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition in New Orleans; the latter project was commissioned by the Canadian Center for Architecture in Montreal. Wagner's photographs of schoolroom interiors, "American Classroom," a subject which has interested her since 1982, were displayed at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The two exhibitions presented an opportunity to evaluate how Wagner's cerebral style of self-conscious photographic objectivity negotiated the

transition from the grandiose public spaces of convention hall construction and exposition site to the semipublic rooms of elementary schools, a police academy, and technical institutes.

In a 1987 lecture Wagner explained her approach to her subjects:

*Choosing something as objective as a construction site [for an empty classroom] forces us to bring new emotions, our own emotions, to the way we view the picture. We are forced to reckon with our own culture, our own time, our own sense of being at this time, without a preconceived set of values and ideas.<sup>1</sup>*

For Wagner, the objectivity expressed in her choice of subject and realized in the form of her photographs promises the

Catherine Wagner, Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy Classroom, Kansas City, Missouri, 1987.

viewer an experience almost primal in its intensity, but one achieved at the expense of an appreciation of the specificity and historicity of the "objective" construction site. From her characteristically high vantage point Wagner represents the Moscone Center's complex of girders, pipes, and excavated trenches as almost preternaturally inert; even the Louisiana World Exposition's profusion of idiosyncratic architectural details and entertainment activities is submitted to the stasis of her compositional order and dispassionate rendition of detail and tone.

Wagner's photographs of American classrooms cover a range of geographic locations and instructional purposes. Her early images were typically shot looking towards the front of the classroom, often featuring the characteristic blackboard and teacher's lectern. More recent images from the series are what she describes as "desktop still lifes": science projects, objects in a sandbox, graffiti on a desk surface. Common to nearly all of the images is the absence of students, a device that enables the viewer to scan the images almost as if they were sensitive photographs of period rooms at the local museum; but Wagner is not interested in constructing a topology of classrooms. The tangibility of all of the information represented in her images is, however, at odds with her style. In contrast, the more recent "desktop still lifes" unite her photographic form with a more circumscribed and poetic content. ■

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the essay by Anne Wilkes Tucker, "No-Nonsense Scrutiny in Search of Vernacular Beauty," published in *American Classroom: The Photographs of Catherine Wagner* (Millerton, 1988); the introjection is Tucker's.

Loew

McLean

---

Museum Area

---

Residential Property

---

2623 Kipling  
 Houston, Texas 77098  
 713 522-2010

## TOPOPHILIA

INFORMATION SERVICES

*Research support and online information retrieval in:*

- CITY & REGIONAL PLANNING
- URBAN AFFAIRS
- ARCHITECTURE
- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
- CONSTRUCTION
- DESIGN
- REAL ESTATE
- TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

*Online sources include:*

- The Architecture Database*  
(Royal Institute of British Architects)
- Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals*  
(Columbia University)
- ICONDA  
(Int'l. Council for Building Research,  
W. Germany)
- Planning Exchange Database*  
(Planning Exchange, Scotland)
- Transportation Research Information Service*  
(U.S. DOT)
- PAIS  
(Public Affairs Information Service, N.Y.)

*Professional, confidential, and responsive research services providing information for: Articles, Reports, Books, Conference Papers, Theses, Proposals, Presentations, Litigation Support, Marketing Plans.*

4 1 5. 6 7 3. 0 3 4 7

## STUCCO-PLASTER RESTORATION

### FINELY CRAFTED ARCHITECTURAL CAST STONE

- SANTA FE FIREPLACES
- SMOOTH or FLUTED PILASTERS
- MOTIFS
- BASES and CAPITALS
- ARCHES
- KEYSTONES
- CONSULTING SERVICES
- CHIMNEY CAPS
- WINDOW SILLS
- TABLETS COLUMNS
- REPRODUCTIONS
- PLASTER STUCCO
- CORNICES
- PATCHING
- ACCENT WALLS
- UNIQUE HOODS

## DONALD CURTIS

(713) 477-6118