

SCHOLASTIC

ART

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New Trends in Sculpture

WORKING WITH VOLUME

SCHOLASTIC



What do you think artist Nancy Rubins might be saying about today's "throw away" society?

Cover: Nancy Rubins, b. 1953. *Mattresses & Cakes*, 1993. 21' high. Paul Kasmin Gallery, NY, NY.

**SCHOLASTIC
ART**

Maurice R. Robinson, founder of Scholastic Inc., 1895-1982

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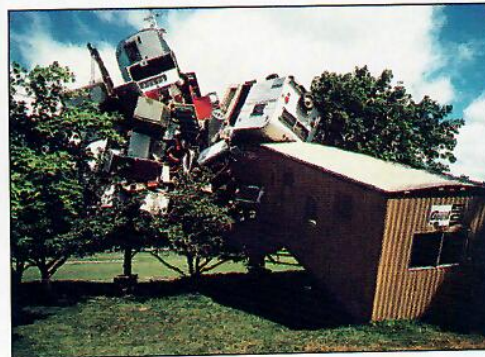
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Visual Message

"ART HAS THE POWER TO MOLD AND SHAPE THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE." — JOSEPH BEUYS



"I'm creating monuments to impermanence, giving our garbage dumps a form that allows them to enter public consciousness." — Nancy Rubins

Nancy Rubins, b. 1953. *Another Kind of Growth*, 1988. 42' high. Installed at the Three Rivers State Park, Pittsburgh. Photo, Paul Kasmin Gallery, NY, NY.

What do you think of the work on the cover? Can you recognize any of the materials used? Would you be surprised to learn that this contemporary sculpture is called *Mattresses & Cakes*?

This construction, created by American sculptor Nancy Rubins, is made of hundreds of rolled-up mattresses stuffed with gooey, rotting cakes. It fills an entire gallery. As it swings from the ceiling, stuffing falls from the mattresses and the decaying cakes give off a musty smell. Rubins's most famous installation, *Another Kind of Growth* (left), consists of mobile homes, hot-water heaters, and refrigerators scattered over the landscape. It looks more like the result of a tornado or a plane crash than a

work of art. Nancy Rubins is only one of many contemporary artists who work with unusual materials to create huge, often controversial sculptures. Rubins's works, which have been compared to "landfills" or "garbage dumps," make many people uncomfortable. Some question

"Future political intentions must be artistic; they must originate from human creativity." — Joseph Beuys

Joseph Beuys (1921-1986). *How to Explain Paintings to a Dead Hare*. Performed at the Schmela Gallery, Düsseldorf, in 1965.



S



“What meaning might a sculpture made of shapes like these have for African-American artist Melvin Edwards?”

Melvin Edwards, b. 1937. *Lynch Fragment: Freedom Weapon*, 1986. Welded steel. 9" x 9" x 6". CDS Gallery, NY, NY.

whether pieces like these could even be called works of art.

Until the beginning of the 20th century, American and European sculpture was very traditional. Sculptures were **figurative**; carved out of stone, marble, or wood; or **modeled** from clay and cast in metal. Today, sculptures can be made out of almost anything, they can be built nearly anywhere, and they can even be performed. Sometimes they exist only as concepts in the artist's mind. And many sculptures being done today—like Nancy Rubins's visual comments on environmental pollution—are being created to express political or social concerns.

One of the most important artists of the mid-20th century is German sculptor *Joseph Beuys* (Bice). All his work was inspired by an early experience as a World War II pilot, when he was shot down over Asia. Local tribes rescued the artist by wrapping his nearly frozen body in felt and animal fat, materials he later used in his sculptures. One of his best-known “social

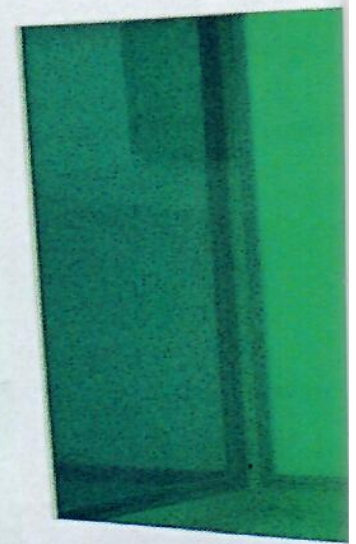
sculptures”—*Coyote*—was done in 1974 to protest the war in Vietnam. In this work, Beuys spent a week in a New York gallery with a live coyote to criticize what he saw as the American need to control other countries. In another performance piece, *How to Explain Paintings to A Dead Hare* (left), the artist, covered in felt, honey, and gold, talked about art to a dead rabbit to point out the spiritual connections between all creatures.

Since 1963 sculptor *Melvin Edwards* has been creating a series of steel sculptures he calls “Lynch Fragments.” *Freedom Weapon* (above) is a visually powerful abstraction, but can you recognize any of the shapes in this work? Even if none of the forms look familiar, how do the sharp points, jagged edges, and black-steel surfaces in this piece make you feel? Edwards welds together hooks, knife blades, hammers, chains, handcuffs, saws, and railroad spikes, transforming their shapes to create compositions that suggest tension, repression, and violence.

Art as Idea

"I HAVE NO OBJECTION TO PEOPLE PUTTING SHARKS IN FORMALDEHYDE, BUT IT'S NOT ART AND THEY HAVE NO RIGHT TO TELL ME IT IS!"

—BRIAN SEWELL, ART CRITIC,
THE EVENING STANDARD



What turns a pair of Reeboks into a work of art?

Gary Simmons, b. 1964. *Pump It Up*, 1990. Mixed Media. 23 1/2" x 14" x 5 1/4". Metro Pictures.



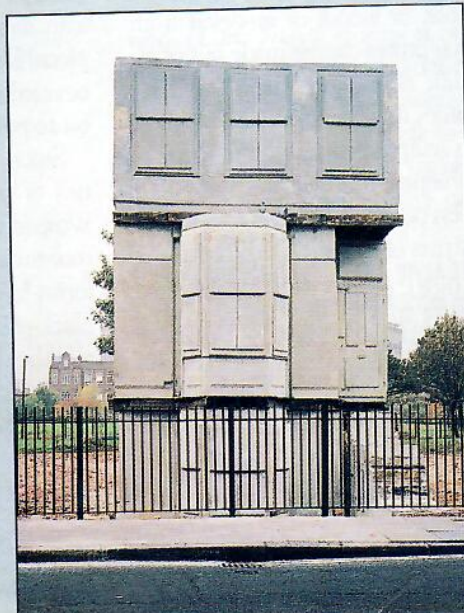
It's getting harder and harder for artists to shock their audiences—people expect to find art anywhere these days, and for it to take just about any form. But even in this accepting atmosphere, British artist *Damien Hirst* has managed to outrage many people on a regular basis. His first piece, done in 1990 and called *A Thousand Years*, was made up of a rotting cow's head and maggots, and it upset nearly everyone who saw it. But the sculpture that really launched the artist's career was titled *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (above right) and consisted of a gigantic tank filled with liquid preservative. Inside the tank, weighted

and balanced so it floated just as it would in the ocean, was a huge, decaying tiger shark.

For many contemporary artists, the idea or *concept*, behind their art is more important than the way the work looks. Many **Conceptual** artists feel that art is part of life; just one more experience that can't be separated from any of the others. In trying to express universal fears of death, Hirst needed an object everyone would understand. "Throughout history sharks have symbolized death. I wanted to find a way to express the fear they bring up." Photos, paintings, or traditional sculptures wouldn't work. "It has to re-

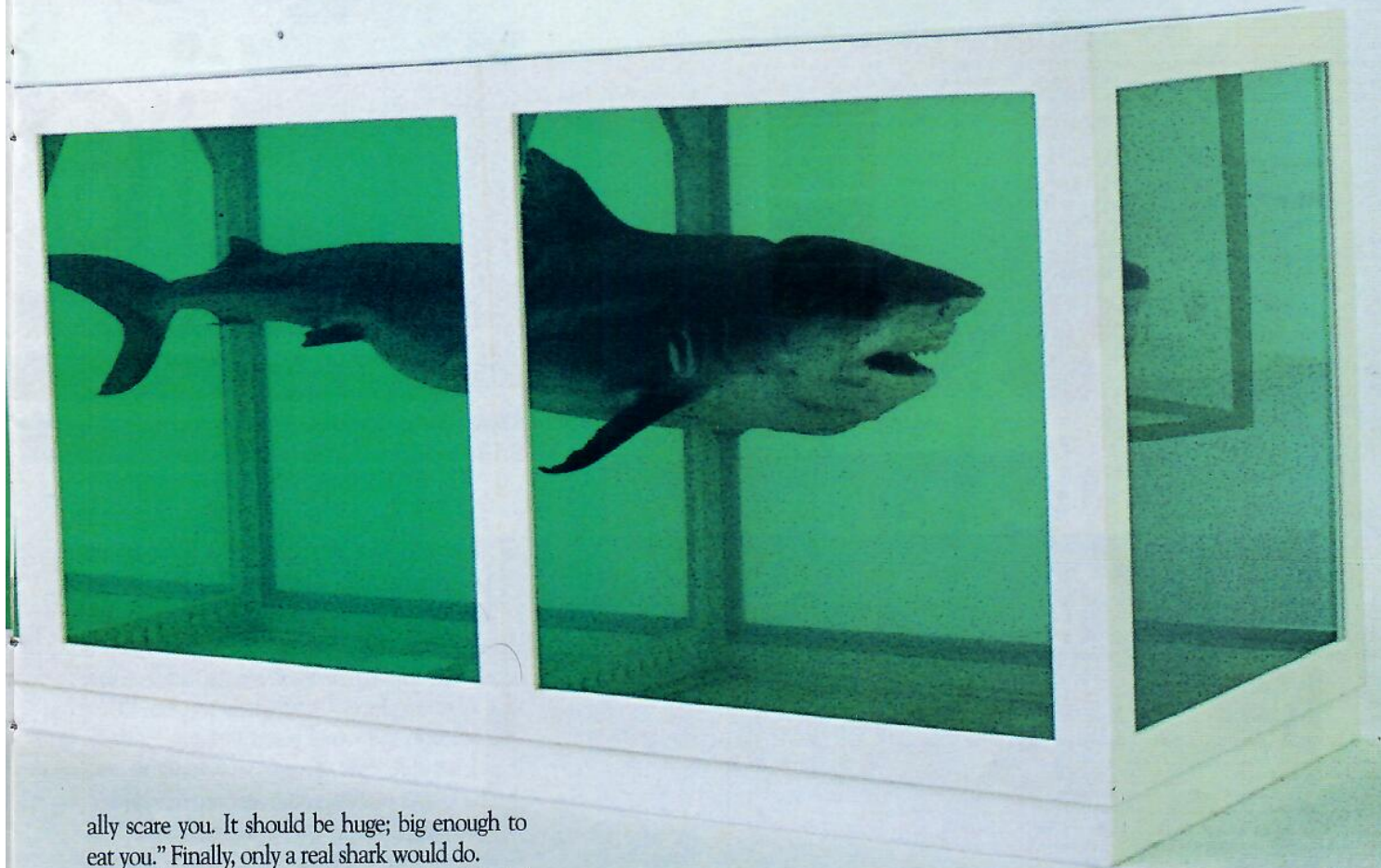
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"House sums up the memories and feelings of all the people who once lived there."—Rachel Whiteread

Rachel Whiteread, b. 1964. *Untitled (House)*, Oct. 1993—Jan. 1994. Concrete, building materials. 32 1/2' high (now destroyed).



ally scare you. It should be huge; big enough to eat you." Finally, only a real shark would do.

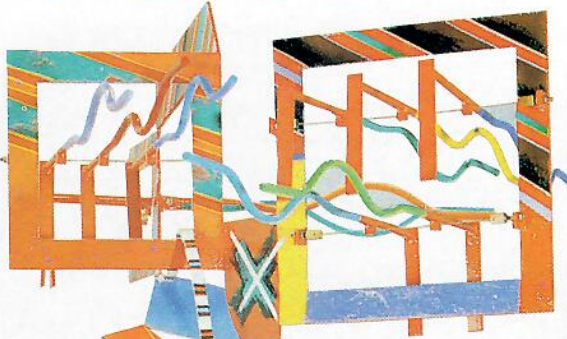
Another British Conceptualist, *Rachel Whiteread*, works with memory and all the feelings memories bring up. She focuses on **negative space**, making casts of "empty" areas—the space under a bed, inside a closet, the volume of a room. In 1993, the artist created her most famous and controversial work, *House* (below, left). She found a three-story Victorian row house that was about to be torn down and, using its wooden frame as a mold, filled the building with concrete. When the concrete dried, the frame was pulled away, leaving a pale, silent, ghostly monument to the memory of its former inhabitants. Intended as a temporary project, *House* became such a popular work of art that many people tried to save it. But four months after its creation, surrounded by crowds and television cameras, a bulldozer smashed the sculpture into tiny bits of concrete.

Another kind of conceptual art is based on the **found object**. A huge shark in a tank is one type of found object. Found objects can also be everyday items the artist *transforms* to make the viewer see them differently. In his sculpture *Pump It Up* (far left), African-American artist *Gary Simmons* selected two familiar objects that are very popular in today's culture. By making slight changes in a pair of Reebok sneakers, the artist was able to express his feelings about modern values. The shoes—covered in gold—hang high on the wall like religious statues in a church. The gold covering also refers to the practice of bronzing baby shoes to preserve a child's first steps. How may the artist be commenting on the way clothing and possessions are regarded in today's world of sports superstars, status symbols, and advertising?

"I've always wanted something that would appeal to people who aren't interested in art."—Damien Hirst

Damien Hirst, b. 1965. *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, 1991. Steel, glass, and tiger shark in 5 percent formaldehyde solution. 7' x 17' x 7'. Saatchi Collection, London. Photo: Tanya Bonakdar Gallery.

New Points of View



"I WANT MY WORK TO PROVIDE A SENSE OF
FANTASY, IMAGINATION, ESCAPE, RETREAT—THE
THE IDEA OF 'OTHERNESS.'"—MARTIN PURYEAR

Compare this work done by African American artist John Scott with the sculpture at the top of the next page.

John Scott b. 1940. *Thorn Bush Blues Totem*, 1991. Private Collection.

Much of the vitality and inventiveness of contemporary sculpture is due to the pieces created by artists from diverse backgrounds. These emerging artists bring fresh perspectives and new approaches to universal themes.

One of the most important of these "new" sculptors is African-American Martin Puryear. Born in Washington, D.C., the artist earned an M.F.A. from Yale University, then went to live in a remote African village. There he worked with tribal weavers and carpenters. He then studied crafts in Japan, and woodworking and boat-building in Sweden. In his large, handcrafted constructions, Puryear links ancient cultures to the modern world. Abstract works like *Maroon* (above right) suggest natural forms rather than imitating them. More than six feet high with one tiny opening

on top, *Maroon's* dark, oval shape, made of tarred mesh, brings to mind images like a ship's hull, a cage, a hut, a giant pod. What additional feelings does this sculpture convey when you recall that the term *maroon* means "to abandon in a desolate place"? And when you learn that this was also the name given to a group of descendants of fugitive slaves?

The African-American experience is expressed in a completely different way by Southern sculptor John Scott. While Puryear works with enclosed, organic shapes and natural materials, Scott expresses the sleek, modern, geometry of an industrial society. His painted steel abstraction *Thorn Bush Blues Totem* (left) was inspired by the African legend of the diddley bow—a hunter's bow turned into a one-stringed fiddle and played to appease the spirit of the animal that had been killed. This work, made up of long, straight lines and short, staggered planes and curves, not only suggests an African musical instrument but also incorporates the rhythms of American jazz. The spaces, or rest areas, between the shapes are a vital part of the sculpture. The painted designs resemble musical notes or piano keys.

Unlike the two other sculptors whose works are shown on these pages, Mexican-American Luis Jiménez (he-MEN-eh) works

W

OF
COMMUNICATE



"A zoo is as interesting to me as an art museum."

— Martin Puryear

Martin Puryear b. 1941. *Maroon*, 1987. Steel, wire mesh, wood, tar. 76" x 120" x 78". Milwaukee Art Museum, gift of Contemporary Art Society.

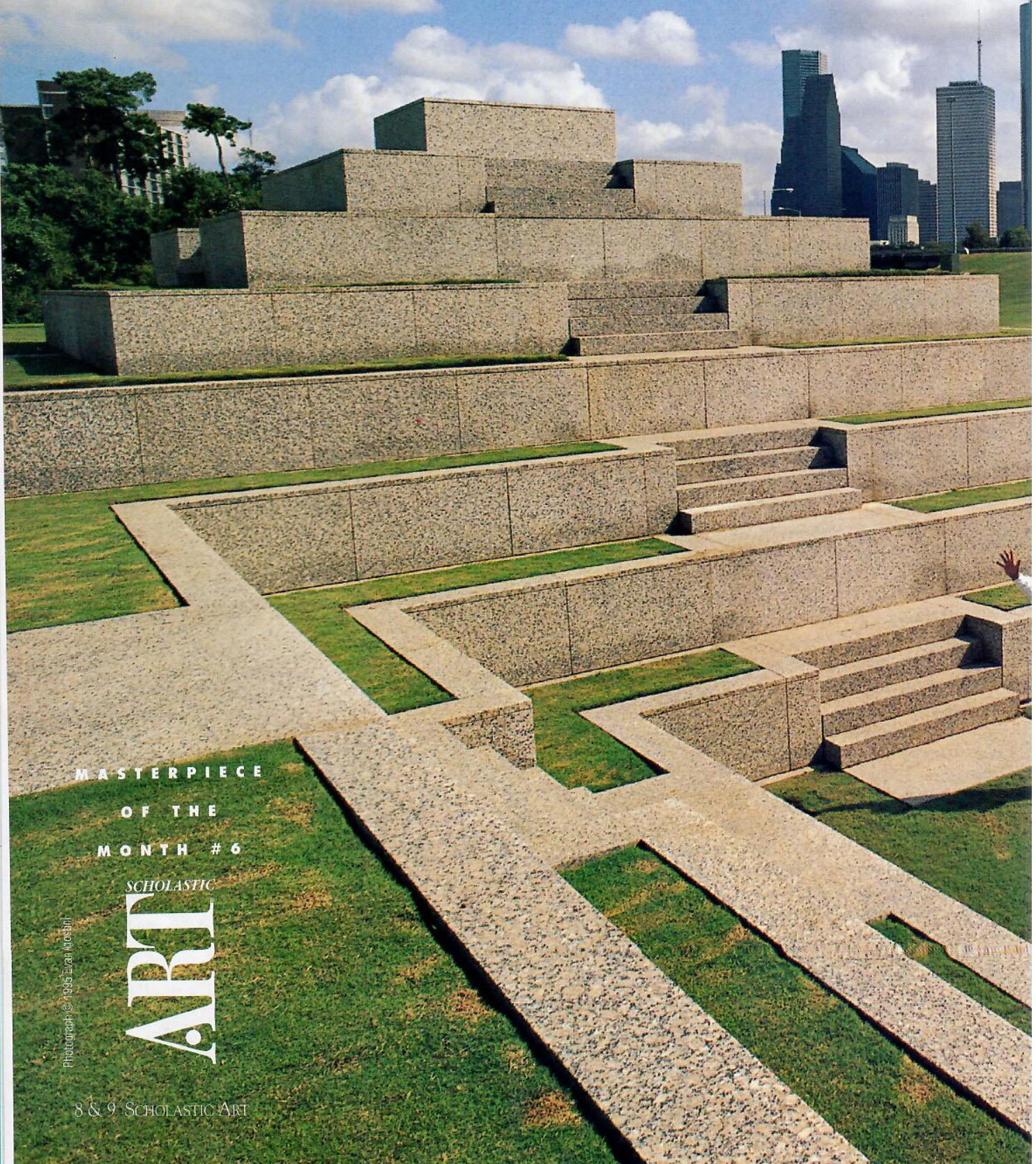
figuratively. He sculpts traditional themes—heroic figures, horses and riders. But he presents them in a different way, using very different materials. The artist believes that the myths of the Old West have become shallow stereotypes. "Mexicans were the original cowboys. It wasn't John Wayne. That's a false image that's grown up." He feels that "The strong vibrant symbols of today's West are the motorcycle and the automobile. I need a material that can express that vitality, one that can incorporate color, a sleek form, and a flawless surface." So he modeled *End of the Trail* (right) in clay, then made a mold and cast it in resin and fiberglass—materials developed in the last few years. He used a bright, high-gloss automotive finish and added electric lights. Jiménez based his satiric comment on the Old West on the signs he sees in front of every motel he drives past.

"When cultures clash, you get a hybrid vigor. You get flashy signs, bright color, the energy of something new."—Luis Jiménez

Luis Jiménez, b. 1948. *End of the Trail (With Electric Sunset)*, 1981. 84" x 84" x 30". Private Collection.



Jesús Bautista



MASTERPIECE
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Photograph © 1985 Evan Aronson

8 & 9 SCHOLASTIC ART

a Moroles

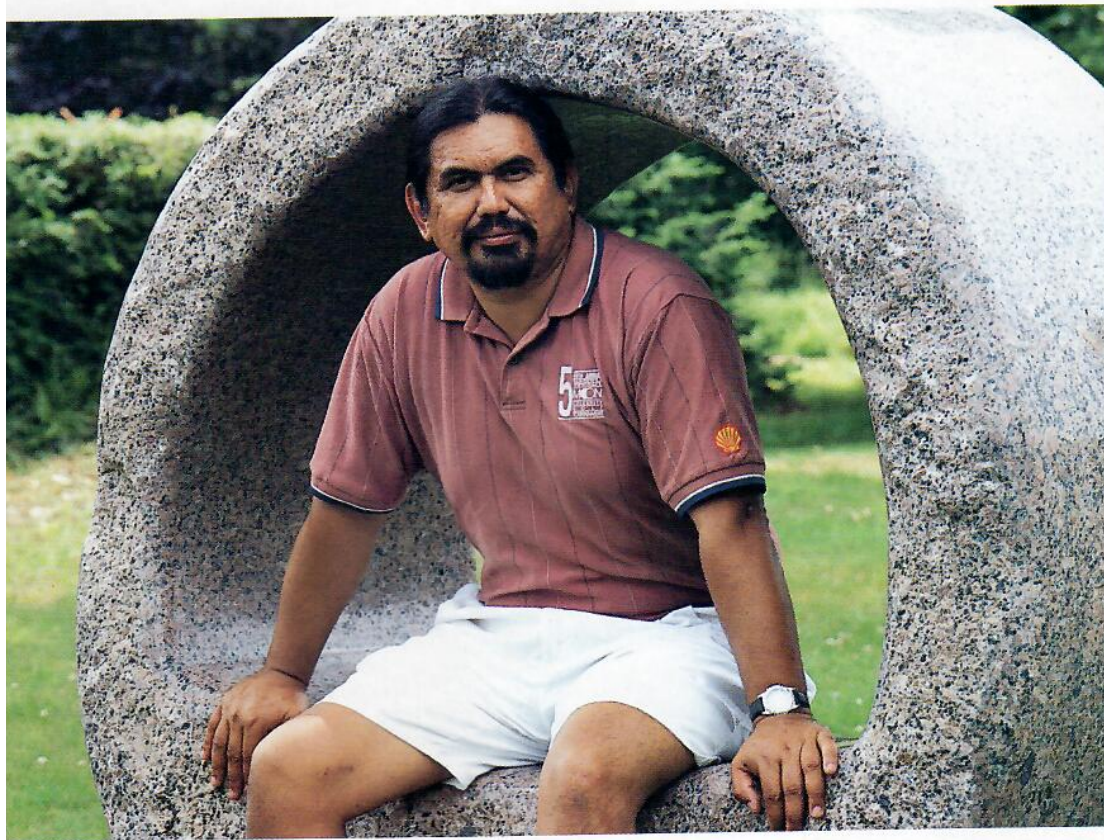
“To create this memorial, I decided to sculpt the landscape that was already there – the central pyramid is actually growing from inside the ground.”



HOUSTON POLICE OFFICERS MEMORIAL

TALKING WITH JESÚS MOROLES

Find out what it takes to be a well-known sculptor working today.



ONE OF THE rising “stars” in the world of sculpture is Texas-born artist Jesús Bautista Moroles (he-SUS bow-TEE-sta more-OH-les). Unlike other sculptors you’ve seen in this issue who use unusual, new materials, Moroles works in the same way sculptors have for centuries—he carves his shapes from enormous blocks of stone. But the huge abstract forms he creates are anything but traditional. Recently Scholastic Art spoke with the artist about his work

Did you always want to be an artist?

I remember being in elementary school and having art exhibitions in the halls. I loved art, and my teachers took me under their wings—I can even remember all their names since third grade.

Can you remember one person who was especially important to you?

When I was in college, a visiting artist came over

and did a workshop—sculptor Luis Jiménez (see pages 6-7). He invited me to work for him. So I was able to live the life and see how hard an artist works and how dedicated you have to be.

What got you interested in sculpture?

I got into sculpture because it was the only B I received in school. Everything else was A’s. I had no problem painting, or metalsmithing, or printmaking. Sculpture was the only thing I was a little slow in, so I thought I’d better do more of it.

Granite is the hardest stone there is. Why did you decide to work in granite?

I worked through clay, limestone, steel, marble, and bronze. I remember the first time I tackled granite. I was wearing goggles, a headband, a mask, gloves, a coat, earplugs, and working in a cloud of dust

with a pneumatic hammer. Finally I stopped. When the dust settled, I saw a crowd of people had been standing around watching. I was so totally into what I was doing, I hadn’t noticed. All



"I want to be involved in something that man has touched but hasn't taken over. I'd like to express the feeling that man and nature have worked together to create this work of art."

I knew this rock was fighting back. That's when I knew this was something I had to pursue.

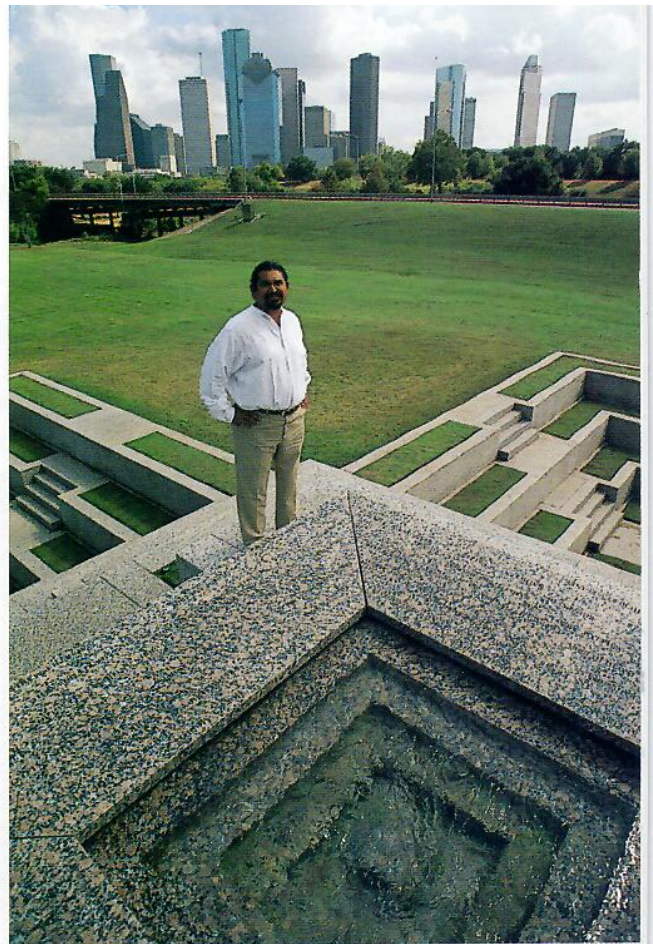
How did you know how to work the stone?
Stone carving was considered old-fashioned and the schools weren't teaching it, so I went to Italy—to the same quarries where Michelangelo got his marble to find out what to do. I've always looked at things and tried to figure them out, and I did the same thing with stone. I saw in the quarry that they don't explode the stone out of the mountain, they *tear* it out. I wanted to expose the true nature of the stone, so I decided not to carve it but to *tear* it.

How do you actually transform these huge blocks of granite into sculptures?
I work on about 20 pieces at a time and I select only a few stones. When I go to a quarry, some stones will speak to me, "Take me home." So I'll take them home and maybe after a few years I'll walk by and see a place to start, so I'll make the first tear. Now it's a whole different piece. I'll turn it and it might be another year before I do anything else. So all these pieces are in different stages just waiting for direction. If I want a curve, I have to do it and see if it's right. We may make it three times because I don't know what I want.

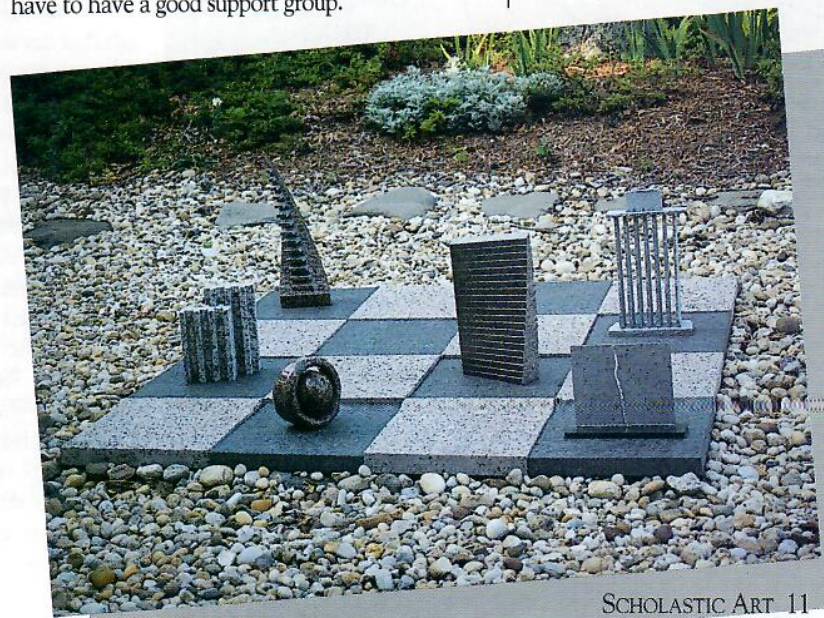
Your most complex work to date was built just outside Houston in 1992. The *Houston Police Officers Memorial* contains pyramids, terraces, and a fountain, and is nearly the size of a football field. How did this project get started?
When I first heard about the project—a monument for police officers who had died—I went out to the site to take a look. The police wanted something figurative—they gave me pictures of their squad cars, their helicopters, their horses. But I wanted to do something with the land—to make this a special place people would want to come to. So I decided to sculpt the site itself to express the idea that "We come from the earth, we rise up from the earth, then we go back down into the earth." I dug out four terraces and piled the earth in the center. The central pyramid actually grows from inside the ground, instead of sitting on it. There's a fountain at the top—water, which makes everything on the earth grow.

This sculpture has been compared to an ancient Mexican pyramid or temple. Do you think your heritage has influenced your art?
I do call myself Mexican-American and this work is like a Maya (an ancient Mexican civilization) temple, but stepped pyramids were first built in Mesopotamia (an area in Asia where Western civilization is believed to have begun). I think that stone has its own history and that's what people are seeing in my work. The history of stone goes back much further than my history or the history of Mexican-Americans or Mexicans. I would like people to think of my work as international—art needs to be for everyone from the world.

What would you say to anyone who is thinking of being an artist?
It takes a lot of hard work. It takes total dedication. And you need to be around people who are very supportive. For me that's the big thing. You have to have a good support group.



"I don't like pedestals, so I decided to make a chessboard with small sculptures sitting on it."



Kelly Wyso: BRINGING IDEAS TO LIFE

We select our Artist of the Month from among Scholastic award winners. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, 555 Broadway, New York, NY 10012-3999 for entry deadlines and rule books.

Scholastic Art magazine does not have a separate competition.

Only 14 when she created this piece of conceptual art that won a Scholastic art award, Kelly Wyso is now a sophomore at Scotia-Glenville Junior High in upstate New York. Right now,

Kelly spends much of her time on sports and wants eventually to go into medicine. But she loves art because she can do whatever she wants. "You feel so free. You can just put it all on paper; it's your time, your space, your ideas."



■ **How did you first get involved with art?**

I've been creating art since I could hold a pen or a pencil. Both my parents are artists. Part of my dad's job is to create designs for automobile upholstery, and he also does a lot of car restoration.

■ **How did you come to do this award-winning sculpture?**

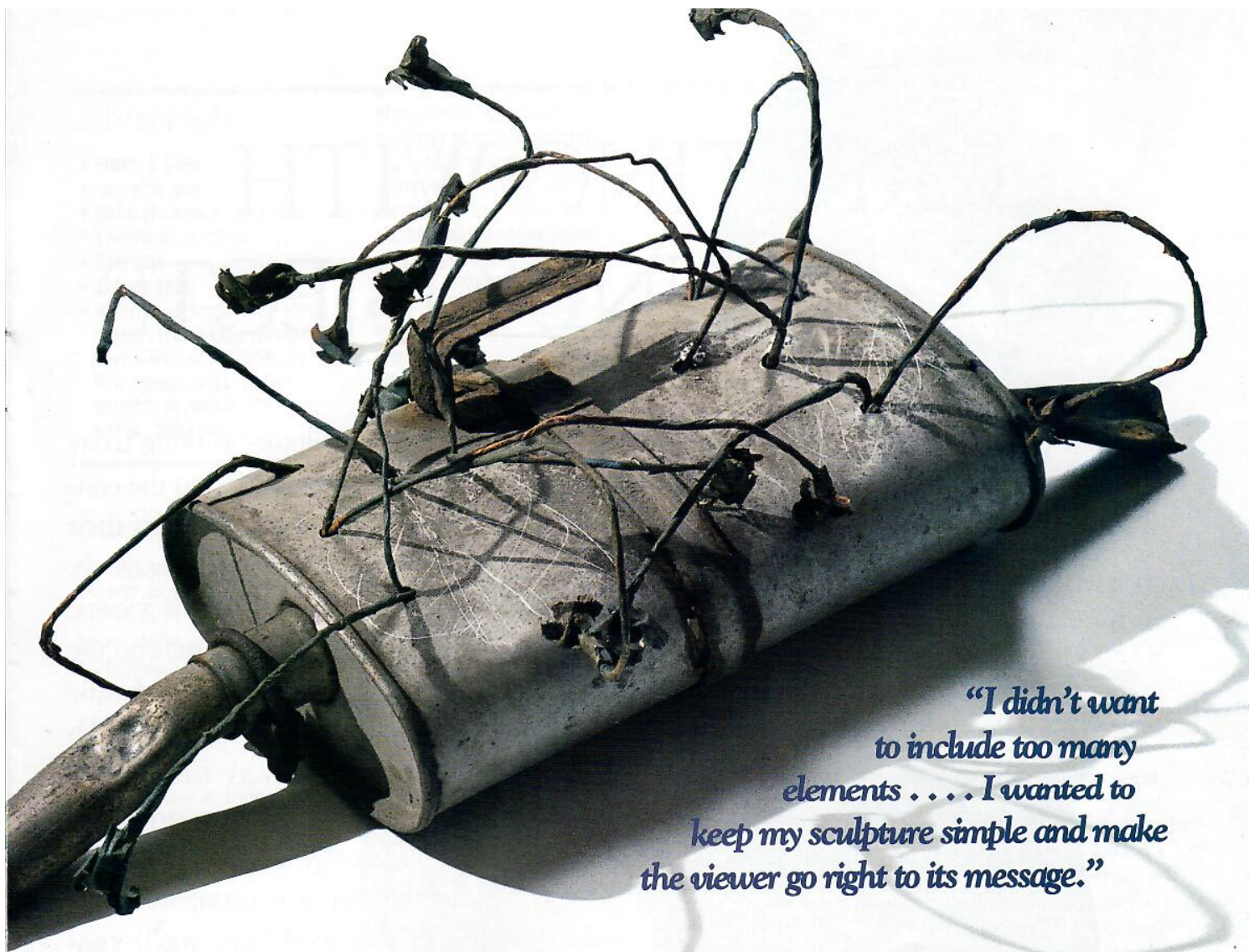
It was part of my final exam in art class. You had to pick a topic. I wanted to pick one that affected the world, so I chose pollution. Your work had to stand for your topic; whoever looked at it had to think about pollution, or civil disobedience, or whatever. You also had to use either clay, papier-

mâché, or batik. I picked papier-mâché because I wanted to use flowers in my sculpture.

■ **How did you come up with your idea?**

My grandfather and my father are both mechanics, so there have always been tools and car parts all over the garage. I didn't grow up around Barbie dolls.

When I got the assignment, I sat down and said, "Think about what you want to do and put it on paper." But I don't work well that way. I need to be inspired visually. So I thought, "OK. Pollution. Carbon monoxide," and I thought about dead flowers. But I still didn't have an idea. Later, driving down I-90, I saw a muffler



“I didn’t want to include too many elements . . . I wanted to keep my sculpture simple and make the viewer go right to its message.”

on the side of the road and I said, “There it is!” The muffler had dead grass growing out of it. I wanted to re-create that effect, but I thought flowers would be so much better.

■ **Then what did you do?**

I went to my dad and said, “Dad, I need a muffler. Have you got one?” He didn’t ask any questions. He just looked at me kind of funny, got a muffler, and gave it to me. I took it to school even though I didn’t know what I wanted to do to it. I just knew it was part of the reason we have pollution.

■ **What did you do next?**

Well, my muffler wasn’t dirty enough—not like the one on the side of the road. So I took a

sledge hammer to it, cut it up, put dirt on it, and made it look really yucky. Then I took a drill press and made holes in it. I used coat hangers for the flowers. I bent them over so they looked as if they were wilting, and put paste and old newspaper strips around them. When the stems dried, I added the “dead” papier-mâché flowers.

■ **What else did you do?**

I took really gloomy colors like army green, and a sickly brown—really dead-looking colors—and painted the flowers so they looked ugly. I let them dry and stuck them in the holes to look like they were sprouting out of the muffler and had been killed by the carbon monoxide.

■ **How did you know you were finished with your piece?**

I didn’t want to draw the viewer away from the main idea by including too many elements. I wanted to keep my sculpture simple and make the viewer go right to its message—pollution.

■ **What did your friends think about this sculpture?**

They had all made fantasy creatures, and here I had a muffler with dead flowers sticking out of it. A lot of them told me, “That’s nice.” And I said, “No. It’s ugly. That’s the point.”

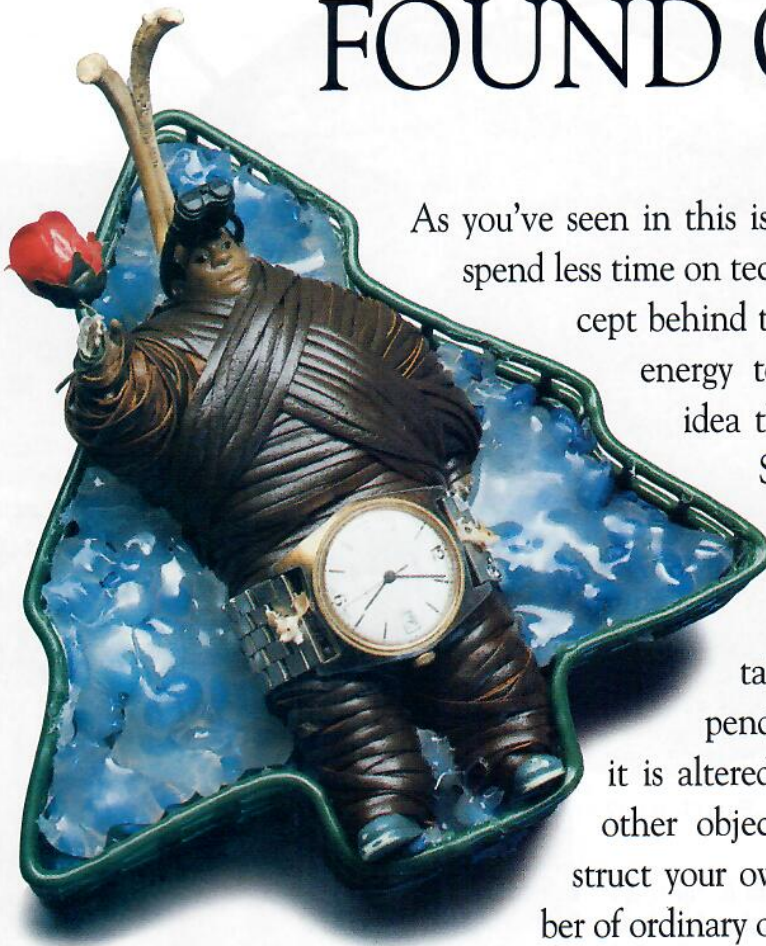
Actually, they thought it was cool. Originally I was going to make a wall and paint one side blue with a meadow of spring flowers. The other side would have graffiti, toxins, and dead

stuff—like a dump. Seeing the muffler changed my mind.

■ **Do you have any advice for other students interested in art?**

Don’t throw anything you’ve created away and say, “This stinks.” That’s what I almost did with my muffler. It was so different from all the other pieces. I didn’t think anyone would like it or even understand what I was trying to say. But my teacher saw it differently. She kept saying, “This is great, keep going.” It helps to have moral support like that. I didn’t quit, the sculpture started growing on me, and finally I thought, “This is pretty good.” If I had quit, my work wouldn’t have been recognized, and I wouldn’t be having this interview!

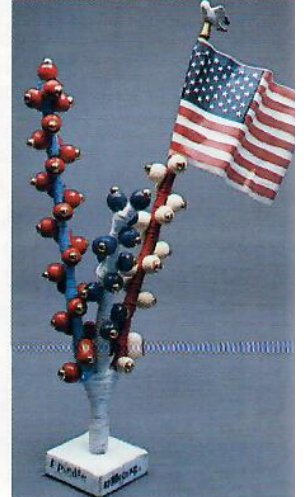
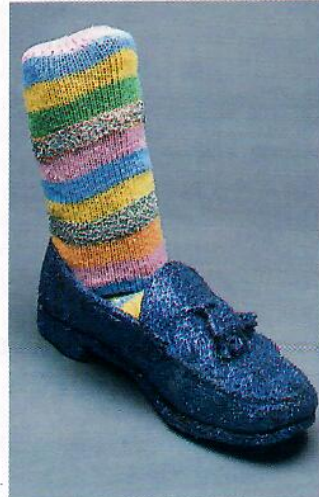
CREATING WITH FOUND OBJECTS



As you've seen in this issue, many sculptors working today spend less time on technique, and more time on the concept behind their art. They devote most of their energy to thinking about the message or idea they wish to convey to the viewer.

Some contemporary artists who use recognizable objects hardly change them at all. Even an item that seems very familiar can take on an entirely new meaning depending on the way it is presented, how it is altered, or the way it is juxtaposed with other objects. In this workshop, you'll construct your own sculpture by combining a number of ordinary objects in new and creative ways.

What everyday objects have been transformed into these inventive sculptures?



Materials

- Elmer's Glue
- Hot glue gun
- Paint (tempera, acrylic)
- Variety of brushes
- Scissors
- X-Acto knife
- A variety of small man-made objects with easily recognizable silhouettes (dolls, action figures, toys, gloves, toothbrush, comb, shoes, spoon, fork, clothes

- pins, sunglasses, jewelry)
- A variety of small, interesting natural objects (stone, wood, twigs, limbs, shells)
- A variety of tiny, light materials that adhere easily (feathers, rice, seeds, glitter, sand, sequins, beads, string, telephone wire, yarn, tiny pasta, wood shavings, pine needles, plastic flowers, bottle caps, breakfast cereal, buttons, old cassettes (tape inside), tinsel, cotton balls, fabric strips).



Starting Out

Collect as many small familiar objects as you can and see if any of them give you ideas for your sculpture. In working with found objects, the concept behind your piece is critical to its success. Decide what you want your work to say and whether you can best express it by working with one object only and changing it in some way. Or think about how you can combine a number of objects in new ways.

Step 2

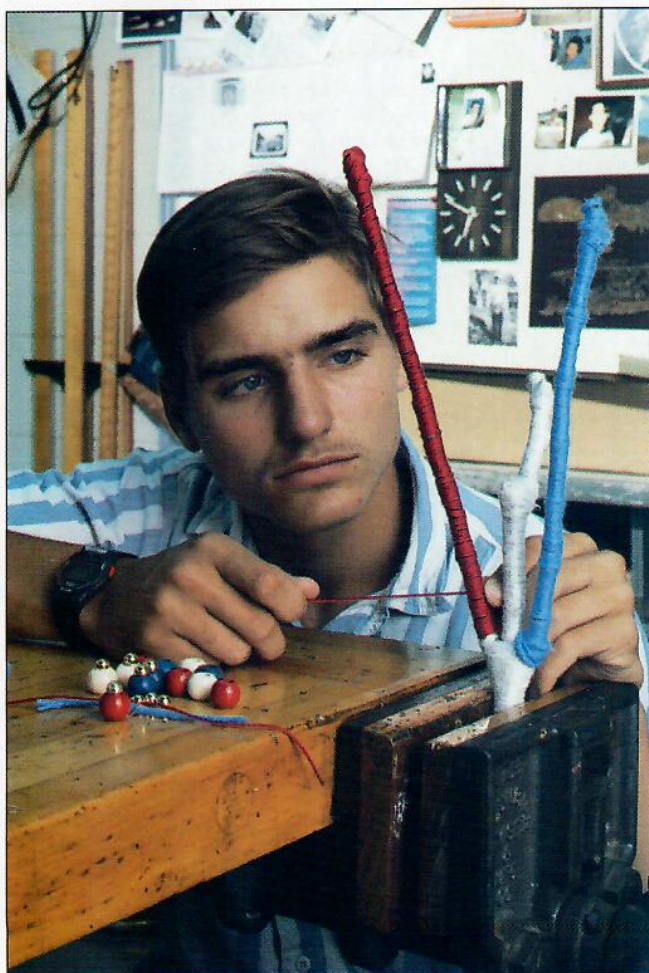
Lay out all the objects you've collected on several tables. Organize everything in some way so you can easily locate the sizes, textures and colors you will need. As you look at all these items, try and forget their original function and see them as art materials. Or you can invent new uses for them by changing their **context** or **scale**, or by **juxtaposing** them unexpectedly.

Step 2

Think about ways to get your piece to stand on its own; will one large object support the sculpture or will you need to make a base? (The base should not detract from the piece.) Think about ways of changing the surface of objects so you can join them together—sanding, scratching, etching, cut-

ting, or adding onto the surface. Once you have planned your construction, you can start to join the objects using Elmer's glue, a hot glue gun, and tying

or wrapping them together. You can add color with paint. Know when to stop; by not doing too much to the surface, you will be able to maintain visual unity.



Prepared by Ned J. Nesti, Jr., Art Instructor, Morrison (IL) High School; Assisted by Mary Ann DeWitte-Chatterton. Photos by Larry Gregory.

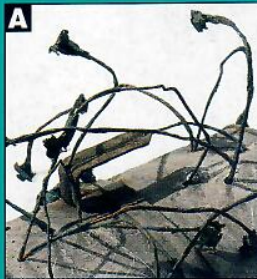
Some Solutions

How many of the sculptures shown on the opposite page are completely **self-contained**? How many of the artists have used the **spaces** in between or around the object as part of the work? Which are made up primarily of **lines**, which are based on **shapes**, and which are a combination of the two? If you use **linear elements** in your work will they be **long, short, wide, thin, straight, or curved**? Will your shapes be **organic** (curved) or **geometric** (straight)? Will your sculpture be designed to be seen mainly from a **single angle** or will it work from **all directions**? If you use color, will you use it **symbolically**? Will you use color patterns to **decorate the surface** of your sculpture, or will you use **natural colors**? Adding **textures** may help you express your concept. Will your sculpture be **smooth or rough, shiny or dull, coarse or fine**?

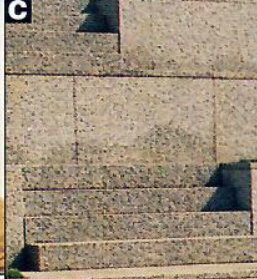
Sculptures by (counterclockwise): Benjamin J. Boyles; Jessica D. Richards; Lindsay R. Rosenow; Clayton W. Riley; Brandon S. Ogburn

IN THE ARTIST'S OWN WORDS

Each of the sculptures shown here appeared somewhere in this issue. And each of the statements below either refers to or was made by the artist who created the work. Can you name the artist and fill in the letter of his or her sculpture?



A 3. "So I acted like I was the Jolly Green Giant, sculpting the landscape, digging my hands into the earth and scooping out holes and hills."
Which sculptor _____ is describing the creation of which of the works shown here? _____



C 9. "I felt my work might give people another perspective on pollution—that they might think of alternatives—like electric cars."
Who is the artist making this statement?
Which sculpture is being referred to? _____

1. Can you name the artist who links the "magic of African music and legend" with "the geometry and technology of modern American industry"?
Which sculpture did this artist do? _____



D 5. "He has always been interested in death and decay. But not in a morbid way."
The mother of which sculptor made the statement above about her son's work?
Which of these sculptures did he do? _____



E 4. "I'm incredibly upset. I have no plans for the future. The project I have set my heart on has been destroyed."
What artist said this about the fate of a recent sculpture?
Which sculpture? _____



F 7. Can you name the artist who recently created a sculpture called *Drawings and Hot Water Heaters?* from materials found in a landfill?
Which of these works was done by this sculptor? _____



2. "Mexicans don't really accept Chicanos, they see us as traitors, and Anglo-Americans don't quite accept us either. I always felt like I was standing outside both cultures. I now think it's an advantage because that's the role the artist has always been in."
Which artist do you think made this statement?
Which sculpture was created by this artist? _____



H 6. "*Some Bright Morning* is a piece dedicated to a black family who had been warned by white people not to be militant. The family continued, and the white people said that some bright morning they were coming to get them. When they finally came, the black people were ready and they didn't lose."
The artist is describing an incident that inspired his most famous series of sculptures. Who is the artist _____ and which of these sculptures did he do? _____



I 10. Which artist might this critic be writing about? "By making slight changes in simple everyday objects, _____ makes a profound visual statement about modern values."
Which sculpture was done by this artist? _____

8. "It is a huge, closed, organic abstraction, a natural-looking shape that could have been carried in on the tide."
To which sculpture is this art critic referring? _____
Which artist? _____

