

Tom Burrows / NOTES ON RECENT SCULPTURE

My recent sculpture adopts the guise of the totemistic object as a support structure for an interplay of meanings. Initially, the work presents a hook for its audience by the ease with which it can become the anecdotal property of the viewer. The obvious imagery of the sculpture can become a verbal commodity to a general public and thus disseminate beyond the limits of a static object fixed in space.

Behind and beyond this initial image hook are layers of meaning set in point and counterpoint through a series of devices. The poetry of material is expressed through the metaphorical qualities of lead, salt, tar, xerox and steel, through the tension of these media in combination with one another and through the level of craft allotted to their manipulation. The poetry of the applied written word, a form of self-inflicted graffiti, both ridicules and clarifies the material and visual content. The metaphor of the visual imagery itself and the force inherent in its particular totem is set by the site on which it's placed. Beyond all is an intangible humour that teeters on the edge of hyperbole of image and intention.

These sculptures are polemic in that they refer to contemporary dialectical anxieties. I encase the anxieties with a primordial conceptual tool, the totem. In this way, I attempt to look at them, to touch them, to ridicule them, to render them with empathy, to be objective.

These works represent a return to a traditional form of gallery sculpture similar to *The Temptations of Mao Tse-Tung* pieces exhibited at the Pender Street Gallery in 1977. My other sculptural involvements were with concepts that lent themselves more successfully to photo-text, i.e., *Squat Doc* in 1981, or site specific works, i.e., the early 70's Mud Flats sculptures and *West Berlin/South Bronx Transfer* in 1984.

This recent work is as much an extension of my photo-text experience as it is a return to the sculptural object. This is evident in both the use of text and the social-political context that it refers to. Two of the pieces, *Out of Site*, *Out of Mind*, and *Bhopal Tar and*

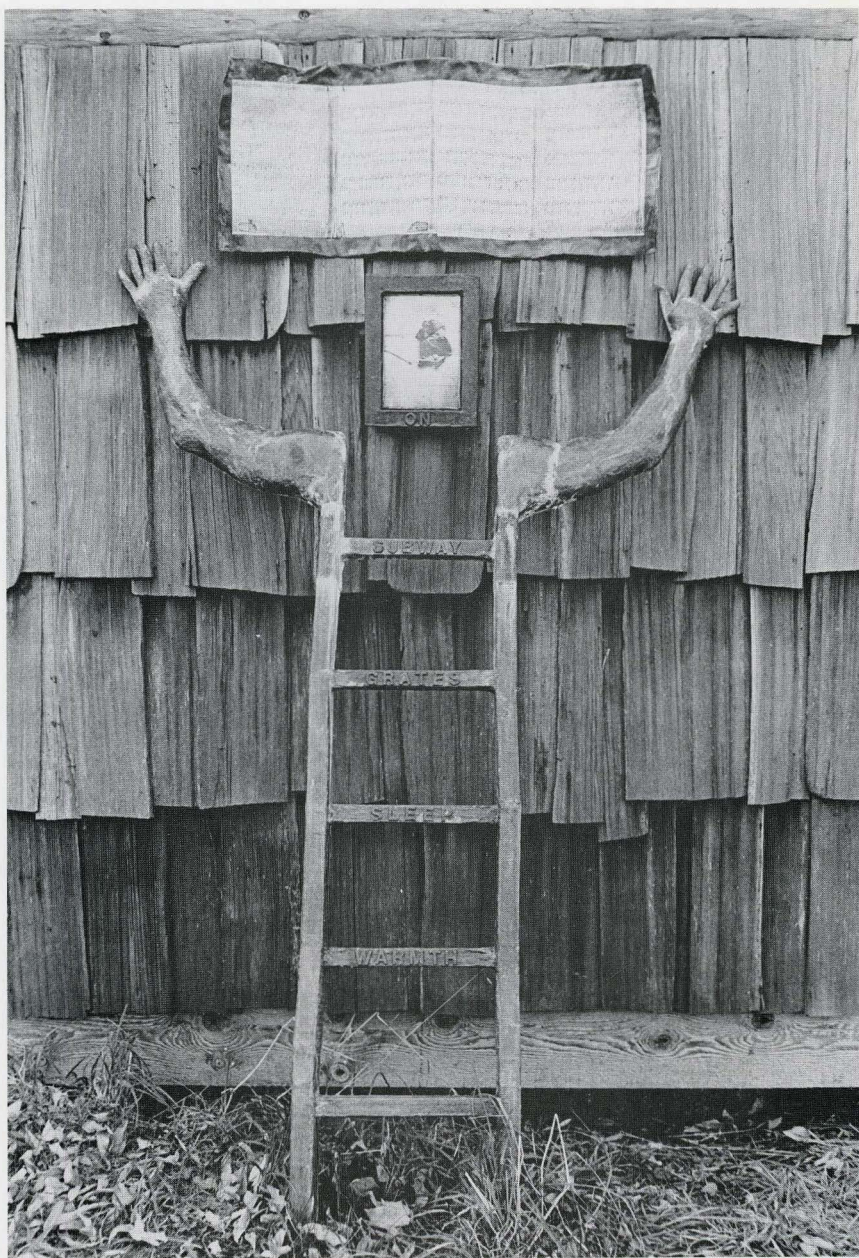
Feather, use photos from *Squat Doc* and become almost 3D frames for the 2D image. The use of text also reflects on *West Berlin/South Bronx Transfer*. I am tempted to label the recent work, text-sculpture.

Since the mid-1960's, with works like *Homage to the Draft Card Burners*, my sculpture has been involved with specific social issues: admittedly at times on an abstract level. In this recent work I feel I have achieved a clear amalgam of my aesthetic, political and geographical affiliations.



Story of "Oh", 1983. Lead on ferro-concrete, 3' x 3' x 4".

Photo: Tom Burrows.



Out of Site, Out of Mind, 1983. Lead and xerox on ferro-concrete, 8' x 3½' x 1'.

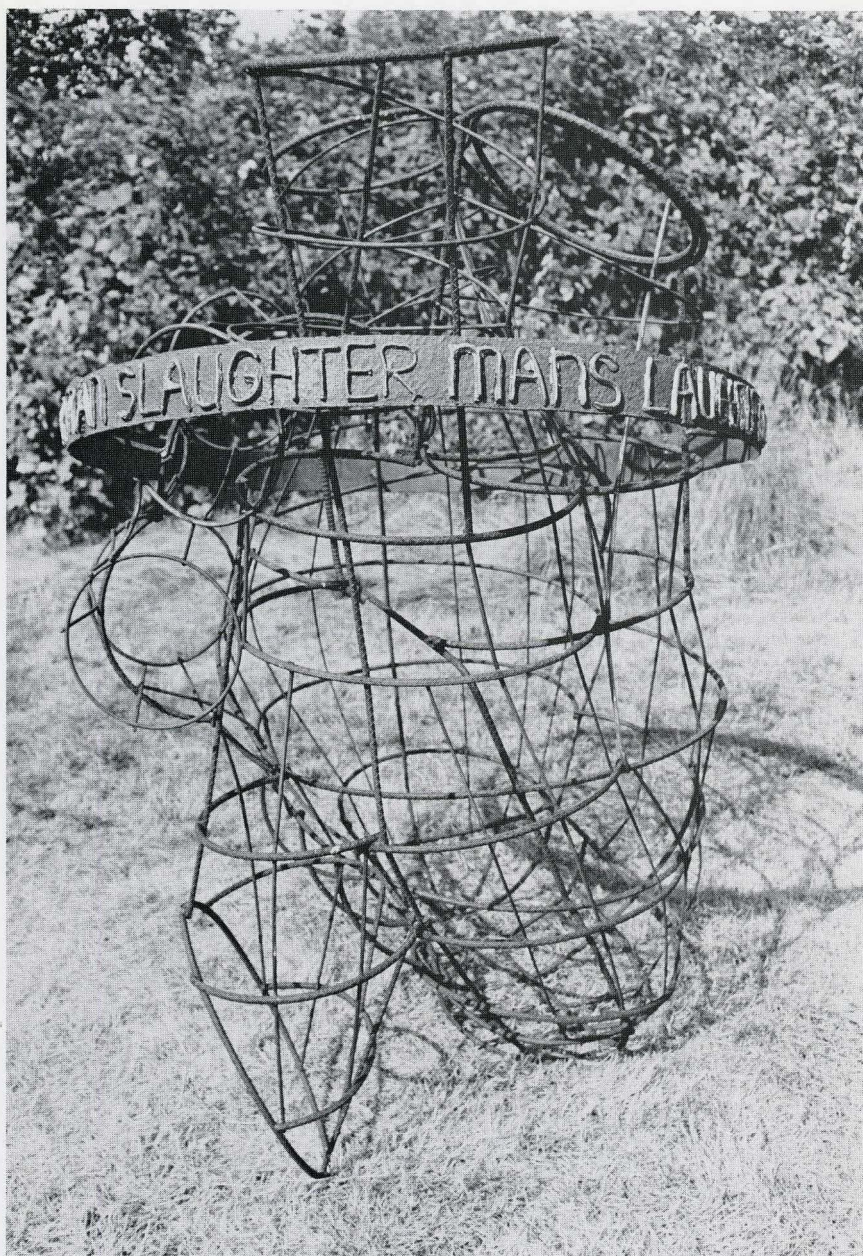


Lead Roses for a Blue Lady, 1985. Lead, cobalt-blue salt on ferro-concrete, 3' x 4' x 5'.



Ewe Guise, 1985-86 (details). Lead, sheep-skin, salt, iron, 3½' x 3½' x 2½'.

Photo: Tom Burrows



Organ Transplant, 1987. Lead, welded steel, 6' x 4' x 3'.