

## Rae Davis *Unfoldings*

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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*

**B**orn 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*  
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2002  
Curator: Robert McKaskell