



**A F F I L I A T I O N S**  
**Recent Sculpture and Its Antecedents**

This exhibition was organized by the following Helena Rubinstein Fellows in the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program: David Clark, Joshua Decter, David Lurie, Vicente Todoli, and Mary-Katherine Weatherford.

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(Artschwager), eeva-inkeri (Bourgeois),  
John A. Ferrari (Stankiewicz), Jeff Koons (Koons),  
David Lubarsky (Nauman), Pelka/Noble (Prince),  
Steven Tucker (Finn), Robin Weglinski (Otterson),  
and Sarah Wells (Butter, Monti).

Front cover, left: Richard Stankiewicz. *Stick Figure*, 1955. Welded steel, 66½ x 8 x 9 inches. Collection of Richard A. Lippe, courtesy Zabriskie Gallery, New York.

Front cover, right: David Finn. *Masked Figure (Mad Dog, Horse, Wet Clown)*, 1984. Refuse materials and painted cardboard, 53 x 21 x 35, 55 x 18 x 33, and 57½ x 23½ x 34 inches. Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York.

Back cover, left: Robert Morris. *Untitled*, 1964 (reconstructed 1985). Painted plywood, 48 x 48 x 48 inches. Collection of the artist.

Back cover, right: Jeff Koons. *New Sheldon Wet/Dry Triple Decker*, 1982. Plexiglass, fluorescent fixtures, and vacuum cleaners, 124½ x 28 x 28 inches. International With Monument Gallery, New York.

# A F F I L I A T I O N S

## Recent Sculpture and Its Antecedents

This exhibition investigates the formal and conceptual issues developed in Abstract Expressionist, Minimalist, and Post-Minimalist sculpture as they have influenced and been reevaluated by more recent American sculptors.

The 1950s Abstract Expressionist sculptures by Louise Bourgeois, Isamu Noguchi, Theodore Roszak, and Richard Stankiewicz embody various approaches to the emblematic representation of the human figure. In *Stick Figure* (1955) Stankiewicz produced a welded totemic object which acknowledges its material origins of man-made, utilitarian devices. It is a sign for the human figure, more directly one of industrial modern man. Bourgeois' *Spring* (1949), translating forms derived from primitive sculptures into a modernist idiom, also attempts to investigate the conditions of the totemic figure as it exists in relation to the viewer. Upright and scaled to the body, these works are easily identified with the human form—but as an abstract sign for it. Their emblematic quality makes them like totemic signposts set up within the viewer's space.

Theodore Roszak's early artistic production, informed by Russian Constructivism, was composed of highly finished pseudo-industrial objects that reflected his radical utopianism—a vision of an ideal society generated by an interchange between art and industry. But after World War II, Roszak's optimism faded. He came to see modern man as being in conflict with technology and industrial production. His subsequent work, such as *Sea Sentinel* (1956), is composed of skeletal, welded steel forms in which brazed bronze suggests decaying flesh and vegetation.

Isamu Noguchi's *Integral* (1959) can be considered an extension of the Surrealist fascination with biomorphic and anthropomorphic symbolic systems. It is a totem asserting an anthropomorphic presence, much in the spirit of the stage props he created for



Louise Bourgeois.  
*Spring*, 1949.  
Bronze, 61½ x 12 x 12  
inches. Robert Miller  
Gallery, New York.

the Martha Graham Dance Company during the later 1950s. Noguchi created objects that acted as agents of movement, projecting a presence similar to that of dancers.

The work of these Abstract Expressionist sculptors used the evocative power of the totemic to reaffirm the viewer's relationship to the object by defining the space of perceptual experience. Although it is not usually recognized, this principle also had an effect on the later work of Donald Judd, John McCracken, and Robert Morris—the three Minimalist sculptors presented here. On one level, the Minimalists of course rejected the sculpture of the previous generation—its expressivity, laying bare of process, and overt representational impulses. Yet the radical implications of Abstract Expressionist sculpture facilitated Minimalist investigations. By the early 1960s, questions about the “function” of sculpture began to dominate sculptural dialogue. The strategies used to determine fundamentals of apprehension, perception, and cognition of objects in space were questioned.

Using a vocabulary of simple, unitary forms, Robert Morris explicitly extended many of the perceptual explorations implicit in Abstract Expressionist work. For Morris, such geometric forms facilitate the viewer's experience of *gestalt*—the immediate apprehension of the wholeness of an object. The sculptural object is recognized in a manner similar to the way in which we spontaneously recognize another human form. For example, in a 1961 performance Robert Morris demonstrated concern both for notions of theatricality and for anthropomorphic presence. The

performance consisted of an eight-foot-high grey painted column standing in the middle of a stage for three minutes, then falling over. The unitary, simple geometric form functioned both as prop and performer. The implied presence of a human form is an underlying aspect of Minimalist sculpture. In his article “Notes on Sculpture” (*Artforum*, April 1969), Morris acknowledges this characteristic of Minimalism.



Donald Judd. *Untitled*, 1966. Galvanized iron, eight units, 9 x 40 x 30 inches each. Private collection.



Left:  
John Duff. *White Wall Piece*, 1972. Fiberglass, wood, and acrylic, 84 x 14 x 11 inches. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Gift of Hornick Industries, Inc. 77.119.



Right:  
Tom Butter. *S.C.*, 1985. Fiberglass and resin, 93 x 40 x 23 inches. Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York.

There is no question that so far as an image goes, [Minimalist] objects removed themselves from figurative allusions. But in a more underlying way, in a perceptual way, they did not. Probably the main thing we see all at once, or as a *thing*, is another human figure. . . . The specific art object of the sixties is not so much a metaphor for the figure as it is an existence parallel to it. It shares the perceptual response we have towards figures.

For Morris, sculpture must be integrated with the structural factors of the gallery space, taking into

consideration the effects of size and proportion upon the subject-object relationship. Morris addresses such issues of structure and context in *Untitled* (1964). The piece is dependent upon the floor and wall as literal supports, emphasizing the architectural conditions which determine the site of the object in space while framing the viewer's experience of that object. John McCracken's *Untitled* (c. 1968), painted a brilliant orange, is concerned with the idea of color as inseparable from shape and form. Leaning against the wall, it requires the architecture for support; it both exists in and alters the space which the viewer occupies and completes.



Donald Judd's stack piece *Untitled* (1968) exemplifies his opposition to compositional strategies derived from European rationalism. Rather than emphasizing compositional balance, Judd's strategy is to choose a particular principle—such as the serial positioning of identical modules—in order to challenge notions of meaning and completeness. Judd underscores the work's similarity to machine-made objects by adopting industrial materials and manufacturing techniques. Upon confrontation with an art object, the viewer expects differentiation both within the work's composition and in comparison to other objects in the world. Judd's serial repetition of forms and industrial means of production offer a radical non-differentiation.

The group of artists who are categorized as Post-Minimalist or Post-Literalist engage in a wide range of practices that attempt to extend the conceptual and formal strategies of the more orthodox Minimalists. Post-Minimalist work and the more recent sculpture of the 1980s are discussed jointly here in order to appreciate their historical proximity as well as to distinguish their conceptual and formal differences. By using fiberglass, an industrial material introduced by Judd and Morris, Eva Hesse investigated the so-called neutrality of material in *Sans II* (1968). By layering the fiberglass and replicating by hand the infrastructure of a serial grid, Hesse produced an interplay of the systematic and the organic. John Duff's *White Wall Piece* (1972) retains the structural simplicity of the Minimalists' unitary geometricism, but introduces elements of process to create tension between the roughness of procedural markings on the surface and the overall unity of shape.



Mel Kendrick. *Poplar with Holes, Crude Oil, Lamp Black*, 1985. Wood, oil, and carbon, 49½ x 15 x 15 inches. Private collection, courtesy John Weber Gallery, New York.



Scott Richter. *Yellow Man* (from "Elvis or Oedipus Series"), 1985. Beeswax, wood, wire, pigment, and carpet, 36 x 32 x 11 inches. Zabriskie Gallery, New York.

Tom Butter's fiberglass work is influenced by Hesse and by the vegetal, organic imagery of Theodore Roszak's sculpture. Butter's *S.C.* (1985) exploits the visual paradox of fiberglass to suggest contradictory effects—monumentality and immateriality, translucence and solidity, substantiality and insubstantiality. Butter leaves remnants of the construction process, such as buff marks and staples. His sculpture explicitly represents nature and natural phenomena and metaphorically symbolizes those elements through the deliberate display of the remnants of its production.

Mel Kendrick's sculpture seeks to employ Constructivist, Cubist, and Futurist formal strategies in a non-representational manner to emphasize properties of material and construction. Furthermore, as in *Poplar with Holes, Crude Oil, Lamp Black* (1985), he integrates the pedestal into the sculptural object in an effort to solve the modernist dilemma over the function of the pedestal in relation to the rest of the work.

In *Untitled* (1976-77) Joel Shapiro introduces elements of biomorphism and figuration into a rigid geometric vocabulary of form, producing an object which ambiguously alludes to either a tree or a human body. The piece functions as a sign to be decoded, inviting the viewer to discern its referent or possible referents. By placing the small object on a large, almost overpowering pedestal, Shapiro recreates for the viewer an ambient architectural environment which functions as a model for perceptual experience.

Another wall-bound figurative piece, Scott Richter's *Yellow Man* (from "*Elvis or Oedipus Series*") (1985), relates formally to the totemism and primitivism of the work of both Bourgeois and Noguchi. Hanging on the wall at approximately the height of the average viewer, the work presents itself as a symbol for the human torso. Its strategic placement stimulates the viewer to perceptually complete the headless and legless body—to identify it as a surrogate figure. However, this identification and recognition remains incomplete: the object's radically abstracted and segmented form estranges the viewer from it and prohibits its fetishization.

Using wood and paint to produce the effect of an "authentic" primitivism, John Monti's *Snit* (1984) operates at the intersection of Expressionist totemism and the Minimalist preoccupation with exploring the architectural conditions of display, balance, and space. Using the strategy of leaning introduced by John McCracken, Monti expands the metaphoric possibilities of the neo-primitivist totem by creating a form which can be interpreted as simultaneously representing a complete human figure and mask-like head.

Steve Keister's geometrically shaped stabile *U.S.O. #7* (1978) explores the relationship of the sculptural object to the environment in which it is placed. Keister's ongoing investigation of the suspension of forms in space makes the viewer aware of the possibility of alternative placements for sculpture. One side of the work is sliced away to reveal an interior painted phosphorescent purple. The contrast of this interior space with the work's orange suede exterior, in combination with gallery lighting, makes

light seem to emanate from the work's core. Moreover, the illusion of suspension in space is only momentary, for Keister's monofilament mooring is soon apparent in the reflections and shadows cast by the wires. The revelation that weightlessness is only an illusion is part of the piece's content. In contrast, Bryan Hunt's *Means Two* (1976) does not reveal its



John Monti. *Snit*, 1984. Painted plywood, 84 x 22 x 13½ inches. Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York.





Richard Artschwager.  
*Tower II*, 1979. Formica  
and lacquer on wood,  
102 x 30 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 71 $\frac{5}{8}$   
inches. Leo Castelli  
Gallery, New York.

manner of construction or suspension. The large dirigible-like form anchored to the wall by one end seems to float above the viewer. Its partially painted black surface lends weight to the form; one senses that it is in defiance of gravity.

The outer skin of Steve Wood's *Nomad* (1985) is punctured to reveal the skeletal interior and its means of support. It is visibly constructed through a buildup of scraps of wood, canvas, pigment, and wire. While the resulting overall form resembles that of the Minimalist icon, Wood allows the viewer selected clues to the means of the work's creation.



Richard Tuttle. *Drift III*, 1965. Painted  
wood, 24 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 52 $\frac{3}{4}$  x  
1 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches. Whitney  
Museum of American  
Art, New York; Pur-  
chase, with funds  
from Mr. and Mrs.  
William A. Marsteller  
and the Painting and  
Sculpture Committee  
83.18.

Richard Artschwager's *Tower II* (1979) is a monolithic construction with two sets of steps on either side of a wall. There is an opening in the wall at the eye level of a person standing at the top of either set of stairs. The piece also presents itself as an architectural form added to the environment of the gallery. Impelled to climb the stairs and look through the opening in the wall, the viewer is prompted to reflect upon modes of behavior and habits of movement which often remain unnoticed and unconscious. Peering through the opening makes possible an eye-level confrontation with another viewer, thus allowing the spectator to confront an image reflecting his own activity. Artschwager creates a situation in which the object is made a physical nexus for the activity of viewing.

Like the Artschwager, Chris Macdonald's tractor-like *Untitled* (1984) suggests the possibility of usefulness and invites the viewer's physical engagement with the sculptural object. In contrast to Artschwager's mass-produced materials, Macdonald bolts rough-hewn blocks of wood together to form

nonfunctional, pseudo-vehicles. The resulting archaic forms recall the direct carving and brutal fabrication of Expressionist sculpture along with its connotations of a primitive mysticism. Macdonald himself develops a mythic cosmology around his objects, claiming that they are magically powered by such elements as water, fire, or music.

In *Drift III* (1965), Richard Tuttle produces an object which exists in the ambiguous realm between painting and sculpture. It responds to investigations of "painting as object," begun in the early 1960s by the painter Frank Stella, who used the actual shape of the painting's support as the "subject." Like Stella and the Color Field painters, Tuttle examines the concept of color-as-shape.

Richard Prince's *Untitled (The Entertainers—Tamara)* (1982-84) calls Minimalism into question even as

it recycles its formal strategies. Prince's thin plexi-glass box, like McCracken's plank, is made of a reflective material and leans against the wall. The piece therefore takes the wall and floor around it as part of its visual content. However, by embedding a cinematically derived photographic image within the piece, Prince extends its content. The pornographic suggestiveness of the image, when seen within a neo-Minimalist object, produces an ironic allegory of material and cultural objectification in contemporary society.

Jeff Koons' *New Sheldon Wet/Dry Triple Decker* (1982) also reexamines literal Minimalist strategies. Three vacuum cleaners (each a different size and color model) are encased within three identical plexi-glass boxes, stacked vertically and lighted from below by fluorescent fixtures. Like the presentation of

Richard Prince.  
*Untitled (The Entertainers—Tamara, Russell, Laoura)*,  
1982-84. Color photographs, Cibachrome prints, in plexiglass boxes, 96 x 48 x 2 inches each. Baskerville + Watson, New York.



such commodities in advertisements and show-rooms, the vacuums are proffered as objects of aesthetic contemplation rather than utilitarian pieces. They make successful sculpture in the mode of Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades. Koons, like Duchamp, reiterates the aestheticization of commodities in contemporary society and, conversely, the commercial fetishization of fine art objects.

Bruce Nauman redefines the idea of what constitutes art in a different way. His *Henry Moore Bound to Fail (iron version)* (1967) is derived from a photograph of the artist with his hands tied behind his back. The work functions as the referent to a past event, positing that event itself as an object for critical examination. In objectifying mental and physical activities, Nauman criticizes the notion of art as the expression of an individual, unique self.

Judith Shea's *Plumbline* (1982) conjures up the presence of the feminine through a simple, freestanding skirt-like form made of wool felt. Extricating a shell of clothing from its usual context, Shea reveals its power to evoke and reinforce notions of beauty, gender, economic and social status. By refusing her audience the actual female body, Shea brings into sharp focus the ideological mechanisms of fashion which structure and control social life.

David Finn, like Stankiewicz, addresses the objectification of human beings by creating metaphorical individuals who are literally formed from the debris of commodity culture—refuse materials and garbage bags. The serial placement of the figures further highlights the problem of differentiating subjects in contemporary society. Sameness is elusively disguised by the colorful masks placed over the figures to hide their identically fashioned, garbage-bag heads.



Bruce Nauman.  
*Henry Moore Bound to Fail (iron version)*, 1967. Cast iron, 26 x 24 x 3½ inches. Collection of Joseph Helman.

Joel Otterson's *Crossed Signals* (1984) is composed of disparate objects assembled, one on top of the other, in a totem pole of Americana. The baseball bat, sporting trophy, and old furniture parts function as cultural icons. Such objects, imbued with a distinctly American sentiment, provoke a sense of nostalgia and trigger a chain of associative meanings in the viewer. The inclusion of a rock fragment forces us to ask whether man-made objects, or culture itself, can replace the authentically natural.

The Post-Minimalists diverge in various directions from the aesthetic assumptions of orthodox Minimalism. Their reintroduction of visibly evident process, the organic, the utilitarian, and the illusionistic extends (and often undermines) the material and conceptual vocabularies introduced by the Minimalists. In contrast, the more contemporary sculptors, with their greater historical distance from both Expressionism and Minimalism, reevaluate those earlier periods more objectively. As a group, their ideas reflect a current artistic revisionism which incorporates Expressionist concerns with the totemic and Minimalist considerations of perceptual experience.

Joshua Decter  
David Lurie



Joel Otterson.  
*Crossed Signals*,  
1984. Mixed media,  
82 x 11 x 11 inches.  
Nature Morte Gallery,  
New York.

# Works in the Exhibition

Dimensions are given in inches; height precedes width precedes depth.

## **Richard Artschwager (b. 1924)**

*Tower II*, 1979

Formica and lacquer on wood, 102 x 30 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 71 $\frac{5}{8}$

Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

## **Louise Bourgeois (b. 1911)**

*Spring*, 1949

Bronze, 61 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 12 x 12

Robert Miller Gallery, New York

## **Tom Butter (b. 1952)**

*S.C.*, 1985

Fiberglass and resin, 93 x 40 x 23

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York

## **John Duff (b. 1943)**

*White Wall Piece*, 1972

Fiberglass, wood, and acrylic, 84 x 14 x 11

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Gift of  
Hornick Industries, Inc. 77.119

## **David Finn (b. 1952)**

*Masked Figure (Old Chicken)*, 1984

Refuse materials and painted cardboard, 54 x 23 x 33

Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York

*Masked Figure (Wet Clown)*, 1984

Refuse materials and painted cardboard, 57 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 34

Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York

*Masked Figure (Yellow Tiger)*, 1984

Refuse materials and painted cardboard, 55 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 21 x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$

Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York

## **Eva Hesse (1936-1970)**

*Sans II*, 1968

Fiberglass, two sections, 38 x 170 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 6 $\frac{7}{8}$  overall

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Gift of the  
Albert A. List Family and Dr. and Mrs. Lester J. Honig  
69.105

## **Bryan Hunt (b. 1947)**

*Means Two*, 1976

Wood, silk, paper, and lacquer, 5 x 40 x 5

Private collection

## **Donald Judd (b. 1928)**

*Untitled*, 1968

Stainless steel and yellow plexiglass, ten units,

9 x 40 x 31 each

Collection of Vera P. List

## **Steve Keister (b. 1949)**

*U.S.O. #7*, 1978

Acrylic and suede on wood with monofilament, 7 x 8 x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$

Collection of Peter C. Freeman

## **Mel Kendrick (b. 1949)**

*Poplar with Holes, Crude Oil, Lamp Black*, 1985

Wood, oil, and carbon, 49 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 15 x 15

Private collection, courtesy John Weber Gallery, New York

## **Jeff Koons (b. 1955)**

*New Sheldon Wet/Dry Triple Decker*, 1982

Plexiglass, fluorescent fixtures, and vacuum cleaners,  
124 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 28 x 28

International With Monument Gallery, New York

## **Chris Macdonald (b. 1957)**

*Untitled*, 1984

Painted wood, 29 x 62 x 52

Collection of the artist

## **John McCracken (b. 1934)**

*Untitled*, c. 1968

Resin on wood, 93 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 14 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 1 $\frac{1}{8}$

Sonnabend Gallery, New York



**John Monti (b. 1957)**

*Snit*, 1984

Painted plywood, 84 x 22 x 13½

Grace Borgenicht Gallery, New York

**Robert Morris (b. 1931)**

*Untitled*, 1964 (reconstructed 1985)

Painted plywood, 48 x 48 x 48

Collection of the artist

**Bruce Nauman (b. 1941)**

*Henry Moore Bound to Fail (iron version)*, 1967

Cast iron, 26 x 24 x 3½

Collection of Joseph Helman

**Isamu Noguchi (b. 1904)**

*Integral*, 1959

Greek marble, 49¼ x 11½ x 11½

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Gift of the

Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Art 60.25

**Joel Otterson (b. 1958)**

*Crossed Signals*, 1984

Mixed media, 82 x 11 x 11

Nature Morte Gallery, New York

**Richard Prince (b. 1949)**

*Untitled (The Entertainers—Tamara)*, 1982-84

Color photograph, Cibachrome print, in plexiglass box,

96 x 48 x 2

Baskerville + Watson, New York

**Scott Richter (b. 1943)**

*Yellow Man (from "Elvis or Oedipus Series")*, 1985

Beeswax, wood, wire, pigment, and carpet, 36 x 32 x 11

Zabriskie Gallery, New York

**Theodore Roszak (1907-1981)**

*Sea Sentinel*, 1956

Steel brazed with bronze, 105 x 42 x 45

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase

56.28

**Joel Shapiro (b. 1941)**

*Untitled*, 1976-77

Bronze, 4½ x 6¼ x 9⅝

Collection of the artist

**Judith Shea (b. 1948)**

*Plumbline*, 1982

Wool felt and casein, 30 x 13½ x 7½

Willard Gallery, New York

**Richard Stankiewicz (1922-1983)**

*Stick Figure*, 1955

Welded steel, 66½ x 8 x 9

Collection of Richard A. Lippe, courtesy Zabriskie Gallery,  
New York

**Richard Tuttle (b. 1941)**

*Drift III*, 1965

Painted wood, 24¼ x 52¼ x 1¼

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase,  
with funds from Mr. and Mrs. William A. Marsteller and  
the Painting and Sculpture Committee 83.18

**Steve Wood (b. 1949)**

*Nomad*, 1985

Wood, resin, metal powder, pigment, and canvas,

97 x 31 x 26

Baskerville + Watson, New York

# Whitney Museum of American Art Fairfield County

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