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Attitudes and Evolution; A Profile of My Work

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ATTITUDES AND EVOLUTION;
A PROFILE OF MY WORK

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Illustrations

Introduction

The realization that one must fend for one's self hits nearly everyone, save for the children of the independently wealthy. For the rest, life is too unpredictable to rely upon somebody else and, therefore, the acquisition of the knowledge needed for self-sufficiency becomes a priority.

After finishing high school, many are disgruntled with the possibility of up to twelve more years of school to become a doctor, lawyer or affluent professional. Yet school teachers and staff are often successful in persuading students to continue their studies. I was persuaded in such a manner and jumped at the opportunity to study art at Syracuse University. The ability to recognize and take advantage of opportunity is a fundemental part of self-sufficiency.

After an initial exposure to design and traditional drawing, education was integrated into my cirriculum as a response to a percieved economic reality. After becoming involved with metalworking in 1976, college was no longer tolerable but rather great. The ability to fabricate personally useful objects was at hand. A degree of self-sufficiency was

attained as I was gaining knowledge and skills of a craftsmen.

Wishing to further my knowledge in the field of metalworking I enrolled in the School for American Craftsman at Rochester Institute of Technology. This school's many tools and resources allowed convenient manipulation of stainless steel, aluminum, plastic and steel. This range of materials and tools opened up aesthetic avenues. Many of these avenues were explored until a personal favorite was found.

Works came to exist within a common format to which generalities could be applied. They are drawings. The forms and colors are basic; shades of grey appear in geometric forms, borrowing both from the surrounding urban environment composed of pavement, cement, brick, glass and steel. On the scale of the late twentieth-century city, the forms are arranged in a functional manner to produce roads and buildings and other constructions which are used until they become obsolete. They are then subject to abandonment, destruction or restoration. On the level of my drawings, the various shades and forms are not static, but change according to each material's intrinsic corrosion rate. If the drawings are displayed where the lighting is at least partially sunlight, the shades and the shadows will also change according to the changing angle of

illumination presented by the sun. Therefore a drawing is created wherein the individual parts and their visual relationships will change through time.

An appropriate presentation for a drawing is determined once it is completed. Although far from ideal, the size of many drawings is detertmined by economic factors. The size of the drawing determines much of its presentation. The human body becomes the viewing plane for smaller works. The appropriate habitat for kinetic studies is the tabletop. The larger works are presented as wall drawings.

Drawings

Drawing has been traditionally recognized as a two-dimensional relay of concepts, a basic, almost universally available method for abstraction.

> Drawing is one of the most elementary of human activities. ... And yet, however 'primitive' this elementary and spontaneous urge to draw may be, it nevertheless represents a major spiritual achievement. . . . It presupposes a considerable capacity for abstraction, an ability to reduce the three-dimensional environment to a line on a two-dimensional plane.[1]

Drawing has been recognized as powerful as a method of communication, indeed as the very root of diligent, fruitful inquiry.

> The science of drawing or of line, if you wish to call it that, is the source and very essence of drawing, of sculpture or architecture and of every kind of representation as well as the root of all sciences.[2]

My works are drawings because they borrow forms from the environment and combine them to form a visual statement, like traditional drawings. On the idea that a drawing may transcend the

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[1]Heriber Hzitter, Drawing History and Technique (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968) , p. 7.

[2]Michelangelo, cited by Paul Cummings, David Smith, The Drawings (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1979) , p.26

notepad , Paul Cummings noted, speaking of David Smith's drawings,that "his drawing procedures proclaim the same constructivist attitudes as his sculpture. The drawn line and the steel rod are one." [3]

My drawings address the portrayal of lines and planes while in reality they exist in height, depth, width and time. Utilization of three dimensions for a drawing serves to magnify the signifigance of time. The passing of time is noticeable throughout the day by the natural change of the light source which is often partially composed of sunlight. Incorporation of corroding materials echoes the long-range wear and tear of time.

Throughout the history of man the passage of time has been noted by change. The drawings change with time on a daily scale mainly due to the change of the sunlight. The drawings change on the scale of years or millenia due to corrosion, the direct physical manifestation of entropy working its tricks on metals in an oxygenated atmosphere. If part of the drawing is a rubber band, the drawing may well change within minutes. In this sense, the drawings are clocks as they display the passage of time.

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[3]Paul Cummings, David Smith, The Drawings (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1979) , p.23.

My drawings address time and change in an attempt to evoke an emotional response from observers who choose to deny change and the passage of time. Change is seen by most as the march of time as it resists the preservation of any state, whether it be one's youth, vitality, estate or position in society.

The drawings are a result of creative effort which productively utilizes my time and generates revenue needed to survive in society. A Freudian analyst might venture that the drawings are created for ego satisfaction, while a tavern patron might argue that the drawings are created as a means of exercising abstract control over the environment through manipulation of its resources. In any case, the drawings' creation is a personably enjoyable event.

The drawings are created as a response to the urban environment, borrowing both materials as well as forms. In this sense, the environment's materials are processed through the artist or creator, myself, and become abstract drawings. Is anything really created? Are there any new ideas or merely new combinations of old ideas? Are the drawings a result of conscious effort or do they represent the

manifestation of the interaction of a person with their environment? Perhaps Oliver Wendell Holmes was referring to railroads without tracks when he wrote, ". . . Any new formula which suddenly emerges in our consciousness has its roots in long trains of thought; it is virtually old when it makes its first appearance among the recognized growths of our intellect."[4] In this light the drawings are not creations but rather manifstations. If the drawings are then manifestations of interaction between the artist and the environment, then perhaps the most truthful representation of the environment would be made by a naturally non-self-conscious mind, the mind of a child.

> During the 1950's, (David) Smith frequently lectured, proselytizing his conviction that drawing is of major importance in the artist's growth and development:"If drawing could come now, as easily as when man was six, he would not doubt or think, he would do. It (drawing) would be a joy but since he approaches it more consciously, and not with the child's freedom, he must admit to himself that he is making a drawing and he approaches mark-making either humble, selfconscious or timid." [5]

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[4]Oliver Wendell Holmes, The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891) , p.31

[5]Paul Cummings, David Smith, The Drawings (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1979), p.26.

If the drawings are considered to be the products of an innocent, child-like mind, then they may be described as products of intuition in a sense. Certainly there is emperical knowledge used in selecting the materials and fabricating the drawings, but intuition plays a part in the selection of the forms and shades from the environment. Intellectual knowledge and activity constitutes a major part of artistic, creative activity, but this activity would become stale and repetitious if it was not complimented with intuition. Giving new insights or a creative flare is merely interpreting from a new perspective, a perspective often generated by intuitive insight. Such insights cannot be consciously produced through rational thought. They tend to emerge unexpectedly, at any time, at work or at play.

Figure 1 shows a small object made of stainless steel and acrylic. The materials are basically inert and the object is therefore basically stable in composition and appearance. The stainless piece has been given grooves which change in appearance as the angle of illumination changes as it would with sunlight. The object is approximately the same size as a mounted, thirty-five-millimeter slide. The bonding of the acrylic

was accomplished using screws.

Figure 2 shows a table-top object, a toy. It is composed of aluminum, steel and rubber. The inner, smaller disc revolves with respect to the outer, larger disc, cyclically stressing the rubber band. With vigorous observer interaction the rubber band may fatigue and fail in a matter of minutes, thus demanding both replacement and a first-order interaction with the observer as he/she replaces the rubber band. If the rubber band is a different color, then the drawing will change as a result of interaction with the observer. Also, handling the object will coat the metals with greases and moisture from the observer's hands which will, in turn, change the rate of corrosion of the metals. Finally, spinning the inner disc with respect to the outer disc will change the lines presented by the rubber band, thus changing the appearance of the drawing.

Figure 3 shows a bracelet made of teflon and rubber bands. Change in this drawing is of form and color. Utilization of differently colored rubber bands allows for the change of color. The rubber bands also serve to bond the bracelet to one's wrist. The form is altered by bending the teflon about; it is a very flexible material, the heat from

one's hands being enough to allow the convenient altering of the drawing-bracelet's form.

Figures 4 and 5 are drawings made of aluminum, steel and rubber. Their size is such that they make effective brooches. Again, all three materials utilized, steel, aluminum and rubber, have different corrosion rates. Again, color can be changed by corrosion or changing the rubber bands. The drawing in Figure 5 can also be changed if the smaller rail is moved relative to the larger rail and, again, observer interaction serves to determine the form of the drawing.

Figure 6 shows a paraffin-paper cup. This drawing is created to survive only a short period of time, perhaps a drink or two. An observer interacting with this drawing in the manner it was designed will destroy the drawing in a matter of minutes or hours. As the cup has no base and cannot stand alone on the table top, it cannot be mistaken for an ashtray.

Figure 7 shows a drawing large enough to be displayed in the corner of a room, hung on the wall in an area which is at least partially illuminated by the sun. The materials used in this drawing have very low corrosion rates and therefore their innate physical appearance is

remarkably stable over the course of a human lifetime. But the appearance of the drawing does change subtly over the course of a day as the changing sunlight interacts with the cables and the changing shadows interact with walls.

Works Cited

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Holmes, Oliver Wendell. The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table. New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891.

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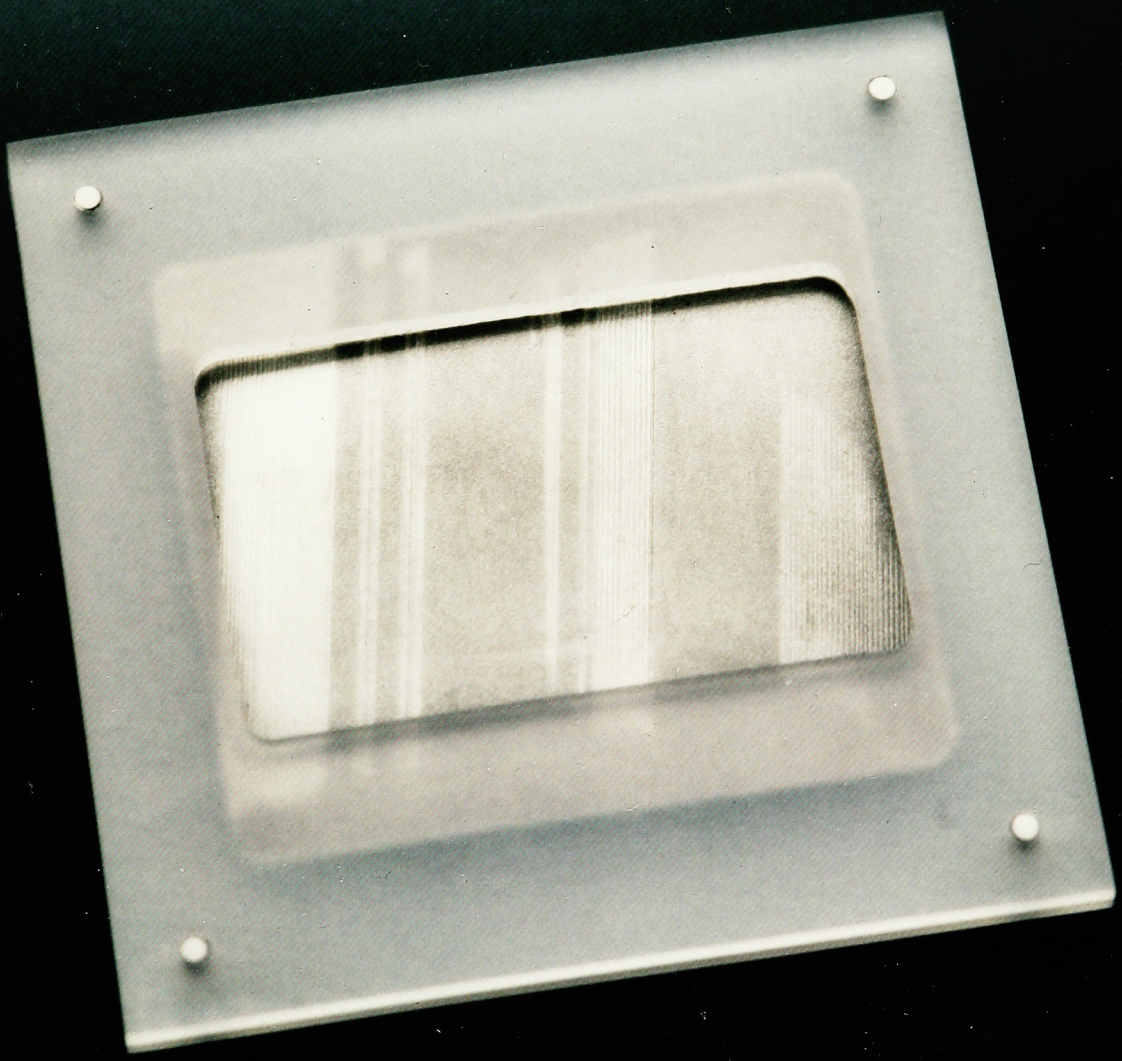

FIGURE 1

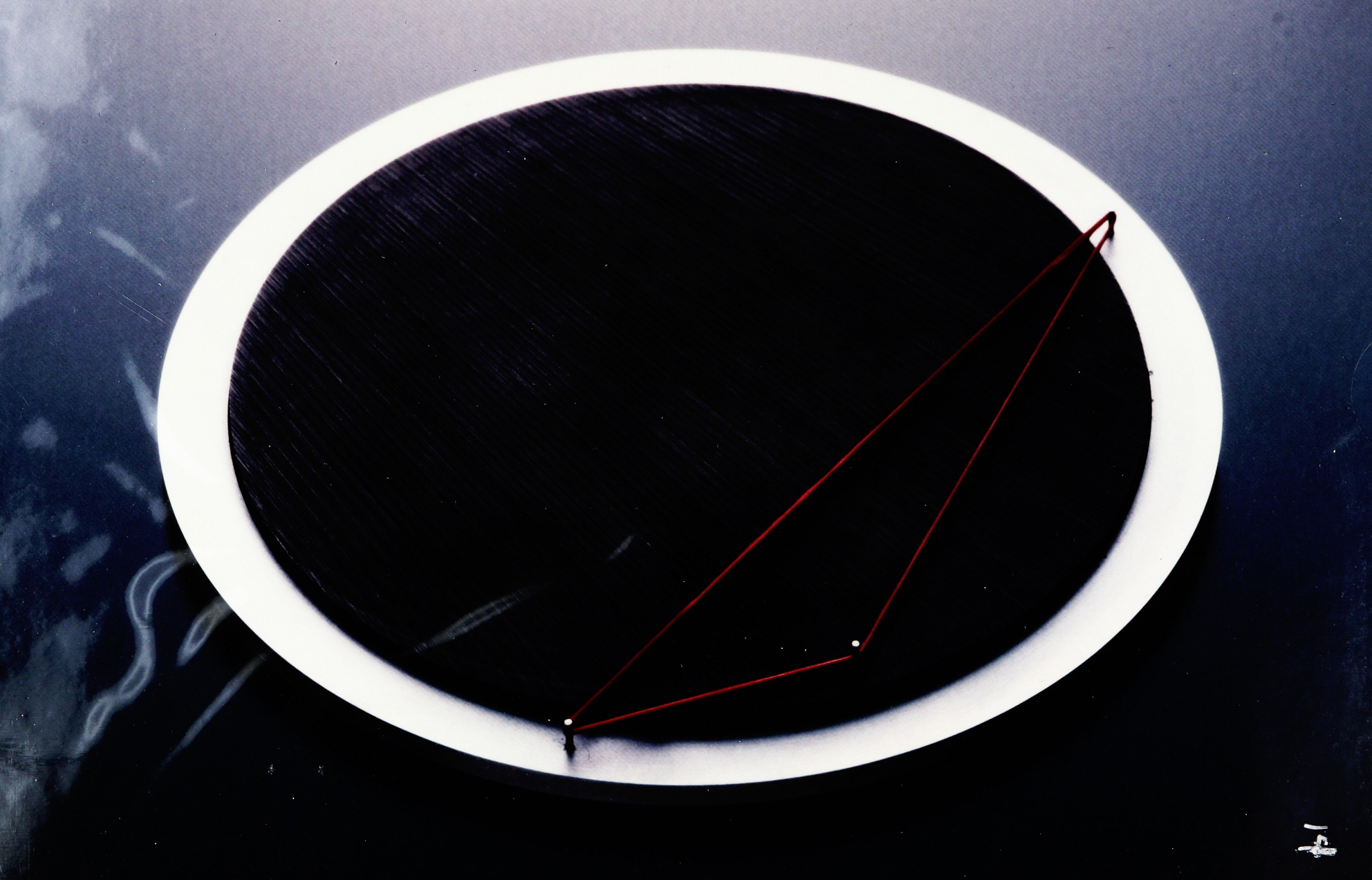

FIGURE 2.

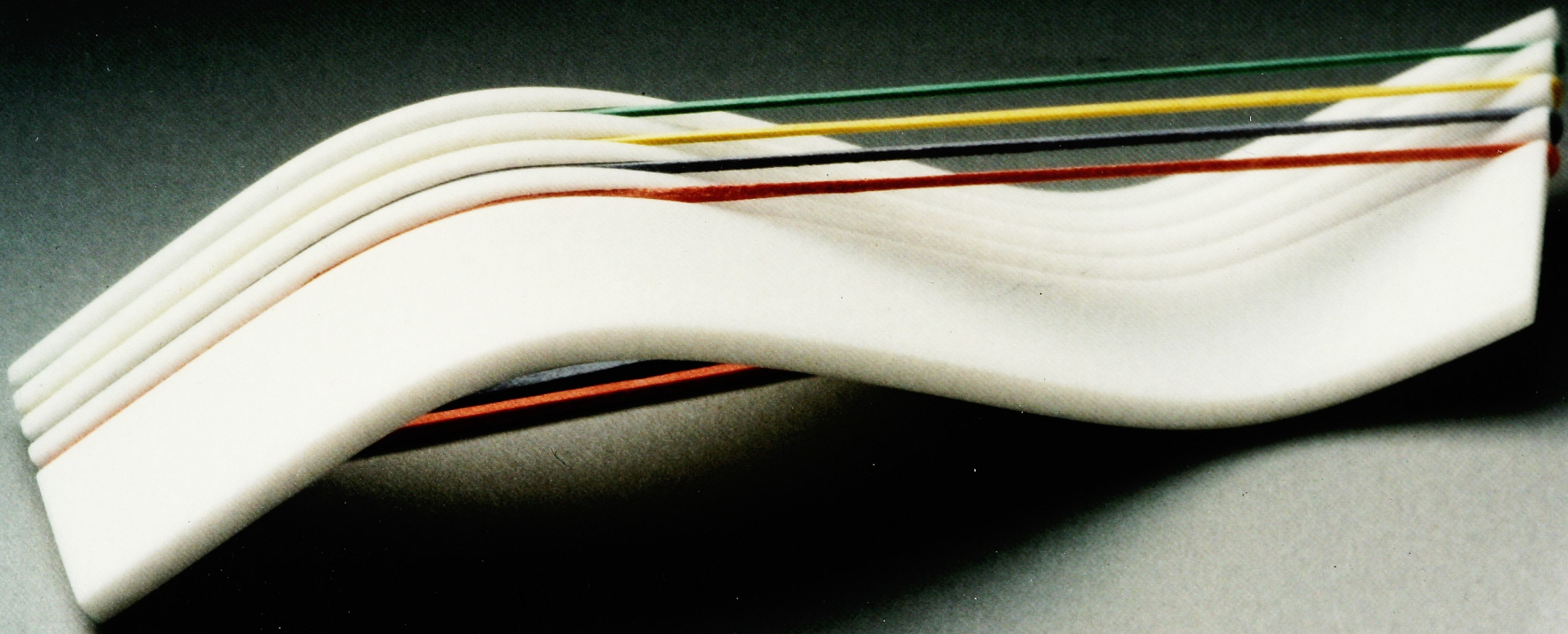

FIGURE 3

FIGURE 4

Figure 6

Figure 3

FIGURE 7