

Espace Sculpture

ART ACTUEL PRATIQUES ET PERSPECTIVES
espace

Scott Eunsson

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SCOTT EUNSON

filling the round one. What was stacked becomes adjacent, complexifying the concept and making lateral what might otherwise be hierarchical.

Suspended, *Airbags* speaks of interconnection: intricate systems interrelated to form a complex apparatus suggesting the body. The tree within demonstrates the miracle of growth and speaks of death — just as breath is a fundamental and significant thing demarcating the time between birth, life, and end. Through scale and material, Carter has taken the reference and moved it beyond the body to address issues of natural cycles, growth and decay, and to embody something essentially invisible: air. Who has seen the wind? The hardened wood within the translucent fabric grounds the piece and keeps experience central, creating a relationship that is physical. The sensation of the materials plays a large role in this piece, where the way materials react when placed next to each other plays back to the viewer's presence and gives it new context: material of the body to material of the organic (tree), the light encasement referencing skin and tissue. And space: how the work (conceived site-specifically) relates to the space, and how we, as viewers, change our relation to space and negotiate it differently, according to the objects placed therein.

Concurrent to *exhale*, Carter is showing *Swallowing Roses I*, *Two(lung)*, and *Two(heart)* at the Textile Museum of Canada. The latter two come from a period where the body was much more literally present in Carter's work: showing hollowed bodices in rich fabrics, one in the form of a lung, the other in that of a heart. Here again, she addresses the aspect of breath, as these chests swell out and internal organs become the external form. *Swallowing Roses I* is a much more visceral counterpart to the piece shown at

the Red Head. Where that was light and lethal, held in delicate grey and sheer hues of the fabric and wire, this counter piece is a rich red brocade reaching fully from floor to ceiling. Perched on a curved, squat wooden stool, the bottom bulges slightly over the edges of the wood before settling into its form. From this seat it rises upwards, growing into a narrow, slim form and finally attaches firmly to the ceiling. There is less grating pain in this piece than in the second: the beauty of the rose fabric, the vibrant colour, and the evocative form smooth over the connotations of blood and the aching stretch of the throat. The bottom grows corpulent as if well-satisfied, and drops its deposit as if it were a nest enclosed within the gently curving stool. Desire and ecstasy are quite tangible in this work, which fills the room with a powerful sense of serenity, even glory.

Again, the work exemplifies what Carter excels at: measuring the viewer's body against that of the sculpture to form a relationship. The long thin fabric looming above does not oppress us, but inflicts the sense of distance, of having a long way to travel. The continual use of fabrics reinforces the tactile quality of Carter's work while also touching on clothing, furniture, things that touch our skin and cushion our bodies. These objects derive their strength from their dual nature, at once wondrously comforting and yet painful and constricted. Carter remains both direct and ambiguous, for she requires the viewer's interaction to complete the impact of the objects' growing presence. ←

Lyn Carter,
exhale, 2001
The Red Head Gallery
Toronto

SCOTT EUNSON,
Untitled, 2001.
Construction #8.
Photo courtesy of the
artist.

"[...] the story of art could not be told without a reference to the architectural background."

— E.H. GOMBRICH, *THE STORY OF ART*

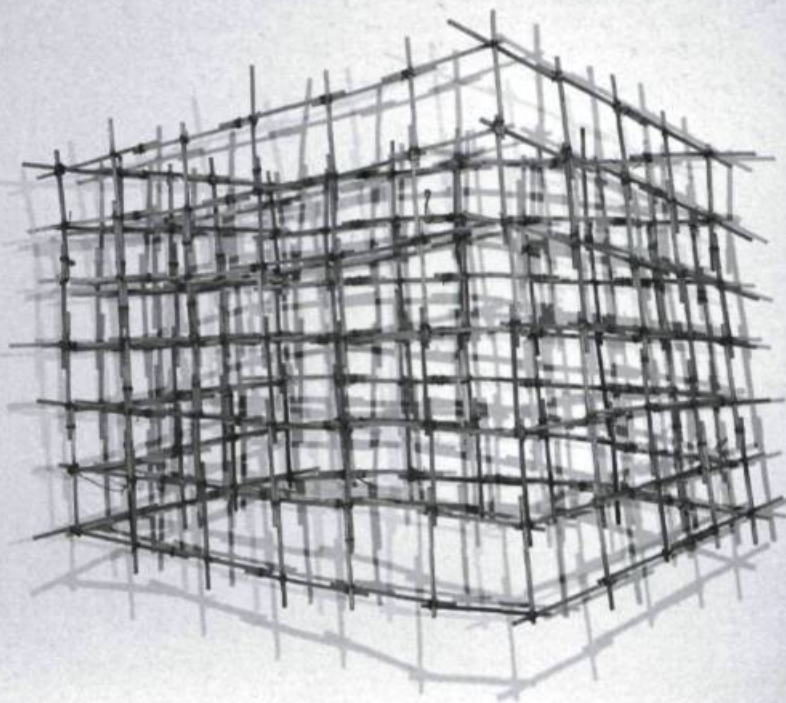
Scott Eunson is a young sculptor, not quite thirty years old. A native of Toronto, he studied at the University of Toronto, graduating with his degree in architecture in 1996. His first few years after finishing school were spent exploring various types of construction, including carpentry and cabinet and furniture making.

For the last two years though, Eunson has been creating and exhibiting his unique and original wall sculptures. This development — from architect to visual artist — came about naturally from his desire to investigate the physicality of our material world in an intuitive way.

Eunson's material of choice is found plywood, concrete, aluminum, and pieces of broken glass. These materials are the fabric of which our modern structures are constructed, something with which any student of architecture is undoubt-

edly familiar. This "debris" is then assembled — both singularly and combined — into new arrangements that are striking in their formal simplicity and metaphoric possibilities. With most of his work being untitled, it is difficult to specify which work in particular is being discussed. This, however, is intentional on the artist's part. To choose to leave something unnamed allows the viewer greater opportunity to make his/her own observations about the nature of the work. The viewers must use their intuition, and can bring personal experience to the sculptures in order to make sense of the work. The work then involves as much the viewer's personal vision and points of reference as the artist's. It also insists that one read the body of the work as a thematic whole, comprising separate yet integrated pieces. This thematic overview is consistent with the artist's technical *modus operandi*.

For example, one image Eunson repeatedly uses is that of various constructions consisting of thin wood, broken and assembled in complex overlappings that verge on but never reduce themselves to an orga-



nized grid. In creating them he always maintains control, despite the disorder within the work. In this, Eunson can be linked to artist Tadashi Kawamata. Within their art both demonstrate concern for constructing works that respond to architecture, social attitudes, and the cultural concerns of the urban environment. But while structurally Kawamata's work relates primarily to the construction and deconstruction of forms and attitudes in exterior urban environments, Eunson works within interior spaces. His scale for work is modest and intimate. It is approachable and invites continued contemplation. His sculptures exemplify the artist's desire to create physical forms that meditate on the aspects of the real and the unreal that exist in our surroundings. Eunson's subversion of the grid structure allows it flexibility and movement. The grid, for him, represents societal conformities and expectations. Art becomes the means of making something that is transcendent, tangible, and expanded.

Environmental allusions are distinctly present in the artist's work. Certain pieces — particularly those which use plywood as their primary compositional element — are startlingly evocative of abstracted landscapes. The mostly hidden architectural staple is treated such as to allow it to reclaim its inherent natural element. He states that his desire in creating these sculptures is to "[...] form new bonds between our artificial realms and their primal physical origins." In doing so, his intention isn't necessarily to be critical, but rather to allow for the occurrence of new possibilities.

He further explores the broad-

ening possibilities by playing with the scale of the works. A number of Eunson's small untitled constructions reference the underpinnings of building structures and become discourses not on architecture but on space. Through the use of layers of material, careful positioning of line, and thoughtful compositional lighting, these small wall reliefs gain an apparent monumentality of form. They appear to bridge the static with the animate by creating a sense of motion in their composition.

The jewel-like finishes of some of his creations provide direct examples of his skill and knowledge regarding cabinetry and furniture-making. Further, this technical proficiency and his understanding of the materials allow him to create a sense of motion and animation in many of his works. In an untitled triptych, Eunson combines two layers of plywood such that the grains of the wood run perpendicular to each other. He then cuts an undulating gap into the top layer to expose the plywood underneath. The sinuous separation varies in width as it crosses from one panel to the other. The wood's natural patterning washes across the panels like waves on a shore, offering the viewer brief hints at what might be hidden underneath. A second structure is deceptively simple. A square sheet of plywood, scratched and damaged, stands like a contemporary urban stele. Embedded in its marred surface, where there would be knots in the wood, are rounded, wooden objects. This acts to give the wood a viscous appearance, as the round balls of wood appear to be at the point of either entering or exiting the fixed wood surface. A third sculpture

also plays with the idea of a grid. This time, however, a plywood sheet is treated to appear to be composed of several squares, each containing a circular knot in the middle. The structure is then bent such as to appear convex. The illusion is startling: this inert piece of wood seems to fill with air, like a sail in the wind. One is tempted to anthropomorphize it further, to see it as a metaphor for the human spirit or human body, swelling and getting ready to exhale.

Eunson has a sophisticated visual vocabulary, which he applies equally to the constructions of modern art and to those of architecture. In some works he seems to draw upon the constructivist tradition established by Naum Gabo and Vladimir Tatlin. Their 1920 Realist Manifesto, beginning "We deny volume as an expression of space . . .," expresses the formalistic issues that Eunson works with and explores in his constructions. Other of his works call to mind conceptual painters such as Sol LeWitt and

Josef Albers. However, rather than constructing paintings through the application of colour, Eunson's conceptualism involves the drawing out of what is naturally present in the material and of enhancing what is possible within his sculptural idiom. He offers the viewer the chance to examine the attributes of the materials used — with the emotions and ideas that they carry.

Eunson's work is consistently characterized by an elegant interplay of forms. Materials are often interwoven or combined to create visually satisfying patterns, which also evoke questions regarding cultural, societal and conceptual stability. Eunson's love of the material, however humble it may be, is readily apparent in his work. Fully utilizing the potential of each element available to him, and demonstrating considerable architectural skill and an original artistic vision, Eunson delivers an impressive body of work to the viewer. ←

RAE DAVIS *Unfoldings*

Born in Plainfield, New Jersey, Rae Davis immigrated to London, Ontario, in 1957. Grounded in theatre and the study of literature, she found both fields too limiting, and by 1963, began developing work without text or actors, work that was "simple, like a waterfall in a Japanese garden."

Rae Davis: Unfoldings is a retrospective exhibition of this Canadian performance and installation artist. Covering three decades of her exploration into the ways we respond, remember and act, *Unfoldings* includes computer-generated video projections, working scale models of original performing spaces, phased slide projections, photographs with a soundtrack,

videos, wallworks, sculptures, and two installations. Her most recent work, SHKSPR GRDN, incorporates eight video monitors, a pergola, and "sundial," and addresses Shakespeare's *Sonnet 18*: "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"

Central to her work is the idea that what we perceive as reality is a constantly unfolding situation based on previous experience, memories, and the perceptual materials available at any given moment. *Unfoldings* offers the viewer the possibility of a rich experience that will stimulate both the intellect and one's intuitive powers. ←

Source: Otto Buj, AGW

Rae Davis: Unfoldings
Art Gallery of Windsor
November 23, 2001–February 17, 2002
Curator: Robert McKaskell