

# JOHANNES VOGT

## Regenesis – some thoughts on Garth Evans' Breakdown, 1971

Breakdown is an extraordinarily rich work that problematizes the object and the viewer's engagement with sculpture. Its genesis around 1970 meshes with larger debates taking place on both sides of the Atlantic, scrutinizing, deconstructing and re-imagining the nature of art and the role of the spectator. This work stands as a kind of lens through which we can consider a key point in Garth Evans' career as well as many of these wider aesthetic and art theoretical issues. Unlocking and exploring Breakdown's full dimensions invites lengthy consideration in essay or exhibition form, this note introduces the work and hints at some aspects of this larger and more complex narrative.

The immediate context for the production of Breakdown was Garth Evans' fellowship with the British Steel Corporation (BSC) originally awarded for one year, and extended to two (1969-71). Garth has spoken of this as a moment of crisis in his practice precipitated on the one hand by a desire to stop making objects while continuing to make sculpture and on the other by the Fellowship's requirement to work in steel. Conscious of the long shadow cast by David Smith and, more immediately, Anthony Caro this demand temporarily halted Garth's ability to produce sculpture. Instead he visited numerous sites owned and operated by British Steel, took a series of remarkable black and white photographs, created a series of prints, planned training films for BSC workers, wrote reports about his findings for the company's managers and curated a show for Inno 71 at the Hayward Gallery comprising steel objects he selected from pieces fabricated in BSC plants.

That Garth's response should have taken a socially and politically engaged direction fitted the aspirations of the Artists Placement Group run by Barbara Steveni who had organised the fellowship. This radical response was most publicly felt in his decision to show steel forms at the Hayward, which presented a startlingly direct challenge to hierarchical divisions between fine art and industrially produced objects in Britain's first purpose-built kunsthalle. On a personal level, Garth's Fellowship activities created a pattern of action, verging on the performative, which flowed into the studio and helped free the deadlock in his practice.

In tandem with the Fellowship, and no less important, in terms of what was (or was not) happening in the studio, was Garth's parallel involvement with a radical new teaching programme at St. Martin's School of Art. In 1969 he and three others (Peter Atkins, Gareth Jones and Peter Harvey) set up and ran a bold, pedagogical experiment which has become known as the 'A Course'. Some of the concepts, power structures and working practices behind this project merged with the questioning, confusion and, ultimately, resolution in Garth's sculpture.

Finally in 1971, a breakthrough occurred and Breakdown began to take shape. The piece was constructed of rectangular hollow lengths of steel to which further lengths were added at differing angles. Each section was welded together with others to create a complex, impenetrable web. As he assembled Breakdown, Garth demanded of himself and the piece that there should be no pattern, repetitions, opening, focus or path through the work. The outcome was a demanding sculpture full of questions, tensions and poetic resonances. Indeed Breakdown's structure purposely defies comprehension even as its outer limits are well defined to

the point of abruptness. Viewing the work at eye level the spectator encounters a bristling, tangled web of steel branches that make the work appear defensive if not overtly hostile. Yet stepping away from the piece and, especially, looking down on it from above, the sculpture assumes a more serene and approachable aspect. In fact explored from this perspective, the lengths of steel seem like rigid, unyielding strokes of a pen or brush, etching and defining the surrounding space in a manner that is simultaneously sculptural and pictorial.

On completion Breakdown was shown only once at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, in British Sculpture '72. Soon afterwards the work was stolen from outside the studio (presumably for scrap). Despite the fleeting appearance of the work in 1972 and its lengthy absence, Breakdown has continued to exert a profound influence on Garth's work. No less significantly, through the new direction in Garth's sculpture that Breakdown unleashed, the work and its implications for the sculptural object have rippled across the practices of younger generations of British sculptors.

In 2013 Breakdown was painstakingly reconstructed using the drawing Garth made to map the exact position of each element. The work's pivotal position in Garth's practice has become still clearer as a result of this recent regensis. Its constituent elements build on the non-referential forms he had used in the 1960s and the 'rules' he had evolved to guide his compositions. Equally, Breakdown looks forward to new preoccupations in the works of the 1970s with a range of humble materials and a focus on surface, explored in floor-based sculptures that shroud, blanket and efface while simultaneously requiring the viewer to think about what is hidden beneath. This fresh preoccupation evolves out of the logic of Breakdown and one of the projects undertaken during the BSC fellowship. Garth took a series of colour slides of manhole covers which fascinated him as potential 'openings to an underground world'. The carpet sculptures of the 1970s invite the viewer to enter or react to this liminal space.

Breakdown rose phoenix-like for the Arts Council Collection retrospective at Longside Gallery in 2013. Although it looked remarkable against the beautiful landscape surrounding Yorkshire Sculpture Park, the essentially urban and architectural quality of the piece was missing in this context. Since then a significant number of contextual materials have resurfaced - prints, photographs, drawings, colour slides, sound and film pieces which offer the basis for a fascinating and rich exhibition particularly if this is used as the platform for a wider exploration of issues (only briefly touched on in past shows and publications) concerning trans-Atlantic dialogues between European art and Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism.

Ann Compton  
December 2013

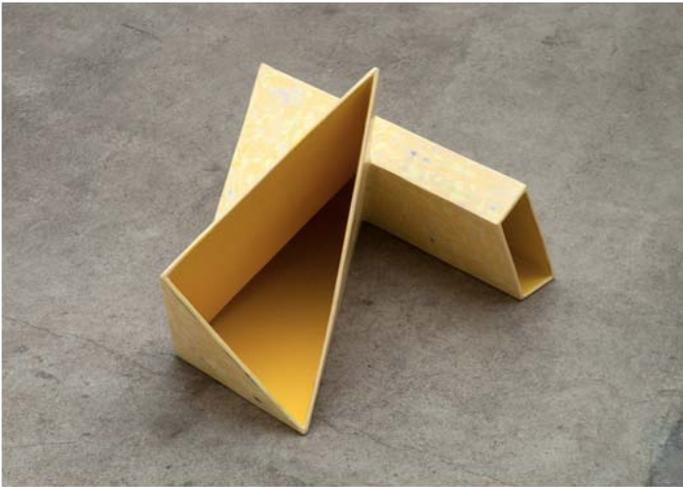
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## artcritical

the online magazine of art and ideas

### From the Horse's Mouth: Artists on their art this season in New York

by THE EDITORS Wednesday, September 25th, 2013



Garth Evans, Bears Ear (Auricula), 1985-87. Epoxy resin, fiberglass, paint over foam core, 16 x 31 x 20 inches. Courtesy of Vogt Gallery

Lectureland is truly under way in New York City in museums, galleries and art schools and college departments as the academic year plays catch up with the Fall art season. artcritical.com's LECTURES/PANELS/EVENTS column in our extensive listings department remains the most comprehensive place to keep track of them all.

And of particular significance to gallerygoers is any chance to hear directly from makers: "From the horse's mouth" as the saying goes.

Last week at Vogt Gallery, for instance, British-born sculptor Garth Evans launched the first comprehensive monograph on his work, "Garth Evans Sculpture: Beneath the Skin," in his show at that gallery. The book, edited by Ann Compton with contributions from various hands, include a thoughtful and obviously very personal set of observations by the artist's wife, Leila Philip, is published by PWP with assistance from the Henry

Moore Foundation. Evans will be in conversation this evening, from 6.30pm, with artcritical Publisher/Editor David Cohen. (525 West 26th Street, Suite 205.) [ARTICLE UPDATED]

Pratt Institute's Visiting Lecture Series kicked off September 30 with maverick provocateur Tom Sachs on his work. Other speakers in this series this fall on the Brooklyn campus are Aura Satz (October 7), Leigh Ledar (November 18), and Judith Bernstein (December 9). (7PM Memorial Hall, 200 Willoughby Avenue.)

And the New York Studio School Evening Lecture Series opened Tuesday, October 1, with a conversation between Svetlana Alpers and Alexi Worth in a discussion focused on Alper's new book, on the art historian's new adventures in seeing the world since moving to New York City, titled "Roof Life." The next day sculptor Alain Kirili discusses Matisse's sacred work at Saint-Paul de Vence in southern France and his own forays into the theme of crucifixion with Father Paul Anel, a priest whose special devotion to art was expressed through his celebrating his first mass in the Matisse chapel. Other artists speaking this season at the School include Louise Fishman (October 8), Lisa Yuskavage (in conversation with Phong Bui, October 15), Hilary Harkness (November 5), Paul Resika (in conversation with Jennifer Samet, November 12), Robert Taplin (December 3) and Tina Barney (December 10). (8 West 8 Street at 6.30PM).

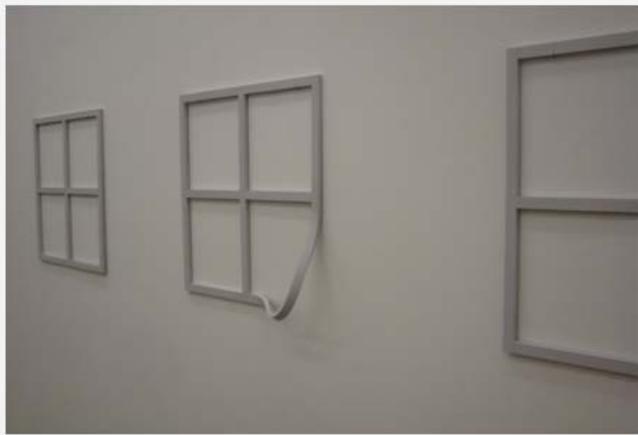
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## Art in Limbo

For emerging art historians, curators, and artists who are in flux.

### Ebb & Flow: Garth Evans at Johannes Vogt

by Andrew Knutson • September 23, 2013



Frames (Echoes) 1-3, 1971-74

Form is a basic element of art. If something is constructed, manipulated, or even painted, a change in form or shape will occur. It is this fundamental concept that is the basis for the work of Garth Evans at Johannes Vogt Gallery. Through using form as a starting point, Evans works beyond this “simple” element to transform material while obscuring the lines of abstraction.

The central figure of Evans’ exhibition is his series Frames (Echoes), which dominates the walls of the gallery. The set begins with a simple and semi-minimalist convention: the grid. These familiar figures have defined modern art since the beginning of the last century. Whether symbolizing a utopia or even methods for exploring limits of the two-dimension field, the simple form is loaded with possible meanings and interpretations. Despite this, Evans reclaims the shape in this series.

Although running in visual similarity to Sol LeWitt, Frames denies many of these modernist or conceptual ideals. The series and much of his work instead finds solace in the work of Eva Hesse. Both artists work within the field of “biomorphic abstraction” because they infuse abstraction with life. Yet, when immediately viewing the first Frame, this sense of “life” is not apparent. It is only in sequence that Evan’s frames break from the wall and become alive. Along the way, the structures

morph from their modernist grids and visually collapse from the apparent structure.

Frames (Echoes) is constructed of painted plywood, and in the series, Evans pushes the limitations of the material. As the sequence progresses, the frame rises, twists, and pulls from the wall and form itself. What starts as a “window” gazing into nothing but wall turns into sculptural forms loaded with potential viewpoints. Each iteration explores these actions—reinforcing a lifelike qualities to the series.

Attention is given to the wall space; however, the walls do not act alone. Amongst the gallery’s floor is a selection of Evans’ freestanding works. The front room contains a more geometric sampling. Each work is constructed from a combination of materials including: epoxy resin, fiberglass, foam core, and paint. The industrial nature of the materials is echoed in their geometric surfaces, and they quickly prompt thoughts of a Minimalist or even Constructivist tradition at work.

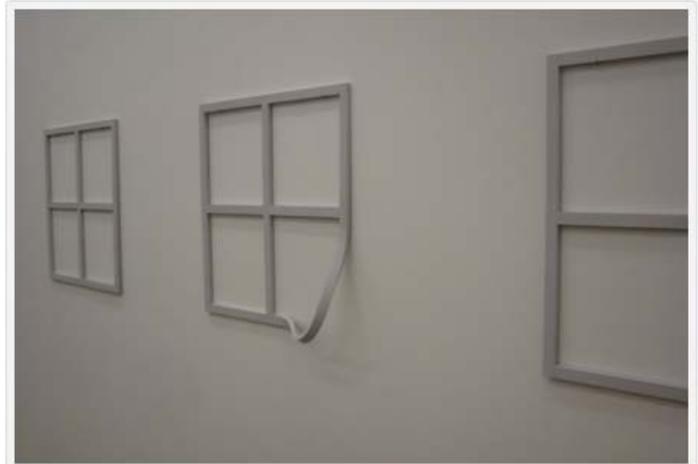
But, Evans subverts these expectations with life and imperfection. His surfaces are not pure and hard Minimalist constructions. They instead reveal muddled paint and nonlinear corners albeit in a subtle manner. The modernist conventions are further broken down by the names of the works. Names such as Bears Ear (Auricula), Knee Deep, and Mrs. Turpin’s Pig all nod to anatomical or biological themes—reminding us that geometry can often be associated with life.

It is in the back room that the geometry starts to melt away completely. Works like Camel (2005) share an affinity in surface to the angular floor sculptures of the first room. However, it’s animal-like appearance and clay construction return the piece to the earth. Johannes Vogt displays a range of Evans’ work, which can be potentially troublesome for the viewer. The playful “animal” and “sharp” geometric sculptures do not immediately seem congruous, but they are indicative of Evans’ scope: Camel being at one end and the first Frame at the other. They are all part of an overall ebb and flow of forms, which Evans is endlessly exploring.

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Much like his work, Evans himself represents a transitional moment in the larger scope of art and art history. He bridges a period in British sculpture that starts with Sir Anthony Caro and ends with New British Sculpture of the 1980s. These large figures, at times, overshadow the work of Evans, but his role as teacher to many of these “younger” sculptors asserts his influence on the next generation. As lecturer at St. Martin’s and Camberwell Schools of Art in the 1960s and 70s, Evans had interactions with artists like Richard Deacon and Antony Gormley. Both of whom create work that, in some ways, responds to Evans– while still exploring their individual perspectives.

Although a bridging figure in 20th Century British sculpture, Evans remains a vital figure today. With teaching ties to New York Studio School, his influence and understanding for materials, form, and modernist history are reaching another generation. Much like lessons in a studio art foundations program, Evans’ work exemplifies the teachings of form while stressing an exercise of manipulation (be it of material or expectation).



Frames (Echoes) 1-3, 1971-74

*Garth Evans’ works will be on display at Johannes Vogt Gallery until October 10th, 2013. In addition, the gallery will host a book launch for Garth Evans: Sculpture Beneath the Skin on September 25th.*

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## artlyst

### Garth Evans Exhibition Curated By Richard Deacon At Yorkshire Sculpture Park



**The Arts Council Collection is presenting a new exhibition of sculpture by Garth Evans, selected by his friend and former student Richard Deacon, which will open at Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park on 23 March 2013.**

This is the first major Garth Evans exhibition in the UK in over 20 years and will feature 28 works spanning the period 1959 – 1982, many drawn from the Arts Council Collection. The show will reconsider Evans' contribution to sculpture in this formative period, moving from early reliefs, to large colourful fibreglass sculptures through to entirely floor-based works. It will include a re-creation of Evans' seminal work *Breakdown* (1971) which was stolen shortly after its first public viewing. Evans has recreated the work based on surviving drawings, photographs and original plans and it will be installed immediately outside the Longside Gallery.

Born in Manchester in 1934, Evans studied at the Slade School of Art (1957-60), exhibiting regularly in London from 1962 until 1991. One of Britain's most innovative sculptors – a generation younger than Anthony Caro and coming before the New British Sculptors of the 1980s, which included Richard Deacon as well as Tony Cragg and Richard Wentworth. Evans is known for his use of geometric, asymmetrical forms and a commitment to using everyday materials such as plywood, fibreglass and polythene. Evans influenced a generation of British sculptors not just through his innovative approach to sculpture but also as a teacher at Central St Martin's School of Art.

Turner Prize winner Richard Deacon's selection of Evans' work results from extensive conversations between the two sculptors and focuses on work created in the first two decades of Evans' long and varied career. The show will bring together the Arts Council Collection's significant holdings of Evans' work, alongside key loans from major UK collections including the British Museum, Leeds Museums and Galleries and Tate as well as a selection of key pieces from the artist's studio. It will feature many sculptures that have not been seen in public since they were first exhibited in the 1960s and '70s.

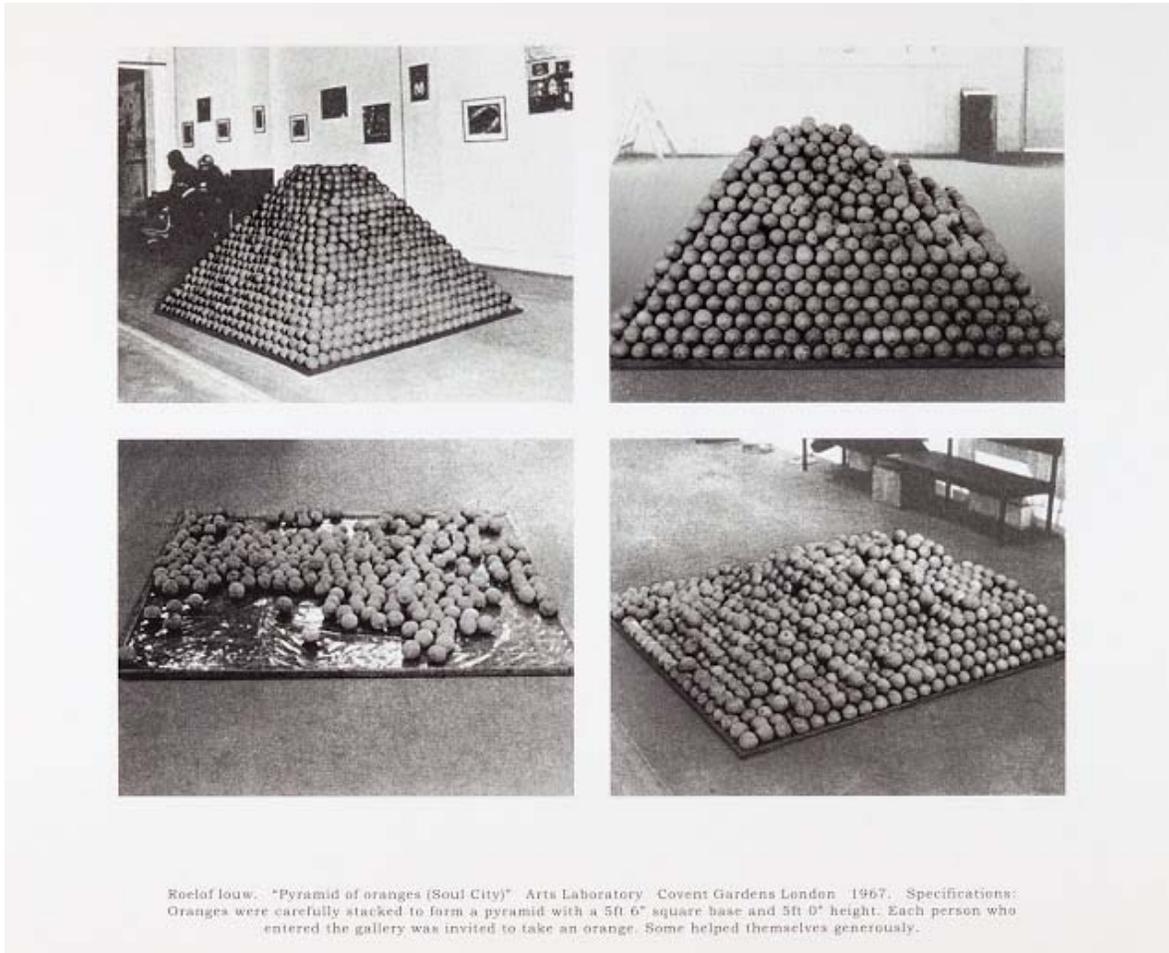
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## Aesthetica

*Aesthetica Magazine Blog, 2012*

Daniel Potts

### United Enemies: The Problem of Sculpture in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s | Henry Moore Institute | Leeds



Text by Daniel Potts

*United Enemies* brings with it the spirit of *Arte Inglese Oggi* (English Art Today) – a 1976 British Council show in Milan featuring the work of many of the artists included – but concentrates on the complex nature of British sculpture in the 1960s and 1970s. *Arte Inglese Oggi* was organised into strict categories: Sculpture, Painting, Performance Art, Artist's Film and Alternative Practices. *United Enemies* retrospectively allows us to carefully consider sculpture in relation to these other practices. The ambition is to impart how the concerns of sculpture at this time were relevant to contemporary artistic change

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and thinking, and thus formed the basis for the New British Sculpture of the 1980s, and what followed. This exhibition is divided into three sections – Manual Thinking, Standing and Groundwork.

Manual Thinking is the first section encountered by the visitor. Here we are encouraged to appreciate how the hand preoccupies the pieces and the methods of production. The work nearest to the entrance of the gallery certainly engages the viewer in this way. It is Roelof Louw's (b.1936) *Soul City (Pyramid of Oranges)*, (1967). We are invited to take and consume one of the oranges from the pyramid. Doing so begs the question: what is the nature of this work? Does the placing of the oranges in a pyramid by the artist constitute the work? Or does the work consist in the taking of an individual orange by the viewer? And so, does an exhibit need to be physically made to constitute a work? These questions alter the parameters of aesthetic perception, thus the work is a successful example of how the concerns of sculpture, at the time of its production, were relevant to artistic change and thinking. However, it is also a most striking work for the brightness of the constitutive parts taken together, and for the regularity of the large-scale geometry. The pungent citric aroma, redolent of the childhood stocking-filler associated with this time of year might prove a welcome waft of nostalgia for many visitors.

In the same section we find the exhibit *Untitled* (1961-62), by Stuart Brisley (b. 1933). This wall-mounted work consists of pieces of dark wood, many of them curved and set in one direction with the effect of a sense of sweeping movement in that direction, mounted on a wooden frame. The sweeping effect is occasionally balanced by other sections of the dark wood, contiguous with the relatively square direction conveyed of the frame. The piece is striking because of the contrast between, on the one hand, the different natures of the apparent direction of movement conveyed by the mounted pieces of wood, and, on the other, the homogeneity of the material used. It is possible that the work will strike the viewer in an irksome, unsettling way because of this contrast, and because the dark wood used is somewhat reminiscent of that used in the construction of furniture.

The second section of the exhibition is Standing. Here, spatial tensions are used to unsettle and challenge the viewer. Two works seemed most remarkable for the unsettling sense of synaesthesia they conveyed, subsisting between the title of the works and the

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physical manifestation. One was Sir Anthony Caro's (b. 1924) *Whispering* (1969). Made from (what seemed to be) some sort of heavy metal and painted red, the piece was somewhat reminiscent of a very long thin anchor, precariously leaning against the wall, with the addition, again consistently homogeneous in the use of material, of a sort of long extended spiral of the shape of those used in the distillation of alcoholic spirits. This addition, with the regular undulations of the thin strip when viewed from most angles, seemed to convey the bubbling, breathy scratchiness of the phenomenon implied by the title. And taken together with the general precariousness of the work, this seemed to impart and evoke the annoyance often felt when one hears the sound of whispering without perceiving the detail.

The other work was *Maid of Honour* (1965) by Garth Evans (b. 1934). Consisting of what seemed to be, two long, thin pyramids arranged vertically, the uppermost point of one meeting and enveloping the other which pointed to the floor, their coupling requiring that both uppermost points were not visible, the work was taller than the average person. Blocks and lines of colour adorned this tall piece. The sense of synaesthesia between the title and the work seems to come from the severity of the sharp lines of what seemed to suggest a formal dress and that of the old-fashioned word 'maid'. The sense of severity also comes from the anonymity – there is certainly no discernible physical, human identity. Perhaps the general sense of severity conveyed is unsettling because it suggests emotional damage and severity of character. The nuptial association compounds this sense.

The third section of *United Enemies* is *Groundwork*. This focuses on the ground as a sculptural subject. Bruce McLean's photograph, titled *Floataway Piece, Beverley Brook Barnes 1967* (1967) is a depiction of wooden sticks floating in a brook. Monochrome allowed for a starker contrast between the light coloured sticks and the dark waters, which they seem to frame as corpuscles of the natural world, taken collectively as the aggregation of things framed and interrupted.

*United Enemies* does not claim to be a comprehensive survey of British sculpture in the 1960s and 1970s. However, it does convey an illuminating sense of the way things were moving during this period, and acts as an explanation of the convergence of different and varied practices that come under the term sculpture, with which we have contemporary acquaintance.

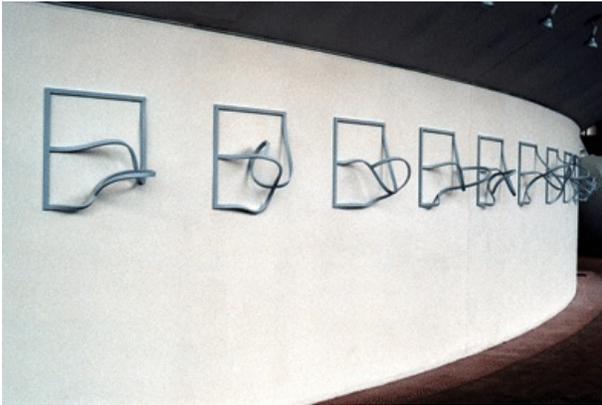
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## sculpture

### **Garth Evans: Transformer**

Janet Koplos, 2010

To look back over Garth Evans's 50 years of art production—sculpture plus drawings and watercolors—is to pursue a will o' the wisp always vanishing out of the corner of one's eye. Evans has repeatedly been exclaimed and admired, but the attention has never led to real fame—which seems to be something that he regularly courts and then dodges. When an early body of work began selling, he quit making it. When he was well-established in his native England he relocated to America. His evasive tactics are also evidenced by the character of his work, which changes materials and ranges from monumental to diminutive. Playful invention, an inclination to start with some recognizable order and then twist or dismember it, and a surprising devotion to surface details, including color, give coherence to his oeuvre—but no consistent look.



*Frames (Echoes) no. 13–16, 1971–4.*  
Laminated and painted plywood, 24 x 24 in. each.

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## The New York Times

ART

### The Mood of the Market, as Measured in the Galleries

Roberta Smith, 2009

“No one is doing well,” snapped the New York dealer Michele Maccarone over the phone. “And anyone who says they are is lying.” Ms. Maccarone, who has had a gallery for eight years, first on the Lower East Side and now on Greenwich Street in the West Village, is known for showing challenging new art as well as for dramatic overstatements. But she had just been asked the question art dealers probably dislike most these days: “How are things going?” Which is code for “Are you selling art? Are you staying open?”

“I didn’t take a day off all summer,” Ms. Maccarone continued. “I’m even doing resale. Me, Michele Maccarone.”

Despite reports from the auction world that a recovery is under way, Manhattan’s gallery scene feels all pins and needles as it heads into fall. Things aren’t as bad as many expected them to be, but they could get worse.

Fragile is the word Knight Landesman, publisher of Artforum magazine, used to describe the current gallery mood: “Fragile and hoping for business.” Ad pages in Artforum’s September issue are down to 206 from 363 a year ago, a decline of more than 40 percent.

An art gallery is like a single-cell organism: it is the crudest but also the most essential life form in the art-world food chain. It is among the easiest of public forums to start up, and therefore the most efficient means of introducing new blood into the system. All it takes is one person with the single-minded determination to get the work of an artist or two seen and a reasonably clean, well-lighted space of almost any size — something that is becoming a more affordable option as rents soften and storefronts, even in some of Chelsea’s chic new condos, sit vacant.

At the same time keeping a gallery going is usually fairly hard, and can seem impossibly daunting when sales slump. As small operations, galleries are highly vulnerable to changes in the economic climate — canaries in the coal mine, as they have often been called. So it made sense, as the bottom fell out of the art market last winter, that many people predicted galleries would start closing fast and furiously.

As it turned out, it is hard to know if this summer has brought much more than the usual in the way of closings, along with relocations, expansions, contractions, splits and alliances. So far the list of galleries that have closed is barely two dozen long, and only if you include galleries that closed several months before the crash; galleries that, to be blunt, will not be missed; neophyte galleries that had yet to establish either a financial or critical foothold; and galleries that closed for reasons only partly related to the market, or not at all.

The much lamented Guild & Greyskul in SoHo, for example, was run by three artists who say they had always intended to return full time to their own work. Rivington Arms, in the East Village, closed because the interests of its two partners diverged. And several galleries have closed in order to regroup and reopen, at least according to their owners, including Cristinerose, Smith-Stewart, the Proposition and Feature. Bose Pacia, the South Asian art gallery lately of Chelsea but now of Dumbo, relocated to regroup and has plans to reopen in a larger space in Manhattan in a year or two, said Rebecca Davis, its director.

Meanwhile there have been expansions, big and small, and a few newcomers, the most significant of which is probably Hauser & Wirth, a deep-pocket gallery with high-profile spaces in Zurich and London. Although Iwan Wirth, a Swiss dealer, was until this June half of Zwirner & Wirth with the American David Zwirner in a town house on East 69th Street, his heftier European brand is arriving in New York — and in the same town house — with a bang. Its first show will be a restaging of Allan Kaprow’s famous 1961 happening-installation “Yard,” with the transgressive performance artist William Pope.L offering an interpretation that may or may not take too many liberties with the original. (The piece, which consisted of over 1,000 discarded car tires, was first exhibited at the Martha Jackson Gallery — located in the same town house.)

The tea leaves on this move, as on much of the current situation, are ambiguous. Is it an omen of the rebounding health of the New York gallery scene, or merely evidence that Hauser & Wirth saw an opportunity to swoop in while the competition was feeling less invincible than usual? Mr.

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Wirth said the gallery had “been thinking about coming to New York for a decade,” and made clear that the softened real estate market had made the move easier.

He sounded enthusiastic, in any case. “It is a completely different thing to be at the center of the universe than on the periphery,” he said. (Asked what he thought about going up against other ultra-high-end galleries, he said only, “Ask me again a year from now.”)

Down in Chelsea, the David Zwirner Gallery will add a fourth gallery space to the three Mr. Zwirner already has on West 19th Street. This one is on the ground floor of the building called the Metal Shutter Houses, designed by Shigeru Ban, which is going up across the street. It will be used primarily for older and secondary-market material.

On a smaller scale, the outsider-art dealer Andrew Edlin, located in the gallery multiplex of 529 West 20th Street, will get much more visibility for his mix of outsider and insider art when he takes over the street-level space on 10th Avenue near 19th Street that was occupied until last July by Bellwether. And Sean Horton, who opened a tiny storefront gallery called Sunday L.E.S. on the Lower East Side three years ago, has extended his initial short-term rental of the parlor floor of the federal-style house on West 22nd Street. (He has also taken on a partner, Frank Liu, identified in a news release as a practicing artist with a very successful career in advertising, and changed the name from Horton & Company to Horton & Liu.)

Mr. Horton, whose taste runs to unknown artists who make quirky paintings, said he had “the best summer ever” in terms of sales. He explained that Sunday would now function as a project space for showing artists the gallery does not represent, while the Chelsea space would concentrate on the 11 it does — a number he and his new partner hope to almost double. Mr. Horton said Chelsea “has a need for young art dealers and young artists,” adding that lower rents in the area were a big help: “This wouldn’t have been possible at all a year ago.”

Even for those who can’t hope to afford any Chelsea rent, the less stratified, increasingly porous quality of the post-boom art world seems to have made setting up shop in some form easier. Last spring the young artist Margaret Lee began staging exhibitions in her Chinatown loft, and she will continue to do so for at least one more year.

Fabienne Stephan, who works as the director of Salon 94 Freemans on the Lower East Side, has opened a minuscule space around the corner on Chrystie Street with her hus-

band, Paul-Aymar Mourgue d’Algue, and a friend, Hanne Mugaas. Measuring 6 by 16 feet, the gallery, called Art Since the Summer of ’69, is described by Ms. Stephan as having “the same square footage of a large painting that could be hanging in a big Chelsea gallery.” The next exhibition, opening Sept. 21, will be “The Bichon Frise in Art,” an archive of reproductions of paintings with small white dogs and some contemporary works made in response to them.

“It’s too easy to go around and see exhibitions you don’t like and criticize things,” Ms. Stephan said. “We decided do something that we like.”

Becky Smith, who closed Bellwether, her Chelsea gallery, in July, is considering organizing a series of nomadic shows in vacant spaces around town (although she is also thinking about returning to her own painting). Amy Smith-Stewart, who closed her gallery on the Lower East Side in May, already has some projects in the works. Ms. Smith-Stewart, too, invoked the softened real estate market. “I want to take advantage of the fact that there is so much commercial space,” she said, “and do something less static and more elastic and artist-driven.”

On the other hand, what might be called the graying, or perhaps the squaring, of Chelsea is still happening, too, with the relocation there of two more 57th Street galleries. Ameringer McEnery Yohe, which represents some living artists like Judy Pfaff but is especially active in the resale market for Color Field and Abstract Expressionist painting, will open on Sept. 17 in the West 22nd Street space vacated by 303 Gallery (which moved to larger, spiffier quarters on West 21st Street).

Lori Bookstein Fine Art, the other 57th Street refugee, is more idiosyncratic, concentrating on underknown older artists, including Garth Evans, Irving Kriesberg and Louise Kruger, and the estates of Louis Finkelstein and Aristodimos Kaldis. After 12 years in business and five on 57th Street, Ms. Bookstein is taking over the former Cohan & Leslie space (next to the former Bellwether) on 10th Avenue. The move was prompted, Ms. Bookstein said, by a raise in her rent uptown. She found she could get 1,000 more feet and a ground-floor space in Chelsea for a bit more than what she used to pay.

Ultimately, of course, how things are going depends on whom you talk to. Ms. Maccarone, at her most optimistic, foresees “an O.K. September until the auctions,” which she predicts will once more confirm a downward trend. To be followed, she says, “by a dry winter and a lousy spring,” with things approaching normal by fall 2010.

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United Enemies brings with it the spirit of *Arte Inglese Oggi* (English Art Today) – a 1976 British Council show in Milan featuring the work of many of the artists included – but concentrates on the complex nature of British sculpture in the 1960s and 1970s. *Arte Inglese Oggi* was organised into strict categories: Sculpture, Painting, Performance Art, Artist's Film and Alternative Practices. *United Enemies* retrospectively allows us to carefully consider sculpture in relation to these other practices. The ambition is to impart how the concerns of sculpture at this time were relevant to contemporary artistic change and thinking, and thus formed the basis for the New British Sculpture of the 1980s, and what followed. This exhibition is divided into three sections – Manual Thinking, Standing and Groundwork.

Manual Thinking is the first section encountered by the visitor. Here we are encouraged to appreciate how the hand preoccupies the pieces and the methods of production. The work nearest to the entrance of the gallery certainly engages the viewer in this way. It is Roelof Louw's (b.1936) *Soul City (Pyramid of Oranges)*, (1967). We are invited to take and consume one of the oranges from the pyramid. Doing so begs the question: what is the nature of this work? Does the placing of the oranges in a pyramid by the artist constitute the work? Or does the work consist in the taking of an individual orange by the viewer? And so, does an exhibit need to be physically made to constitute a work? These questions alter the parameters of aesthetic perception, thus the work is a successful example of how the concerns of sculpture, at the time of its production, were relevant to artistic change and thinking. However, it is also a most striking work for the brightness of the constitutive parts taken together, and for the regularity of the large-scale geometry. The pungent citric aroma, redolent of the childhood stocking-filler associated with this time of year might prove a welcome waft of nostalgia for many visitors.

In the same section we find the exhibit *Untitled* (1961-62), by Stuart Brisley (b. 1933). This wall-mounted work consists of pieces of dark wood, many of them curved and set in one direction with the effect of a sense of sweeping movement in that direction, mounted on a wooden frame. The sweeping effect is occasionally balanced by other sections of the dark wood, contiguous with the relatively square direction conveyed of the frame. The piece is striking because of the contrast between, on the one hand, the different natures of the apparent direction of movement conveyed by the mounted pieces of wood, and, on the other, the homogeneity of the material used. It is possible that the work will strike the viewer in an irksome, unsettling way because of this contrast, and because the dark wood used is somewhat reminiscent of that used in the construction of furniture.

The second section of the exhibition is *Standing*. Here, spatial tensions are used to unsettle and challenge the viewer. Two works

seemed most remarkable for the unsettling sense of synaesthesia they conveyed, subsisting between the title of the works and the physical manifestation. One was Sir Anthony Caro's (b. 1924) *Whispering* (1969). Made from (what seemed to be) some sort of heavy metal and painted red, the piece was somewhat reminiscent of a very long thin anchor, precariously leaning against the wall, with the addition, again consistently homogeneous in the use of material, of a sort of long extended spiral of the shape of those used in the distillation of alcoholic spirits. This addition, with the regular undulations of the thin strip when viewed from most angles, seemed to convey the bubbling, breathy scratchiness of the phenomenon implied by the title. And taken together with the general precariousness of the work, this seemed to impart and evoke the annoyance often felt when one hears the sound of whispering without perceiving the detail.

The other work was *Maid of Honour* (1965) by Garth Evans (b. 1934). Consisting of what seemed to be, two long, thin pyramids arranged vertically, the uppermost point of one meeting and enveloping the other which pointed to the floor, their coupling requiring that both uppermost points were not visible, the work was taller than the average person. Blocks and lines of colour adorned this tall piece. The sense of synaesthesia between the title and the work seems to come from the severity of the sharp lines of what seemed to suggest a formal dress and that of the old-fashioned word 'maid'. The sense of severity also comes from the anonymity – there is certainly no discernible physical, human identity. Perhaps the general sense of severity conveyed is unsettling because it suggests emotional damage and severity of character. The nuptial association compounds this sense.

The third section of *United Enemies* is *Groundwork*. This focuses on the ground as a sculptural subject. Bruce McLean's photograph, titled *Floataway Piece, Beverley Brook Barnes 1967* (1967) is a depiction of wooden sticks floating in a brook. Monochrome allowed for a starker contrast between the light coloured sticks and the dark waters, which they seem to frame as corpuscles of the natural world, taken collectively as the aggregation of things framed and interrupted.

*United Enemies* does not claim to be a comprehensive survey of British sculpture in the 1960s and 1970s. However, it does convey an illuminating sense of the way things were moving during this period, and acts as an explanation of the convergence of different and varied practices that come under the term sculpture, with which we have contemporary acquaintance.

*United Enemies: The Problem of Sculpture in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s*, 01/12/2011 - 11/03/2012, Henry Moore Institute, The Headrow, Leeds.

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“I’m doing everything I can think of” to get by, she said. She cut staff and eliminated art fairs even before the market crashes of 2008. She is going to younger artists whose work can be priced less expensively (maybe not the first reason an artist wants to be given a show, but never mind). And three benefits will be held in her gallery this season. Will she be paid for the use of her space? No, she said, “but they might bring people into the gallery who have not been exposed to contemporary art before.”

Several blocks north in Chelsea, meanwhile, the characteristic ebullience of Friedrich Petzel, a German-born dealer with an eponymous gallery on West 22nd Street, seemed

barely dimmed. “We’ve had an actually O.K. six months,” Mr. Petzel said, noting nonetheless that he had cut back certain expenses, stretching exhibition runs and ceasing to cover artists’ fabrication costs. Yet “things felt a lot grimmer in the early ’90s,” he said, referring to the last art-market slump.

“Sure, it’s gotten harder” to sell, he added, “but you have to do better, do more. I’m looking at this as an opportunity and also as temporary.”

“We will certainly succeed,” he said expansively. “I have no doubt.”

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## NEW YORK OBSERVER

### Evans Crafts Valiant Gestures Out of Cut-Rate Materials

Mario Naves, 2006



The viability of an artistic tradition depends upon the determination and momentum an artist brings to it. We've all seen paintings, drawings or sculptures that reiterate firmly established conventions, often with appealing dexterity and patent intensity. They can be pleasing to look at. Invariably, though, they're unnecessary—nostalgic glosses with noble intentions.

It's one thing just to spin the wheels of tradition or, if you prefer, style; it's quite another to road-test its tenets. Reiteration isn't invention. Tradition honors considered skepticism. Hard questions can lead to dramatic breaks and reveal surprising continuities. Modernism is testament both to the flexibility of tradition and its unyielding purpose. Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* and Matisse's *Luxe, Calme, et Volupté* are but two examples of the unlimited potential residing within its parameters.

Yet, as is more often the case, artists can ask questions that are subtler, if no less probing and challenging. It has become difficult to recognize when a contemporary painter or sculptor wrests something individual from tradition. Our

what's-hot-and-what's-not culture—dependent on spectacle, novelty, and magazines like *People* and *Artforum*—can dull the capability to parse and undergo deeper and quieter pleasures.

Garth Evans' sculptures at Lori Bookstein Fine Art fit into an identifiable style: biomorphic abstraction. The eight pieces operate within a modernist current explored by the likes of Hans Arp, early Giacometti, Henry Moore, Isamu Noguchi and Joan Miró. There are unmistakable intimations of natural phenomena: the figure, geological formations and fauna less than flora, though the organic nature of Mr. Evans' methods recall the slow and steady transformation of plant life.

However much we can place Mr. Evans' art within a tradition, we haven't seen anything quite like it before. What's unsettling about the sculptures is how they flit from under our expectations. Pegging them is a fool's game. But Mr. Evans' art isn't evasive; it's rich with—and enriched by—experience. The work takes on a lot to chew and chews it well. His bulbous forms struggle and writhe, as if they couldn't bear the myriad contradictions they embody. It's a fascinating tussle to behold.

You could argue that the pieces aren't in a modernist vein at all. Modernism, despite its many glories, did much to winnow the possibilities of art, to diminish its breadth and reach. Mr. Evans' work could be regarded as anti-modernist, or at least un-modernist, because its inclusive nature welcomes greater and, at times, maddening complexity.

If his project is anti-modern in intent, it's also pre-modern in character. Buried not far under the surface of his muscular forms are antecedents that can be traced to antiquity, particularly the art of Greece and Rome. A transplant from England, Mr. Evans may well have spent his formative years looking at the *Elgin Marbles* in the British Museum. In fact, I'd bet on it. His sculptures, while humbler in scope, have a related sweep and motion. The mute dignity of *Toward* (1992), *Driven* (1992-94) and *Armed* (1992-95) also recalls that of *The Dying Gaul* (circa 230-220 B.C.). Their

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valiant gestures almost qualify them as transcriptions of that art-historical staple.

These “bodies,” Mr. Evans tells us, are “embodiments of ... preverbal states of awareness.” They offer an “exploration and discovery of one’s body, its limits and its limitations and, also, of course, the pleasures it brings.”

It’s worth noting that the titles of Mr. Evans’ pieces are, if not verbs exactly, then indicative of physical effort and, as its corollary, psychological exertion. Driven, Tend, Beyond, Through, even Milk—what’s important is not that the titles describe, but that the works exemplify and expand upon those descriptions.

Mr. Evans works with humble materials. No marble or bronze for him, thank you very much; ratty and everyday stuff will do. Each sculpture is a patient accumulation of bits and pieces of discarded cardboard boxes. Cutting them into geometric shards—the triangle is a favored building block—Mr. Evans combines and shapes them into flowing, intricate and monumental forms.

He’s unapologetic about the cut-rate nature of his medium. Stains, pen marks, logos and fragments of identifiable instructions (“ndle with c”, “agile”) shuttle across the surfaces and are punctuated by colored strips of paper, among them bits of red, yellow and a muted phthalo green.

It’s unclear whether these serve a structural purpose—as band-aids, if you will, for the cardboard faceting—or as decorative fillips. It doesn’t matter: The tabs of color set into motion staccato rhythms that play off the rolling forms and the cardboard’s dirty and crumpled browns. A layer of fiberglass, pockmarked and imperfect, envelops each piece, endowing them with fleshy exteriors. Skin, Mr. Evans suggests, is not only a conductor of sensation; it is a dauntingly tenuous barrier. Mortality permeates the work, eroticism less so. The tender gravity of Mr. Evans’ pursuit is palpable.

Maybe it’s the fiberglass talking, but the art of Eva Hesse seems a useful counterpoint. The two sculptors share a dark and vaguely absurdist take on bodily vulnerability. Thankfully, Mr. Evans avoids (or ignores) the deadening prescriptions of Minimalism, a school that has done all-but-irreparable damage to several generations of artists.

Mr. Evans’ “bodies,” like Hesse’s skins and vessels, suggest memento mori, yet they never succumb to inertia. However occluded and strained, vitality courses through their gritty, muscular and inelegant frames. His accomplishment is, in the end, everything Hesse’s admirers claim for her art, but that her art itself can’t sustain. In his own mordant way, Mr. Evans is an optimist: He reminds us that the true and only subject of art is life.

Garth Evans: Sculpture is at Lori Bookstein Fine Art, 37 West 57th Street, third floor, until Oct. 21.

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## On Sculpture Today

David Cohen, 2006

**A cornucopia of sculpture shows in the galleries this month represents a moment of optimism for a medium that for some time looked like it was in trouble.**

Whereas painting is always being pronounced dead or miraculously brought to life again, sculpture has a more insidious malaise. Painting has strenuous, medium-specific criteria, usually entailing pigment and a static support. But catchall definitions of sculpture have marginalized its meaning as entities worked, volumetrically, in the round. The great 20th-century addition to carving and modeling, harking back to an equally primordial method, was assemblage: sticking found things together, rather than chipping away stone or pummeling clay.

After a big push toward assemblage in the 1950s and 1960s, with hundreds of artists taking to welding in metal or synthetic materials, there came a backlash that departed even more radically from traditional sculptural craft. Though welding had seemed the beginning of a new sculpture, it turned out to be the swan song for the old kind. People trained as sculptors, influenced by the prevailing counterculture, took the discipline beyond crafting three-dimensional objects to include areas such as installation, performance, and video.

Isn't disaffection with a meaningfully defined sculpture just a problem for these individuals, not for the medium per se? No, because museum budgets, art school departments, and a whole art-world infrastructure bought the line of this new "expanded field" of sculpture. Inevitably, so did subsequent generations of students, trained by the first generation of rebels.

But the urge to make things in the round, and to impress materials with thoughts and feelings, won't disappear just because the avant garde is in the mood for a paradigm shift. What is

striking about the resilience of sculpture is that some of the players involved in the revival of traditional processes were earlier in their careers participants in the overhaul of the medium. What has to be admitted, however, is such artists are now—in that diplomatic phrase—"of a certain age." Critics who love carving, modeling, and truly sculpturally inventive assemblage are still scouring the horizon for the next generation. Perhaps this season's ad hoc sculpture fest will inspire young practitioners.

URSULA VON RYDINGSVARD  
Madison Square Park  
Galerie Lelong

The unique resonance and charge of Ursula von Rydingsvard's sculpture has to do with certain inherent contradictions. Her forms are at one level archetypal—they have a sense of being primordial, of relating to the kinds of vessels or contraptions that humans have surrounded themselves with because they need them—but at the same time they are enigmatic: You can't put an immediate name to them. Yet while her sculpture invariably takes monumental shape, it is worked as much intuitively as it is preconceived.

At Madison Square Park she is showing several large-scale pieces for the first time, including one sensational piece, "Damski Czeppek" (2006), in polyurethane resin. That is a distinct departure in material for an artist who since 1975 has been known for her distinctive use of cedar. Ms. von Rydingsvard's forms are overtly made, and yet could pass as natural. You sense the originating hand, the impact of power tools, but the surfaces are never weighed down by personal expressionism. On the contrary, you get a simultaneous sense of fabrication and natural erosion.

Her typical cedar pieces are made of layer upon layer of joined strips of roughly hewn wood. The result is therefore simultaneously a solid object and a grid. Cedar is notoriously difficult to carve because it splits and fissures, but this elusive nature suits her purpose, imbuing the work with a life of its own. Her surfaces expose the rough ends of sheets or columns of wood, creating multifaceted textures that are rich with nebulous forms and figures.

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The polyurethane piece in the park takes its form from a traditional Polish head-dress. (Many of her motifs are inspired by her childhood spent in a Polish refugee camp.) It is cast from a wood model and thus has her trademark layering and faceting, but has a translucence that adds an entirely new dimension to her work. Despite its sartorial origin, the piece—a hollowed out, 12-foot-high chamber you can walk into, flanked by two snake forms embracing an esplanade in the grass—has the feeling of a magical grotto.

MI A WESTERLUND ROOSEN  
Betty Cuninghame Gallery

Mia Westerlund Roosen shares with Ms. von Rydingsvard a penchant for the archetypal and the monumental. Some of her most memorable work to date has been temporary outdoor sculptural happenings on a very large scale. Until this show, her principal medium has been concrete, worked in ways that traverse the traditional boundary between carving and modeling by incorporating elements of both processes.

"The Tweedle Twins" (2006) is the work here that relates to her earlier body of sculpture. Referring no doubt to Dee and Dum, it presents Siamese twins of conjoined circular forms tapering to a head-like stalk. The work has a hefty, plodding awkwardness that puts you in mind of Alfred Jarry's character Ubu Roi—as drawn by the writer and arriving via Louise Bourgeois.

Despite its archaic and primitive character, and its overt sense of mass, Ms. Westerlund Roosen's language actually evolved from early interests in process and installation art—scatter being the opposite of mass. Her newest pieces connect to early experimentation with found materials, and are worked in felt and resin. Felt has connotations of the process art of Robert Morris, but the visual impact of her work is an unnerving mix of solidity and ephemera, of lightness and weight. The resin gives her material a chunky, permanent sculptural look, recalling her use of concrete, while the fluttering shapes in works like "Little Falls" (2005) and "Carmelite II," looking like shavings from the solid forms from which they issue, explore sensations of wind or water.

FABIENNE LASSERRE: OTHERS  
Virgil de Voldère Gallery

Ms. Westerlund Roosen has a new soul sister, it seems, in the young Canadian Fabienne Lasserre. Her striking installation of sculpture and drawing in her debut New York exhibition has a distinctly Surrealist feel, with weird personages made from stuffed gray wool with such embellishments as fingernails, abalone, and coral. Her stuffed toys, with titles like "Tentacle Blob" and "Elephant with Leash," have an oafish otherness that is at once sci-fi and ethnographic. With their soft core and menacing, disagreeable tentacles and encrustations, you don't quite know whether to cuddle them or run.

GARTH EVANS  
Lori Bookstein Fine Art

Garth Evans's abstract sculpture shares with Ms. Westerlund Roosen and Ms. Lasserre a zoomorphic tendency. The British sculptor, who has lived in America since 1979, was highly regarded with early work that explored open systems. A typical work, like "Untitled No 3" (1975) in the Tate, was a web of rubber strips arranged in a loose grid on the ground. To now be creating individual sculptural pieces with strong figural connotations marks a rediscovery of sculptural roots, or an abandonment of an experimental path, depending on your aesthetic politics.

His first show at Bookstein presents eight works in fiberglass over cardboard. Despite such down-at-heel materials, which retain the street life of the carton boxes with occasional markings, the voluptuous biomorphism of these forms, and the rich glazes, can deceive the eye at some distance into thinking of these as cast in bronze, or carved from porphyry. On closer inspection, the surfaces are punctuated with strips of tape, holding geometric shapes in place to achieve surprising curvaciousness. The DNA of his organic forms is geometric—like our own.

Evans's bestiary recalls Henry Moore or early, Surrealist Giacometti. Titles are generally phenomenal: "Through," "Tend," "Reach," "Beyond." The sculptures seem driven by some inner growth demons; protuberances could equally be limbs or tumors, with correspondingly disparate connotations of wholesomeness and menace, empathy and horror, humor and pity. You could say they inhabit a space beyond good and evil.

"Milk" (1993–95) has four balls raised from the ground at the end of centrally joined limbs to recall, massively blown up and frozen in time, a drop of liquid hitting a surface. The sculpture makes the case for the interrelationship of forms and phenomena, for the sense of growth and decay following patterns that transcend materials or circumstances.

JUDY PFAFF: BUCKETS OF RAIN  
Ameringer Yohe

In 1992, Judy Pfaff and Ms. von Rydingsvard collaborated on a piece in a SoHo loft space that tested the boundaries between unified object and total environment: between sculpture and installation. Ms. von Rydingsvard—despite her monumentality and experiments with sculpture that moves, or that you walk through—is resolutely for the object. Ms. Pfaff is one of the pioneers of installation, credited with adding a feminist edge to assemblage that influenced such widely and justly admired

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contemporary artists as Jessica Stockholder (her current show is reviewed by Maureen Mullarkey on the next page) and Sarah Sze.

But Ms. Pfaff's installations —though embracing big amounts of space, doing wacky things with existing architecture like punching holes in walls and ceilings, and entailing the collision and scatter of wayward materials —somehow always feel politely contained, and, in a funny way, traditional.

Her exuberant and visually absorbing new installation brings whole trees and root complexes into the gallery. As in her last show at this gallery, there are four distinct, loosely interrelated areas. One is populated with the tree parts, painted black and white and augmented with foam. Another has a huge hourglass-like structure of an Arabian dome and its double, inverted. These found or fabricated things are isolated, and despite the plethora of other things happening around them, ask to be viewed sculpturally: as worked entities, made and to be viewed in the round.

But equally Ms. Pfaff has a painterly sensibility. Her walls and ceilings (and the gallery's windows) are coated with sprayed paint, dripped paint, fluorescent light strips, either colored or hand painted, strips of corrugated plastic, painted tubing, steel wires, tapes, and foils. For many in the 1960s and afterwards, installation art was a rebellion not only against traditional artistic mediums, but against aesthetic expectations. For Ms. Pfaff, on the contrary, installation is a means to enhance the visual and tactile, to marry painting and sculpture, and have them multiply.

Von Rydingsvard at Madison Square Park until December 31 (Fifth Avenue at 23rd Street); at Lelong until October 21 (528 W. 26th St., between Tenth and Eleventh avenues, 212-315-0470).

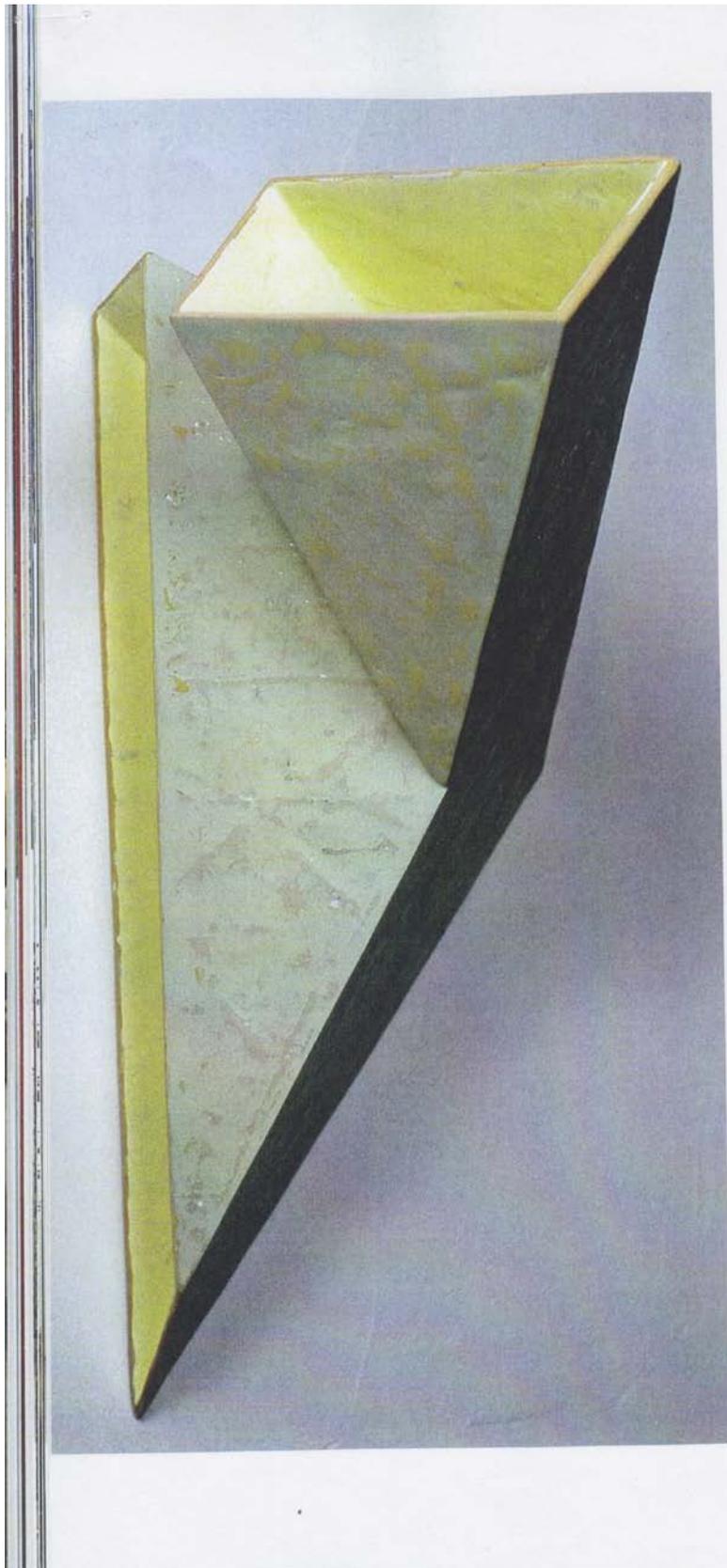
Roosen until October 14 (541 W. 25th St., between Tenth and Eleventh avenues, 212-242-2772).

Lasserre until October 7 (526 W. 26th Street, between Tenth and Eleventh avenues, fourth floor, 212-343-9694).

Evans until October 21 (37 W. 57th St., between Fifth and Sixth avenues, 212-750-0949).

Pfaff until October 7 (20 W. 57th St., between Fifth and Sixth avenues, 212-445-0051).

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## Garth Evans Transformer

BY JANET KOPLOS

To look back over Garth Evans's 50 years of art production—sculpture plus drawings and watercolors—is to pursue a will o' the wisp always vanishing out of the corner of one's eye. Evans has repeatedly been exclaimed and admired, but the attention has never led to real fame—which seems to be something that he regularly courts and then dodges. When an early body of work began selling, he quit making it. When he was well-established in his native England he relocated to America. His evasive tactics are also evidenced by the character of his work, which changes materials and ranges from monumental to diminutive. Playful invention, an inclination to start with some recognizable order and then twist or dismember it, and a surprising devotion to surface details, including color, give coherence to his oeuvre—but no consistent look.

*Geko*, 1989–90. Cardboard, resin, glass fiber, and paint, 29 x 18 x 21 in.

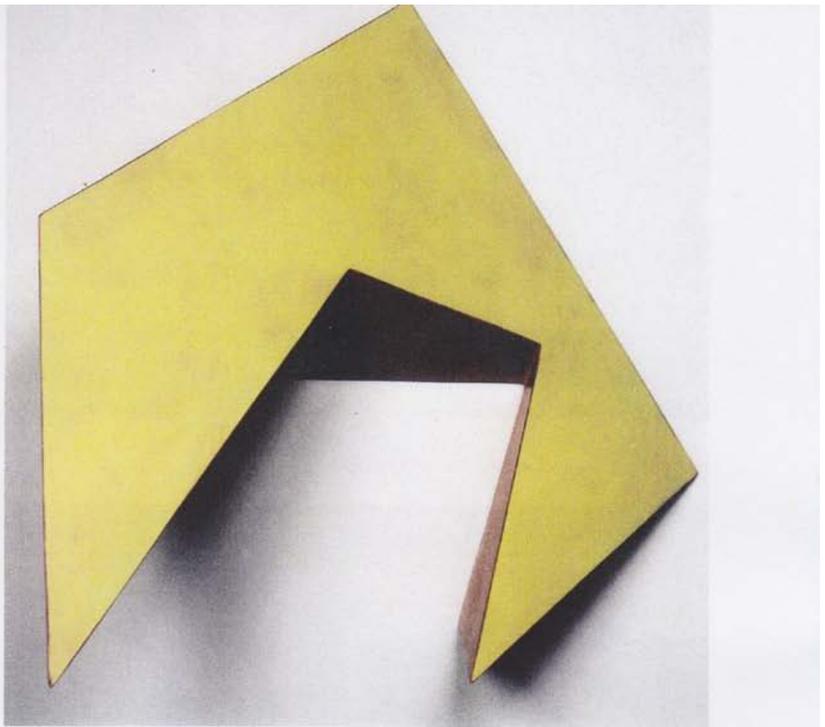
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*Head Dress*, 1988–89. Cardboard, resin, glass fiber, and paint, 27 x 26 x 19 in.

Evans's press over the years has called his work organic and non-organic, Constructivist and intuitive, emotional and formalistic. His artistic elusiveness extends to a series of angular wall constructions, begun in painted plywood soon after he moved to the U.S. in 1979 and then developed in cardboard, resin, glass fiber, and paint. The latter were the subject of an exhibition at Lori Bookstein Fine Art in New York City earlier this year. These forms are impossible to name any more specifically than the vague "hollow polygons." They are such masqueraders that even with an illustrated checklist it was hard to identify them: one had to move around the form until the view matched that on the checklist. From even a slightly different angle, a form looks entirely different. Take *Geko* (1989–90) as an example. It has a triangular shape where it rests against the wall, but it pushes out diagonally into a shape that recalls a bend in ductwork. It is primarily dentist-office green, with yellow inside and butterscotch on the imperfect rim that you can easily see into if you approach it from the left side. From the right, however, the piece has a sort of trumpet, opening upward, that also creates the suggestion of a chimney.

Or consider *Head Dress* (1988–89): a prominent bright yellow plane is a square on three sides, but the fourth extends outward diagonally, and there is a nearly rectangular cut into the plane, as if it had been bitten by a creature with a single big tooth. A view of the sculpture from the side, close to the wall, gives a pink face and an orangy-peach face, both so smooth and satiny that they evoke powdered-sugar icing. Or look at the 1987 floor piece *Mrs. Turpin's Pig*. It makes Evans's Minimalist credentials clear, but this is candied Minimalism, much more palatable. Here, you seem to be looking through resin to angular drawings (perhaps printing on the found-cardboard base). From one view, this object might be a Rietveld *Zigzag Chair* that's

*Mrs. Turpin's Pig*, 1987. Cardboard, resin, glass fiber, and paint, 20 x 46 x 19 in.



collapsed to one side. What's flat against the ground, though, is a four-sided, more-or-less diamond shape. And what would be the top of the back if this were a chair is not a support bar but a triangular volume. The whole—which if it were not so sharp-cornered could also be compared to a reclining body, bent at the hips—is a mottled, shadowed, peachy blush. The edges where the planes meet are crisp (in this piece as in nearly all of the works of this period) and have been rubbed so that an under-color shows where the top pigment is worn away.

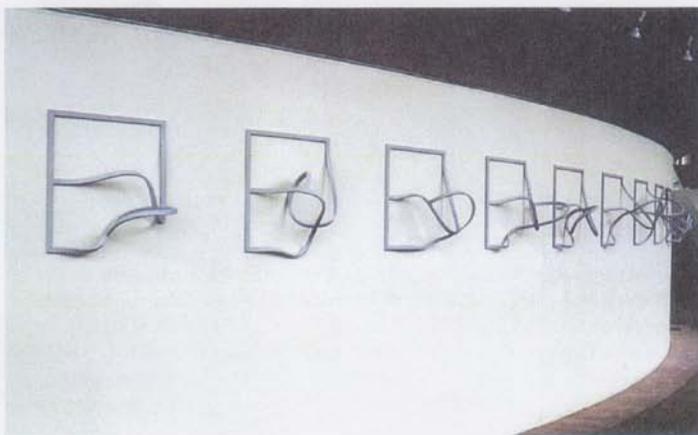
These '80s works also display other continuing aspects of Evans's sculpture, early and late: it is always labored over at some length, which allows him considered thought about the work in the process of making it. This investment of time is visible in the complex and elegant surfaces of these works, their often-appealing colors sanded to a marzipan



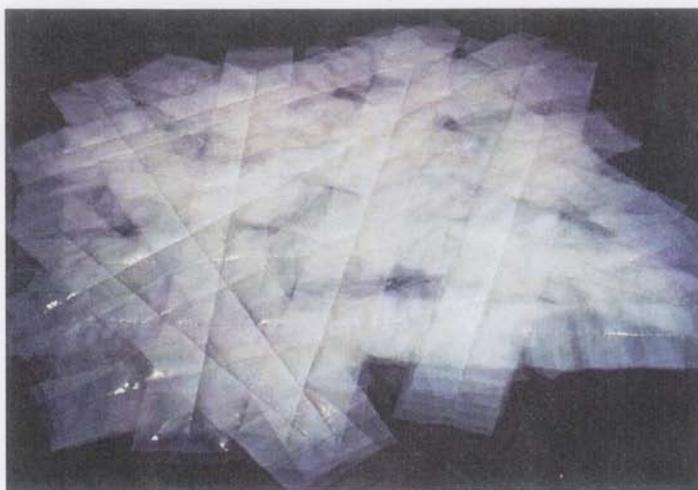
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Above: *Untitled No. 37*, 1967. Fiberglass and paint, 6 x 8 x 6 ft.



Above: *Frames (Echoes) no. 13-16*, 1971-74. Laminated and painted plywood, 24 x 24 in. each. Below: *St. Mary's No. 1*, 1978. Welded polythene sheet, 1.25 x 121 x 124 in.



smoothness and opacity—although sometimes he sands away enough of this lusciousness to reveal the plywood underneath. And that jolt is also characteristic: the contrasting terms of the various press accounts reveal him as a master of paradox.

In the short run, this is not necessarily good. Fame in the era of the sound bite comes from a recognizable, easily summarizable style. But in the long run, these shifts, these subtleties, make Evans's work a treasury: every viewer can find a set of allusions or associations or issues, and the work (as the best art always is) is open enough to be available to endless re-understanding. So what identifies Evans's oeuvre is a mindset, or a way of working, in the absence of any obvious visual feature.

Born in Cheshire in 1934, Evans studied at the Manchester College of Art and the Slade School. He was a lecturer at St. Martin's School of Art from 1965 to 1979 and also taught at Camberwell School of Art. In the U.S., he has long been associated with the New York Studio School (since 1988), where he is head of sculpture. He had his first solo show in 1962 at Rowan Gallery in London and remained associated with the gallery for two decades.

During that time, and since, his work has included staggeringly different forms. He worked in synthetics such as fiberglass, which give some large works a Pop flavor: *Rosebed* (1964), a plane cupped in a rounded base, might be compared to a wafer pushed down into a marshmallow; and *Maid of Honour* (1965) is a sassy, pinched-waist polychrome column. Other strongly colored, large-scale forms resemble Tony Smith's or Joel Shapiro's (later) constructive elements. During his English years, Evans also worked with linear structures and negative space. One unexpected materialization could be described as a big cube of outlined air, but not much like something by Sol LeWitt. In *Untitled No. 36* (1967), Evans defines his shape with long tapered cones, arranged point to point and end to end, so that the outline goes thick and thin.

He also made a series of wood tangles, as unlikely as that sounds. *Frames (Echoes)* is a group of 20 wall works (1971-74) that

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look rather like windows with a single vertical mullion. Although each is a regular rectangle at, say, the upper left corner, Evans bent the slender plies so that they curl out into space, breaking free of order and restraint. He also briefly worked in steel when he was awarded a fellowship by British Steel. He hung around mills, attracted by scrap and the study pieces made by steelworker apprentices, and made some low floor works from steel rods in various tangled densities, including a mat made of crazily sprung bedsprings (1977, destroyed). He made other related "carpet pieces"—floor works consisting of rubber, plastic, wood, and other materials, such as *Sheffield* (1977) or *St. Mary's No. 1* (1978). They were like nothing in England, and although their placement on the floor can be related to Carl Andre's works, Evans tried out the tactile and flexible.

The '80s works, made in the U.S., continued to use apparent order as a starting point, but the entire volumetric form bends or opens unexpectedly. Evans's '90s works are as apparently different from those wall constructions as they are from the carpet works. These "bodies" (his term) consist of organic forms that look like a cross between Henry Moore figures and balloon animals—except that they may be the darkest, most agonized-looking works that Evans has made. They are constructed of small triangles of cardboard taped and glued into wormy and bulbous twisting brown forms, coated in resin that doesn't conceal the identity of the materials or the process of their assembly. Cardboard, like wood, seems his *métier*; both are pliable (pun intended) and allow the deliberate pace of working he so clearly prefers.

The curvature of the "bodies" might seem to be an anomaly, yet it's not. Evans had modeled heads in clay, although he did not consider them serious works, and he had also drawn similar organic forms a decade before, during a stay at Yaddo. As he began assembling this series, he was also doing water-color abstractions that evoke tongues, duck bills, and other such organic possibilities. And one more thing: writers have repeatedly noted Evans's emphasis on the surface of so many of his sculptures, even referring to them as skins. Here, in these cardboard "bodies," that metaphor is particularly appropriate. These skins show the scars of hot glue and the tattoos of colored tape and printed texts on the found materials.

Somehow it's not surprising that since the '90s, Evans has been making organic works in ceramic that continue the bulbous shapes in smaller scale and return to his earlier variety of hues. These constructed hollow works slightly resemble the unorthodox ceramics of Ken Price, but Evans applies solid colors and develops the forms in segments or extensions that may allude to recognizable forms (for example, *Lady Foot*; others recall bones, gourds, or simplified animal shapes). The overall effect, however, is abstract, as in *Blue Baby*, four fat ovoid volumes, largely horizontal, merged with a membrane or drape at the center. One recent ceramic series, "Dancers," returns to linear shaping of air. These very open works embody the idea of gesture, pose, and extension rather than literally depicting figures. The lines are ragged and vivacious looking; the forms seem unlike any of Evans's previous sculpture, but they recall a series of nervously energetic, openwork collages from 1979–81.

Evans was called "a sculptor of distinction" in his early years of work in England, and "perhaps the most underrated British sculptor of his generation" during his early years in America. His visual intelligence shows through in all of his lamentably under-recognized work.

*Janet Koplos is a writer living in New York.*



Above: #23 (*Lady Foot*), 2005. Glazed ceramic, 22 x 14 x 10.5 in. Below: #15 (*Dead Mouse*), 2008. Ceramic, 5.5 x 9.5 x 10 in.



# JOHANNES VOGT



## The Academy Hedges Its Bets

Lance Esplund, 2008

THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN, WHICH CONTINUALLY provides us with great exhibitions and lectures unavailable elsewhere in the city, is an essential, thriving part of the New York art world. Its recent shows of David Smith and Jean Helion have reestablished the venue as an invaluable institution that stands not behind trends but behind art. But its 181st Annual, which opens tomorrow, suggests that the institution is getting nervous about its competitive place in the 21st century - that it is feeling a little out of step and hedging its bets.

Until 2002, the works in these biennial exhibitions were selected by a council of academicians in an open, juried format. Artists, mostly painters and sculptors, who wished to show at the Academy submitted works for consideration. But the last two biennials have been selected by invitation only, which has altered their flavor considerably.

The Academy's last non-member exhibition, the 179th Annual, in 2004, included installation art for the first time. The 181st Annual turns it up a notch with video. What this change indicates is not that the National Academy is embracing contemporary trends and media (if so, it is decades behind), but that it is attempting to put on a contemporary face. It remains unclear whether this is meant to compete with Chelsea galleries, the Whitney Biennial, P.S.1, and MoMA, or to attract a broader spectrum of the New York art world. In the end, though, it produces a scattered exhibition that no longer has a tradition conscious center.

I have been going for years to the National Academy's "annuals," which used to include both academicians and nonacademicians. In 2000, because the shows were getting too crowded, the Academy decided to separate and alternate shows between members and nonmembers. The "annuals" have all had an overwhelming share of illustrative and academic art, enlivened here and there with genuinely spectacular talents. The more than 150 works by 124 artists in the 181st Annual, loaded down with academic realism and academic abstraction (and now academic installation and video), is no exception.

Certain works in the exhibition thrilled me, such as John Chamberlain's "The Big One" (1992) and Richard Rezac's "Untitled" (2004-05). The first - a vertical mass of twisted, painted, and chromium-plated steel that commands a curved niche in the museum's entry hall - opens the show with a big bang. The sculpture's zebra-striped foot plays beautifully off of the floor's black-and-white swirled marble, and its bright colors electrify the wall's subdued earth tones. Mr. Rezac's work, in birch wood, nickel-plated bronze, and aluminum, is an enigmatic

mobile that teasingly suggests a ship, a crane, a machine, or an upside-down table.

Other sculptures stand out, including Anthony Rubino's abstract, ceramic hieroglyphic figure "Allegro in Blue and White" (2005), and Alan Wiener's suite of strange, abstract, denture-like resin casts displayed in glass cases. Cathy Butterly's goofy "Rock, Paper, Scissors" (2005), a small, freestanding, abstract porcelain and earthenware form that is part animal, part human, and part wrapped-up package with a bow, is great fun. Garth Evans's large fiberglass sculpture "Hold" (1992-94), a blunt, recumbent, abstract biomorphic figure, is arresting, as is Matt Harle's "Untitled" (2003), a floor-standing sculpture made of interlocking planes of foam insulation, out of which rise a loosely pyramidal, hydrostone skeleton.

The Academy, which thrives on representation, is, paradoxically, better in this exhibition at selecting abstract artists than representational ones. A number of strong works by lesser-known abstract painters - James Little, Tine Lundsryd, Gordon Powell, Trevor Winkfield - tower over more established voices, such as that of Thomas Nozkowski.

The flat, hard-edged paintings by Mr. Little and Mr. Winkfield - who currently has a beautiful show of small paintings at Tibor de Nagy - each exert a commanding presence in their respective galleries. Mr. Little's "Bitter-Sweet Victory" (2005), a can-can row of pointed forms in day-glow colors, holds astringent, heightened color in a state of suspended quietude and equilibrium. Mr. Winkfield's "Her Pines, His Pineapple" (2005), a jumble of symbol, nature, interior, and object, juggles and mixes everything in the painting (pineapple, flower-face, mountains, pine trees) as if in a poetic blender.

It is difficult to know where the National Academy is heading. What is clear is that academic videos and installations are no more engaging than academic abstraction and representation. Maybe the problem lies with the National Academy's inherent group dynamic - a scattershot, conflicting voice that could be remedied every other year, or at least brought into coherence, with a single curator.

Until June 13 (1083 Fifth Avenue at 89th Street, 212-369-4880).

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## THE SPECTATOR

### Look back with pleasure

Andrew Lambirth, 2006

The Bloomberg Space on the edge of Finsbury Square is a fine ground-floor gallery with rocketing ceilings that exudes wealth and sophistication. It's a rare and pleasantly civilised experience to walk in off the street and not only be welcomed but also handed a complimentary catalogue of the exhibition. The catalogue is a modest illustrated pamphlet containing ample information about both artists and exhibits — sufficient even for the knowledgeable spectator. Here are none of the door-stopper tomes beloved of academic curators, just a neat, stapled brochure, and a handlist of the exhibits if you require more specific information. The surroundings are spacious and elegant. Museums should be like this. Since they aren't, perhaps the burden of more exhibitions should be shouldered by the likes of Bloomberg — eminently capable City firms with a strong interest in the arts who have the space to mount temporary displays.

The current Bloomberg loan exhibition is focused on the year 1979, apparently in honour of the first British Art Show, which was curated in that year by the redoubtable critic William Packer. (The sixth British Art Show opens this autumn in Gateshead and tours the country. It's a 'state-of-the-art' survey of varying interest, largely dependent on the intelligence of the selectors. Few have had the humane eclecticism of Packer.) Three Bloomberg curators (Stephen Hepworth, Graham Gussin and Sacha Craddock) have each selected five artists who showed either in that first British Art Show or in the Hayward Annual (that's another group show which would bear reviving) of the same year. To these a single mutually agreed addition was made, constituting a total of 16 exhibiting artists, all now showing at least one work made in the late 70s.

A couple of white sculptures by Carole Hodgson, which apparently refer to the landscape of west Wales, are the first objects you encounter. Plaster uprights on plinths, they look like blanched slices of shale or slate, and echo the small henge of paired lumps of chalk by Nick Pope, set some way off on the floor. But the big impact in this large space is made by the two Bert Irvin paintings: dynamic with diagonals, vibrant or opaque. In comparison, James Faure Walker's messy abstract 'Lazy Afternoons', with its Monet waterlily references, looks clumsy — like a pattern of handprints to ward off the evil eye gone mad. The other picture here is an optical field painting by Barrie Cook,

consisting of repeated vertical forms like burnt matches or cotton buds, exploring white/black and blue/red. Amiable, but without the mental shiver you get from Bridget Riley. Also in this room are John Cobb's disassembled wooden construction 'Easy Chair', and Garth Evans's flat plywood spiral, like a coir floormat, rippling outwards from a circular centre in waves of distortion.

That feeling of sculpture taking itself to pieces and pondering the remains continues into what is called the 'Back Space'. Occupying much of the floor is Jeff Lowe's surrealist assembly of forms in zinc-plated steel, stone and slate. On the walls are a couple of typical Stephen Buckley oils, all low-relief geometry and fabric pattern. Michael Mason is represented by a collage of 'Vac Forms', four envelopes of photos, diagrams and lists, and the maquette for a far larger sculpture called 'Agincourt'. This seems to have been a playful architectural interpretation of the mediaeval battle. Thankfully, the tone of this room is boosted by the inclusion of Prunella Clough.

Clough is one of those refreshingly diffident painters the English produce from time to time, whose originality is unmistakable and more far-reaching than many a noisier and more celebrated talent. No one could particularise a painting's surface in quite such an exquisitely varied way. Clough was a supreme manipulator of textures, a tonal painter who painted the organic and natural world besieged by man-made detail, the latter often depicted in rainbow hues. So here, in this typically poetic image ('Untitled with four elements'), she juxtaposes the geometric and the organic, the linear and volumetric, in quiet buff and grey. Colour is reserved for an elbow of tubing which obtrudes into the bottom-left corner, in green, pink, yellow and white. Like most of Clough's paintings, its reticence is deceptive: it withstands a lot of looking.

The other exhibits are arranged around a balcony, which looks down on to the floor below. (The architecture of the Bloomberg building is dramatic, but does not compete unfairly with the exhibits.) Four collages by John Stezaker are the cut-out silhouettes of film stars (is that Orson Welles, by any chance?), only the surrounds remaining from the original magazine photos, their features excised and dark. These make a wild contrast with the meticulously observed

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realism of Euan Uglow's portrait, 'Head of Pat', painted over five years of rigorous and unrelenting scrutiny. The radical nature of Uglow's painting is still underestimated. Perhaps the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of his work will help to draw attention to its originality and inventiveness.

A complex film installation by Tony Sinden consists of a pair of black screens, each with a grey plastic chair set off to one side, with framed photographic accoutrements. Film plays continually on each screen, of a figure interacting with a similar chair. It's all about the relationship between still and moving, real and projected objects, I suppose — fine if you enjoy that sort of thing. There are three albums of images by the maverick performance artist Genesis P-Orridge, which are obscure and of little obvious interest; hardly worthy of the instigator of 'Throbbing Gristle' and 'Industrial

Music'. A video loop of Charlie Hooker's 1979 performance, 'Stroll On', re-enacted in early August, is playing on a monitor. I recall the late Ken Kiff singing Hooker's praises and suggesting he would make a provocative artist in residence at the National Gallery.

As is usual in these mixed exhibitions, it's the paintings which stand out: Uglow, Clough, Irvin. For these alone the show is worth a look. The gallery is open Tuesday– Saturday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m. Another performance of Charlie Hooker's 'Stroll On' will take place at 7 p.m. on Friday, 16 September to mark the end of the exhibition. Email: [gallery@bloomberg.net](mailto:gallery@bloomberg.net) to reserve a space.

*This article first appeared in the print edition of The Spectator magazine, dated August 27, 2005*

# JOHANNES VOGT

## NEW YORK OBSERVER

### Un-Hyped Academy Annual Quietly Takes the Long View

Mario Naves, 2006

Hype is an insidious, all but irresistible phenomenon. It preys on our insecurities, our need to belong to a community, however contrived or flimsy. It's also there to sell us a bill of goods. Hype was the sole factor explaining the crowds at the Whitney Biennial that just closed. No one visiting the Whitney expected to see art, did they?

The 181st Annual: An Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary Art at the National Academy Museum has nowhere near the buzz of the Biennial. Perhaps the venue is considered too poky—"the museum that time forgot," as one wag put it. Susan Shatter, the institution's current president, writes of the academy's "loyalty to representational art," but adds that it's "catching up to an art world that is more aesthetically diverse."

The academy's recent annuals have included media other than painting, drawing and sculpture—installations, say, or anything else requiring an extension cord and a computer technician. But while new forms promise a certain frisson of hip, they can't guarantee risk, reach or (dare I say it?) beauty.

A committee from the academy narrowed hundreds of recommended submissions down to the work of 124 artists. The result is a hodgepodge; could a show featuring so many artists amount to anything else? All the same, there are many highlights, and the best are brave and profound.

The exhibition presents a number of artists at the top of their form. Chief among them are James Little and Robert Kushner. The tumbling flora, gold leaf and glitter of *Conservatory Scatter IV* (2005) evince Mr. Kushner's long-standing love of Asian art and unapologetic embrace of the decorative. No surprise there, but this is the best painting he's pulled off in years, deftly setting material excess into motion. Color and surface have always been his strengths, but here they're endowed with newfound density and grit. *Conservatory Scatter IV* alternately crackles and flows. It's a thrilling performance.

So is Mr. Little's *Bitter-Sweet Victory* (2005), an arrangement of rigorously articulated geometric patterns. Though

he defines his jagged forms with the hardest of hard edges, he tempers their mechanical character with supple, warm and pleasingly tactile surfaces. The brash palette—purplish blues, light-filled oranges, sharp and velvety greens—is all the more impressive for not "popping" at the eye. (Op Art gimmickry isn't the point.) The clincher lies in the center of the painting: A column of yellow ochre containing almost unperceivable shifts in tone and temperature anchors the composition, demonstrating Mr. Little's coloristic know-how.

Paintings by Thomas Nozkowski, Helen Miranda Wilson, Tine Lundsryd, Kevin Wixted, Michael Tompkins, Harriet Korman, Joan Semmel and Trevor Winkfield don't disappoint high expectations. New to me is Ralph Iwamoto, whose acrylic-on-canvas *Dominoes*, Opus 27 (1987) synopses and enlivens its grid through a seemingly infinite number of variations on an octagon. Lee Walton mines a related impulse with ink and watercolor on paper, though he's inspired by baseball rather than geometry: *2005 World Series, Chicago White Sox vs. Houston Astros* (2005) is a delightfully offhanded recording of sports strategy. Lauren Bakoian's print, *The Slow Thinker* (2005), creates an enigmatic Klee-like animism from a sloping grid, the coarse grain of a woodblock, and a spare and ghostly allusion to the figure.

Sculpture is well served by the machine-shop proficiency of Richard Rezac and the lumpish vigor of Garth Evans and Matt Harle, whose untitled construction made of insulation foam, hydrostone and acrylic paint posits an intriguingly disjointed symbiosis of drawing and architecture. Sculptor Stephen Talasnik's pencil drawing, *Rococo Dream* (2006), imagines structures that are equal parts roller coaster, botanical study and Euclidean fantasy. Mr. Talasnik should have a beer with Gerald Auten, whose *Pencilhead* (2005) exhibits a similar gift for creating astonishingly lustrous surfaces with graphite.

The number of dreadful works here is small, though the ordinary does outnumber the exceptional. And while no survey this size could consistently sustain or gratify one's interest, the National Academy's quiet insistence on individual vision is a better marker of art's continuing vitality

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than the group think recently heralded at the Whitney. The half-life of hype is mercifully brief. The life of art goes on forever.

*The 181st Annual: An Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary American Art is at the National Academy Museum, 1083 Fifth Avenue, until June 18.*

## Out of Contexts

It's unfair to judge an artist, an ethos and a decade by an exhibition the scale of Eva Hesse: Sculpture, on display at the Jewish Museum. There have to be better ways to eulogize a "great American artist," Minimalism and the 1960's than an abruptly circumscribed overview of signature sculptures or pieces representative of important stylistic shifts.

Hesse is a hugely influential figure. Her investigations of industrial materials, repetitive forms and bodily dysfunction imbued the blunt severity of Minimalism with Surrealist-inspired psychological tension. They're seen as forming a bridge between an impersonal machine-tooled art and something intimate and diaristic. Hesse's early death—of a brain tumor in 1970, at the age of 34—imparts the awful force of prophecy to her fleshy skeins of rope and membranous "accretions" of fiberglass and polyester resin.

Yearning is her leitmotif: The sculptures strain under the dictates of anonymity and order. Imperfections resulting from material processes endow Hesse's vessels and "skins" of latex with a wobbly fragility. The work's plaintive character—its bathos, really—is genuine. So too is Hesse's dogged search for art that "accedes to its non-logical self." But mostly the sculptures are pretentious and inert.

In an interview, artist Mel Bochner stated that "there was something 'haunted' about [Hesse's] work. Maybe it's haunted by all those lost 'contexts' of the 1960s." He's right: The air of morbidity hanging over Eva Hesse: Sculpture is unrelated to her tragic death. Minimalism is the grim reaper here, and the 1960's its partner in crime.

Minimalism's disavowal of metaphor, of art's ability to take on an independent life through illusion, has left a catastrophic mark on several generations of artists. Hesse was fascinated by the brutal permanence of Minimalist art, but attempted to wriggle out from under its intractable weight. She failed. The chinks Hesse put into Minimalism's façade—by allowing chance incident, say, to augment a work's final shape—only underscore its deadening authority. The curse of "anti-form" (now there's a quaint bit of 60's cant) is that it squelches artistic potential. Nihilism is bad enough; coupled with know-nothing portentousness, it's insufferable.

In tweaking the tenets of Minimalism, Hesse mistook molehills for mountains; her work feels overblown. Sculpture that thrives upon the vitality of form either held no interest for her or was beyond her talents. A healthy engagement with the transformative possibilities of material and metaphor can redeem almost anything. There's nothing redemptive about Eva Hesse: Sculpture. It commemorates an artist, an ethos and a time whose import are vastly overrated.

*Eva Hesse: Sculpture is at the Jewish Museum, 1109 Fifth Avenue, until Sept. 17.*

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## The New York Times

### ART REVIEW; For a Broad Landscape, An Equally Wide Survey

Ken Johnson, 2006

At this moment in the United States, artists are collectively producing every kind of art imaginable, from the conservatively traditional to the radically conceptual. Critics, curators, gallery owners and historians will filter out most of it in their continuing efforts to discover some meaningful direction, but no one really has a clear view of the big picture. It is too broad, hazy and confusing.

In its own haphazard way, however, the National Academy Museum's "181st Annual" comes close to reflecting accurately the pluralism of art in America. (This year, as it is in alternate years, the show is an invitational made up of works by artists who are not members of the academy.) The eight-member invitational committee did not try to carve a thin slice out of the whole in an effort to represent some important or up-to-date development. Numerous well-known artists are among the 124 selected, including John Chamberlain, Pat Steir and Kiki Smith, but what the committee came up with is a trend-blind cross section. With artists born in every decade from the 1920's to the 1980's, it is, you might say, the anti-Whitney Biennial. It won't make you angry, but neither will it thrill you.

Besides looking all too much as if it were organized by committee, the show has a major problem in its installation. Because so many different styles are represented, and the layout seems to have been determined mainly by the sizes of different works, there is a numbing randomness.

A better idea might have been to group pieces according to style into a series of focused mini-exhibitions. For example, at least a dozen of the show's painters are still drawing inspiration from Abstract Expressionism, producing essays in painterly and emotional spontaneity. Gathering together works of this sort by Judith Murray, Lynne Frehm, Brian Rutenberg and others would provide an occasion not only for comparisons of quality but also for a meditation on what it is that continues to make painterly abstraction so appealing to so many artists.

Geometric abstraction preoccupies another large group of artists who aim not for expressive freedom but for structural order and sensuous calm. These include, most notably, Merrill Wagner, James Little and Helen Miranda Wilson. And, as you would expect of a traditionalist institution like the National Academy, there are many who paint or draw from perceptual experience. Works in this vein include Syl-

via Plimack Mangold's Cézannesque painting of a tree; Joan Semmel's slyly aggressive nude self-portrait with a camera; and Margery Beaumont's small, soft-focus, Morandi-like still-life painting.

Providing relief from traditionalist approaches that are too often overly familiar, whether abstract or representational, are those artists involved in more or less comical figurative fantasy, like Alexi Worth, Karl Wirsum, Trevor Winkfield and Llyn Foulkes. Others, including Jim Lutes, Jonathan Lasker and Gordon Powell, put inventive spins on abstraction. The idiosyncratic originality of these artists is something the show needs more of.

One of the few sociologically assertive works is Maren Hassinger's mock-primitivist installation centered on a video in which she paints her own face black to satirize racist stereotyping. Another is Enrique Chagoya's large, cartoon-style charcoal drawing featuring a military helicopter piloted by two Jesus figures; it is from a series called "Road Map" that satirizes President Bush's plans for Middle East peace. But the invitational committee members were clearly more interested in visibly skillful handmade approaches than they were in challenging new concepts or ideologies.

There is one other video work, a poetic sculpture by Heidi Kumao in which imagery of flowing, water-borne sediment is projected onto a piece of paper inserted in an old-fashioned typewriter. A multimedia corner installation of Constructivist forms, found objects and a glowing black light by Phong Bui also adds to the impression that, however tentatively, the academy is trying to cultivate some openness to nontraditional forms.

Sculpture, for some reason, is the most consistently high-quality part of the show. Mr. Chamberlain's tangle of colorful strips of auto-body metal; Kathy Butterly's lovely little, funky-surrealist ceramic vessel; Richard Rezac's sleek, subtly eccentric construction of wood and metal; and Tony Feher's hanging configuration of small glass jars with a red marble in each: these, along with works by Lynda Benglis, Garth Evans and Tom Burckhardt, would make an excellent small sculpture show.

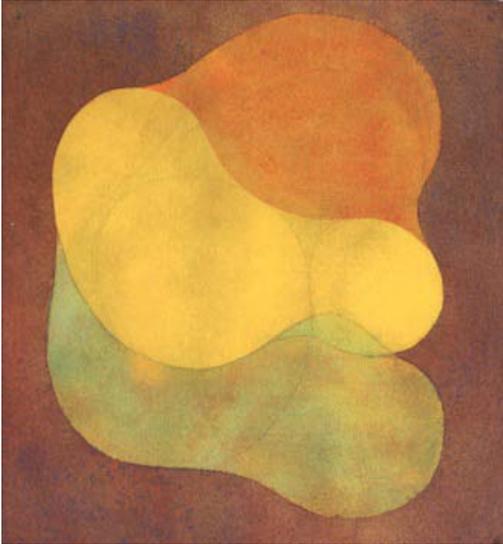
If the two-dimensional works had been selected as discerningly, the whole annual might have been a terrific exhibition. But then it would not be so democratic.

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**artcritical**  
the online magazine of art and ideas

## David Reed at Max Protetch, Garth Evans at Lori Bookstein, Lisa Hoke at Elizabeth Harris, Alfred Leslie at Allan Stone

David Cohen, 2004



Garth Evans, Dark House #18 1995-96 watercolor on paper, 10 x 9-1/4 inches

Courtesy Lori Bookstein Fine Art, NYC

David Reed and Garth Evans are improvisors at the top of their form. Where Mr. Evans is like a laid back pianist tinkering away at a set of variations in a warm, quiet bar, Mr. Reed is the last of the big bandsmen, high in style, decibels, and spirits. Mr. Reed is showing new paintings at Max Protetch, Mr. Evans a set of watercolors in the project room at Lori Bookstein—in their different ways they both have us rethinking one of the most cherished dichotomies of the painting phenomenon: transparency versus opacity. Each is fascinated by the spatial depths and related emotional resonances of color and materiality. Each uses technique at a high pitch to play depth against surface, closure against ethereality. But the differences between them come down to more than mere mood or means.

Mr. Evans is the more old-fashioned of the two. You can tell right off that he is primarily a sculptor. It is not just because there is always a figure set against a ground (in his case geometric shapes rather than anything anthropomorphic). There's also an awareness of the expressive value of roughness; although the page is saturated by watercolor used counter-intuitively with almost chalky, pigment-rich earthiness. There's little instance of the watercolorist's

traditional love of the naked whiteness of the paper, and yet the support has presence: its physicality is played off against the illusion of receding space, achieved with billowing, brooding, pulsating color. The geometric forms have a complexity that subverts the space around them, tucking themselves back and forth within competing picture planes.

Mr. Evans is consummate in his skillful use of the medium and profound in his play with depth and surface, but there is something strong and honest about the use of material; we see through it to form. Mr. Reed, by contrast, is a wizard, a pyrotechnician with paint. He wows and disconcerts with his layering techniques. Where an Evans is spatial, a Reed is spacey. The former is rough on the edges, but you see what you are getting; the latter is silky smooth and slick, reveling in enigma. One is about form, the other style.

With Mr. Reed, the retina feels like its being seduced by a jelly-fish. His complexities of temperature and speed throw the eye about with a tricksiness of baroque proportions. His squiggles manage to recall at once medieval drapery and Bronx graffiti: Martin Schongauer meets Kenny Sharf. Actually, at his best he recalls Sargent in his painterly panache. Where Mr. Evans carves out strong, solid, albeit spatially ambiguous forms, Mr. Reed's highly energetic, slippery, ethereal squiggles are much more about sensation as an end in itself, about perception than that the perceived. Observers have often remarked how his paint looks photographic. Like a photograph, we see right through the paint to the image it evokes, and yet his image IS the paint—philosophically he is as slippery as his squiggles, which is just the way we like it.

Lisa Hoke has seemed in the past an amusing decorator whose trademark motif would soon exhaust itself. Her installation at Elizabeth Harris puts paid to that: it is good, true and beautiful. She follows on neatly from Mr. Evans and Mr. Reed, not just because of a shared affection for serpentine forms and rich chroma. She has found a strategy to saturate the gaze without teasing the mind. Building effective, rich patterns from banal yet gorgeous means.

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She recalls Antoni Gaudì in this regard: as his walls are encrusted with shards of gaudy, glistening ceramic, hers postmodernize the found object while preserving its jouissance with a vocabulary consisting, primarily, of two elements: found paper coffee or soda cups and plastic beakers quarter filled with paint. These are massed to form blocks of color, the cups protruding sculpturally, the beakers swirling into swathes of pure surface. These elements bring to mind the pioneers of painterly digitalism, Seurat and Klimt. She isn't just about technique and its semiotic implications, however: there is genuine exploration of color sensations—not just chroma but hue. It is a major work that demands return visits to penetrate its depths, and to revel in its surfaces.

Alfred Leslie's abstraction is the stuff of legend, for it is often told how he turned his back on an accomplished early style to embrace the new perceptual realism of the 1960s, the style for which he is better known. It turns out, as the cache Allan Stone has gathered together at his Upper Eastside Gallery, that he was a highly accomplished if somewhat derivative Abstract Expressionist in the 1950s. The experience of this show is rather like finding a vintage Cadillac in a long locked garage: they are as fresh as the day they were painted and roaring to go.

There are undoubtedly strong influences from better known painters like de Kooning and Kline in the way emphatic

brushstrokes define structure, chance effects are given full play, and the paint embodies the sensation of flesh, and there is probably some influence from such figures as Al Held and Milton Resnick. But the palette has a panache of its own that belies the existential heaviness of his peers, and the energy is prodigious.

I spoke with him as his show opened about the distance he must feel from his early artistic self. On the contrary, he sees absolute continuity between his charged, loose, gutsy bravura painting and collage of the 1950s and the hermetically tight realism, with its bid to create a contemporary history painting, of the subsequent decades, such as his Caravaggesque series devoted to the death of Frank O'Hara, or the monumental series of full-frontal male and female nudes. He stresses frontality, confrontation and all-overness as the underlying formal continuum.

There is a clue about his impatience with abstraction in the experimental movies he directed, two of which are being screened by Mr. Stone in a special projection room (including "Pull my Daisy" with a script by Jack Kerouac, who narrates). Ms. Leslie's allegiance was to the avantgarde in its broad manifestation, not towards a specific style or technique.

*A version of this article first appeared in the New York Sun, December 16, 2004*