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### Realistic emergence

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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
The College of Fine and Applied Arts  
in Candidacy for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

REALISTIC EMERGENCE

By

Roger W. Otis

May 16, 1990



## Approvals

Advisor: William Keyser \_\_\_\_\_  
Date 6-25-90

Associate Advisor: Dr. Barbara Hodik \_\_\_\_\_  
Date 6-14-90

Associate Advisor: Kener Bond \_\_\_\_\_  
Date 6-15-90

Special Assistant to the Dean for Graduate Affairs:  
Philip Bornarth \_\_\_\_\_  
Date 6/29/90

Dean, College of Fine and Applied Arts:  
Dr. Robert Johnston \_\_\_\_\_  
Date 7/2/1990

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Date 12 June 1990

Roger W. Otis

The main thrust of my thesis proposal is to illustrate the theme, "realistic emergence" through renderings in wood. I want the viewer to be confronted with the emergence of an object into his/her space. The power and tension caused by the rendering's "emergence" should evoke a stronger emotion than an object placed fully in the room or hung on the wall.

A large variety of traditional woodworking techniques will be used to accomplish the above.

Animal, object and human form will be explored, researched and evaluated for the value of each in accomplishing the above-stated purpose. In doing this body of work I hope to lay new groundwork for a new form of artistic expression: a cause and effect relationship because of the "power and tension" caused by the rendering's "emergence" into the viewer's space.

## Acknowledgements:

I want to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to the many people that influenced this work.

First and foremost, I want to thank Dr. Johnston, Dean of the College of Fine and Applied Arts, for his enthusiastic approval and acceptance of my work. His expressed excitement added greatly to my own enthusiasm and reinforced my own confidence. This support in an environment where "critique" rules the day, was fresh, invigorating and always welcomed and appreciated.

Next, I would like to thank my Committee Chairman William Keyser, who took the risk of allowing me to do very large and complex projects, and afforded me his faith and confidence that I would be successful. His guidance and logical problem solving help along the way were invaluable to the success of these projects.

Dr. Hodik has been a wonderful advisor, confidant and friend as I have sat in her office many times and asked for her opinion on a current problem. She has been of invaluable help in not only the projects themselves, but in the writing, editing and format of the thesis paper.

Kener Bond has also been a trusted friend and one with whom I could confide and share ideas. We seem to have a lot in common and share similar feelings about many things.

Thanks also to Doug Sigler and Rich Tannen for the suggestions and opinions offered. Their support and help has meant a lot to me.

Thanks must also go to the many friends, known and unknown who have come by to admire the work as it has progressed from stage to stage. Their interest and admiration have added validity to my own satisfaction of the work.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the wonderfully patient people at Reinbeck who cautiously allowed this overly enthusiastic researcher to search, measure and in general caress this grand, and perhaps the only one of its kind, airplane in existence today.

Lastly, I must acknowledge the help in figure work from Bob Leverich, Bruce Sodervick, my two male models, Steve Kaplan, and Sean Flynn, and my ten year old daughter, Laura, who had just the right ears from which to reference.

## EMERGENCE THEMES IN ANCIENT HISTORY

As I have researched both free-standing and bas-relief figurative sculpture in ancient history, I have come to the conclusion that either a great many talented sculptors existed during this long period of history, or the demand for this type of work caused many to arise and develop these talents. The artistic depth and scope of this ancient work is truly impressive.

As we look at many examples of "emerging figures" in figurative sculpture, we find that entrance portals seemed to be one of the more popular places to display this kind of work. These portals were obviously major focal points, and I can imagine that the most notable artists of the day were rivals for these prime locations.

Some entrance sculpture was in bas-relief and narrative in nature. It was displayed to serve as a reminder of some great lesson for current and future generations.

Following are just a few examples of this narrative type of work:

The Creation of Adam, c.1430, a marble relief located in the Main Portal, S. Petronio, Bologna. (See Plate 1.)

The Story of Jacob and Esau, c. 1435, of gilt bronze at the Baptistry in Florence. (See Plate 2.)

The Feast of Herod, c. 1425, of gilt bronze at the Baptismal Font, S. Giovanni, Siena. (See Plate 3.)

Last Judgment, c.1130-35, Tympanum from church of St Lazare, Autun. (See Plate 4.)

The Kiss of Judas, c. 1240-50, on the choir screen, Naumburg Cathedral. (See Plate 5.)

Other sculptural pieces (both bas-relief and free-standing) were for a different purpose. They were there to promote religious or political purposes, posted as guards, or set with the intent to intimidate those entering.

The very realistic sculpture of life size lions forming the base for the columns of the elevated Pulpit at the Baptistry in Piza, 1259. is a beautiful example of such work. (See Plate 6.)

Hundreds of other examples exist, but I'll just mention a few here:

The West Portal, Chartres Cathedral, c.1215-20, shows an Early Gothic influence. Figures massed in great numbers stand guard at the entrance to possibly ward off the evil spirits. They certainly would also cause anyone entering some serious self introspection. (See Plate 7.)

This particular Cathedral with its many figured portals was of interest to me as this seemed to be a beginning of a more complete representation of the figure. It is no longer a flattened figure, but has a more active "emerging" role.

**Here, then, we witness a development of truly revolutionary importance: the first basic step toward the reconquest of monumental sculpture in the round since the end of classical antiquity ...the very fact that they are round endows them with a more emphatic presence than anything in Romanesque sculpture. 1**



The North Jamb, Center Portal, St. -Gilles-du-Gard, 12th. century, is massed with huge imposing figures, "emerging" beasts and other images, designed to confuse and intimate those entering. (See Plate 8.)

Ramses II at Luxor, a twenty foot tall sculpture of the great pharoah,"... is a symbolic reference to his power and importance." 2 (See Plate 9.)

In doing research for this section I found it interesting that during this Early Egyptian period in both sculpture and painting, the "...formal frontalized viewpoint is continuously maintained. The more directly a personage confronts the spectator, the more impressive it was considered to be." 3 In later works, the frontalized viewpoint was not so important. Personally, I'm anxious to do a work that is not emerging into my presence, but leaving my presence through the wall instead.

In another part of the world, we see similar work. In the early Mayan culture figures such as,

**...the squatting figure of Xochipili in its almost terrifying starkness... and the massive ...Lady of the Serpents Skirt...must have presented a fearsome spectacle in its original place in a dark temple interior with the light coming up from below. 4**

These are examples of figures that were stationed to frighten or intimidate. Some of these were fully three dimensional, while others like their Eastern counterparts were "emerging".

## How the Research of Ancient History has Affected my Views on Emergence Themes

Having studied "emergence themes" in Ancient History, I now have a better understanding of how I would like others to be affected by my work. I certainly don't want to do a piece of work that would cause one to be frightened or intimidated. I really have no political or religious causes that at this time I feel I want to promote through my work, with the possible exception of historical memorials. Though I like decorative work, my practical side would probably resist the urge to do something simply decorative. I believe that both my Elephant sculpture, completed in 1989, and The Aviator are somewhat narrative in nature. A lot could be read into both of these sculptures if the viewer decided to do so.

I might, in the future, find it interesting and compelling to do a more purely narrative piece. Somehow, this is enticing to me. It has been interesting to discover the motivations behind the work that I have reviewed here.

### **End Notes for Emergence Themes in Ancient History**

1. H.W. Janson, History of Art (New York: Harry M. Abrams, 1986), 318.
2. Bernard S. Myers, Art and Civilization (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), 25.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. ,116.





PLATE 1

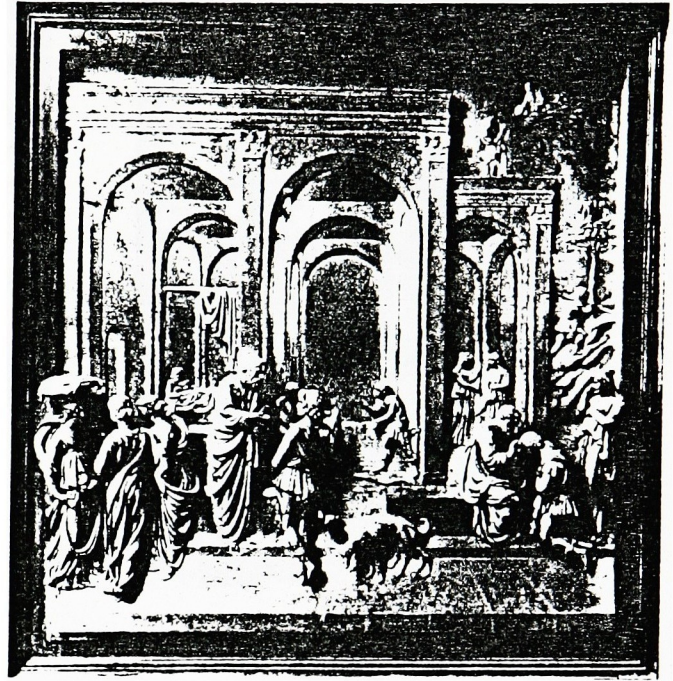


PLATE 2



264



PLATE 4



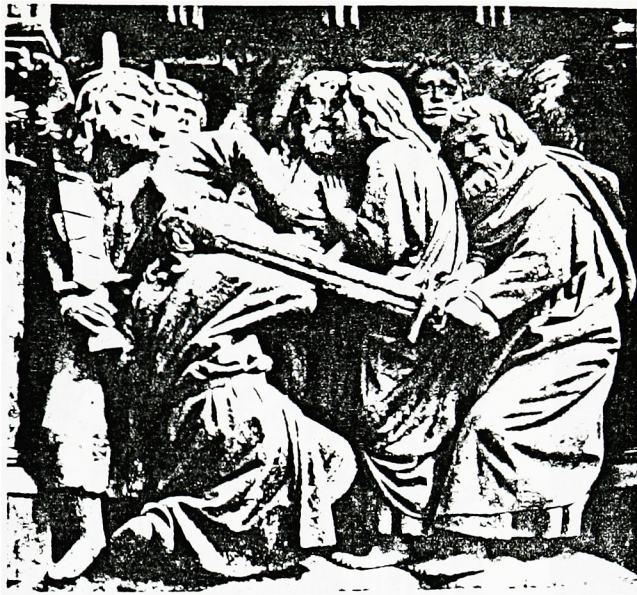


PLATE 5

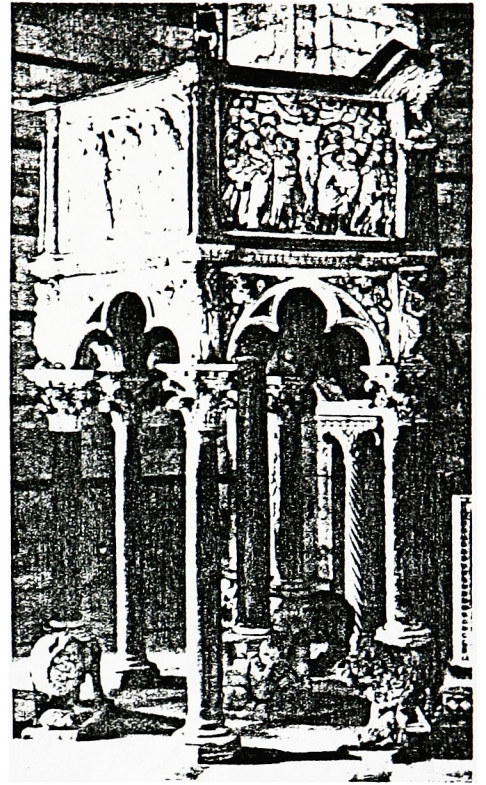


PLATE 6

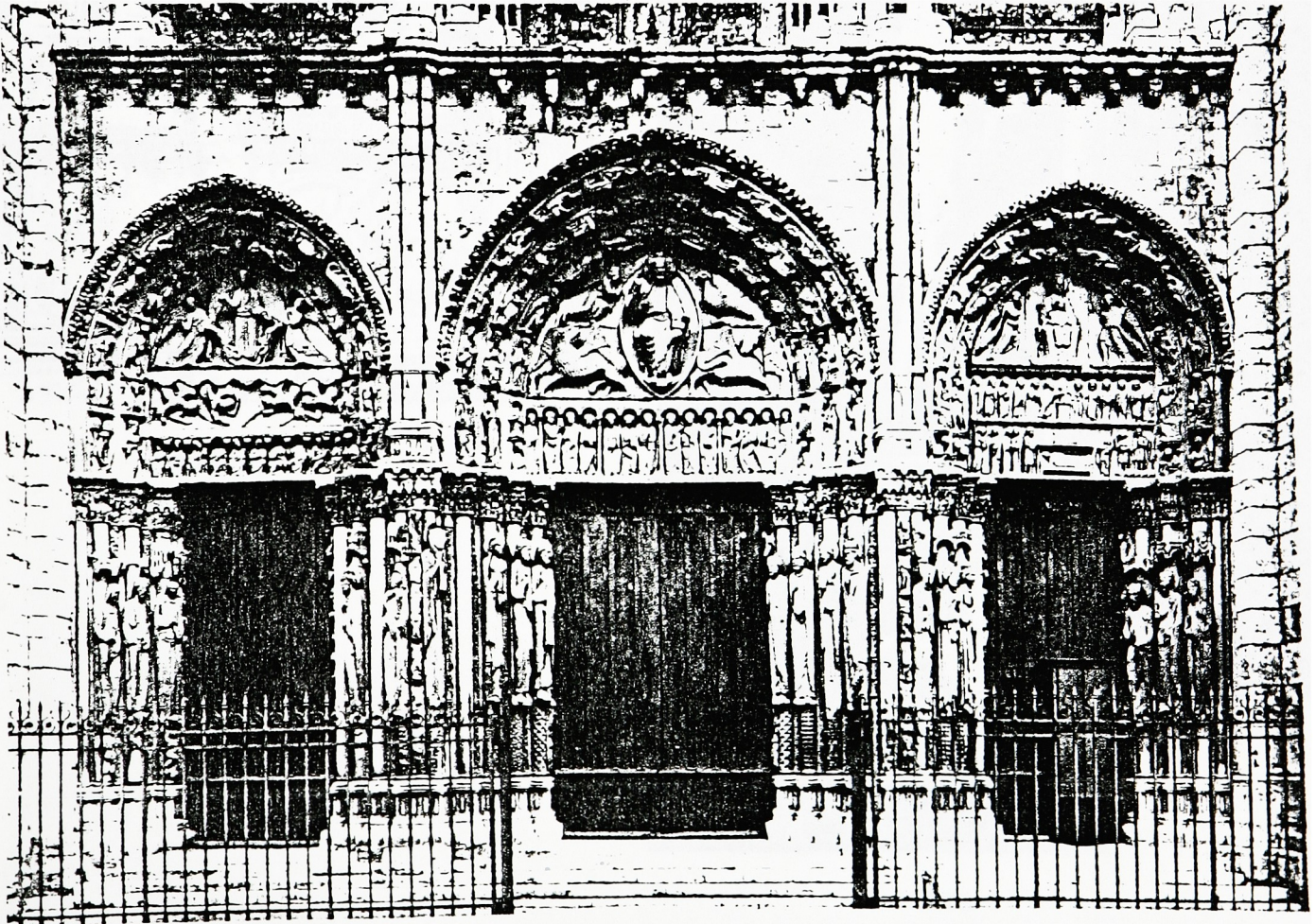


PLATE 7



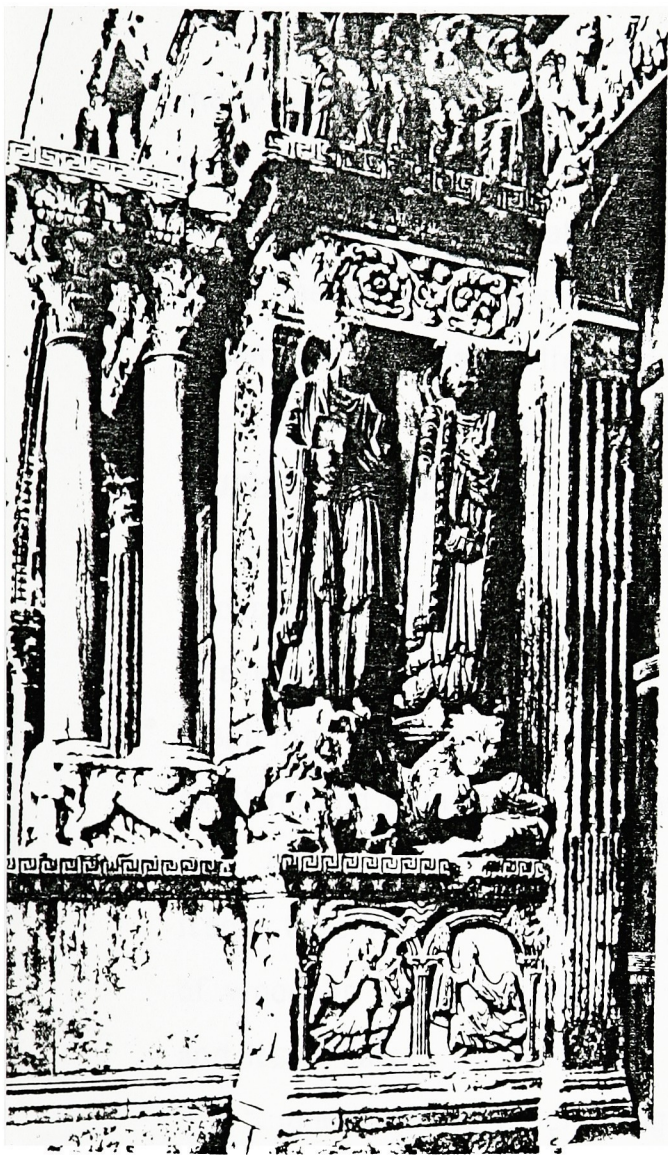


PLATE 8

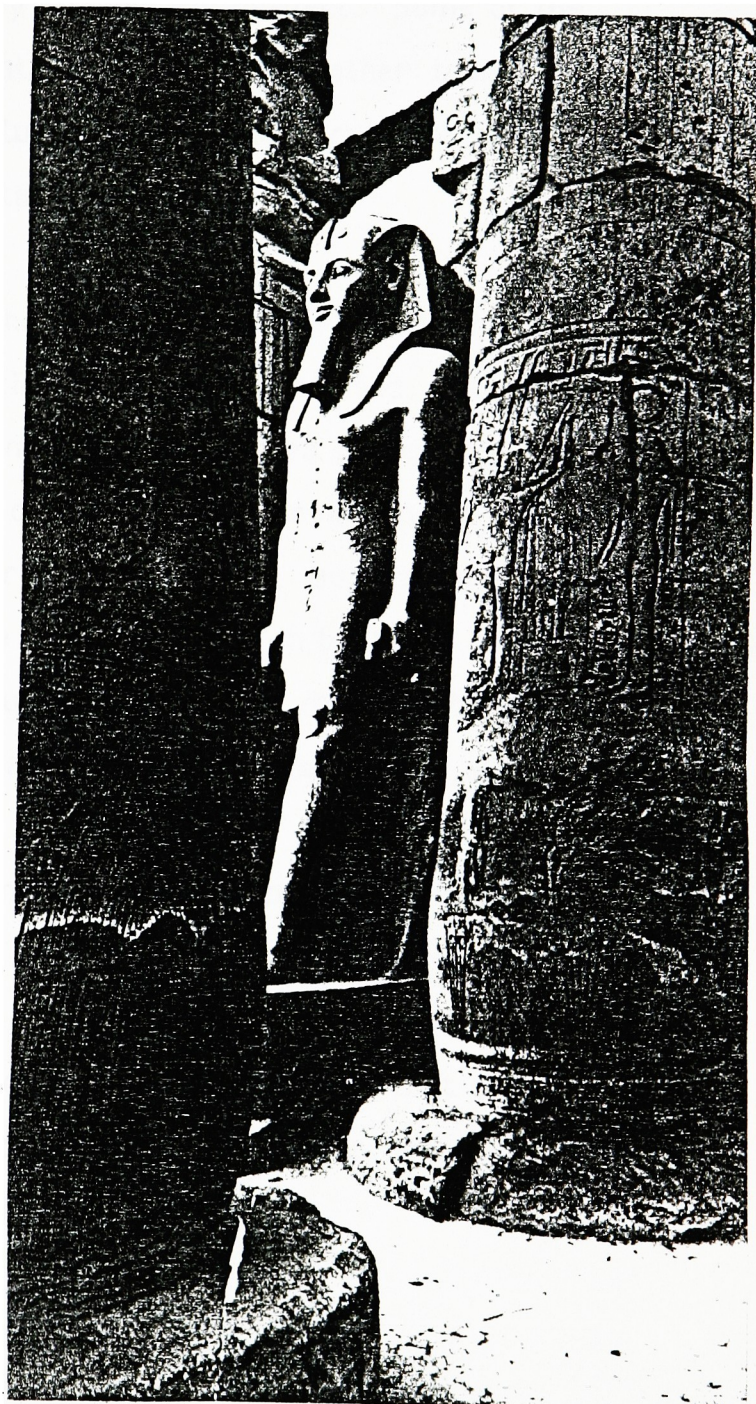


PLATE 9



## Emergence Themes in Contemporary America

It was exciting to find others doing some similar work. I'm sure many others, of whom I'm unaware, are out there now also doing work of a similar nature. I offer my acknowledgements to them as well as to those here noted that I greatly admire and respect. Some of the work mentioned below is free-standing sculpture rather than "emerging" or "bas-relief" sculpture. This is noted only for clarity as one views the work of these notable men.

### Fumio Yoshimura

Probably the work that is the most noteworthy here is the grouping of Fumio's three bicycles made of linden wood, left natural. These 1984-85 immaculately laminated and carved pieces are awe inspiring. To me this beautiful duplication of a "common" object is exciting and reinforces my own reasons for doing such a work as this.

I find it interesting that we can walk right on by those common items that we live with daily, but when an artist makes a bicycle out of wood, in this case, we are drawn to study it and wonder about it and its creator.

"...one finds it fascinating and will spend some considerable time studying and admiring the detail that one finds uninteresting in the real world."<sup>5</sup>

I know that I also have been drawn to study objects that are either out of context, or made from a different material than normal. These unexpected changes catch our attention.

"With imagination, humor, irony, passion and skill he provokes me to study the ordinary, which thus becomes the extraordinary. He has turned a physical object into a metaphysical one."6 (See Plate 10.)

### Patrick Bremer

Patrick constructs larger than life insects largely from exotic woods. His painstaking work with ultimate detail provides his subjects with a "living" quality. Patrick clues us in on how he plans the identity of each of his insects:

I do have a kind of 'identity' in mind. As I created Cricket for instance, I wanted to call up associations with a friendly insect at the hearthside, Walt Disney and Jimmie Cricket. But as I began Cricket Hunter, I wanted an undeniable sinister aspect to come through. 7

### Armand La Montagne

Armand had full size and life like wood statues of Boston Celtic's Larry Bird and Boston Bruin's Bobby Orr displayed at the Sports Museum of New England in Boston in 1988. These were constructed from 2,000 pound blocks of professionally laminated knot free basswood, carved and painted. In his work, Armand is after an exact look-a-like appearance.

The Bobby Orr figure carved by Armond required some 2000 hours of work. Having done two very large pieces myself of only 600 hours each, I certainly can appreciate Armand's dedication. (See Plate 11.)

### Harry Hitchner

Harry does life size carvings of figures in their environment from American History, "...depicting the ordinary man reacting to the events of an ordinary day." 8 (See Plate 12.)

I respect and enjoy Harry's intent as indicated below, but I tend to prefer the "awe inspiring carvings."

"He doesn't aim to create awe-inspiring carvings. Instead, he concentrates on creating an aura of plausibility through subtle detail-position of hands, condition of the clothing, texture of the hair."9

### **Wendell Castle**

Wendell has done a number of pieces that have caught my attention and that have been a source of inspiration for me.

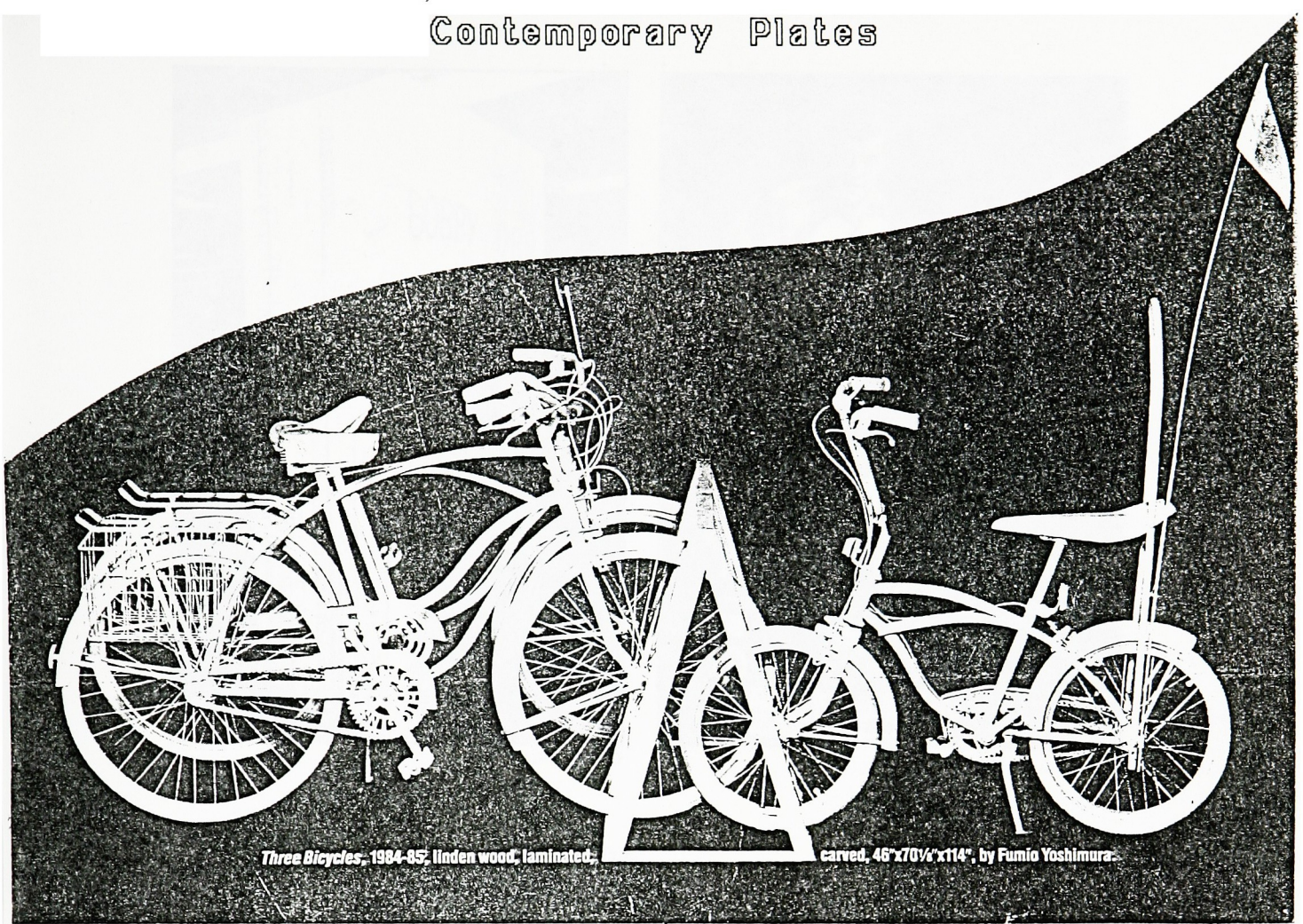
I will probably continue to use the stack lamination technique that Wendell has perfected to such a high degree. I agree in total with him when he says: "...the lamination technique opens doors for the furniture designer, allowing his imagination to explore entirely new areas, the only limit being the horizons of his artistic fancies and ingenuity."10

### **Additional artists**

The following are lesser known artists who never-the-less have left their mark on the artistic accomplishments of our contemporary world.

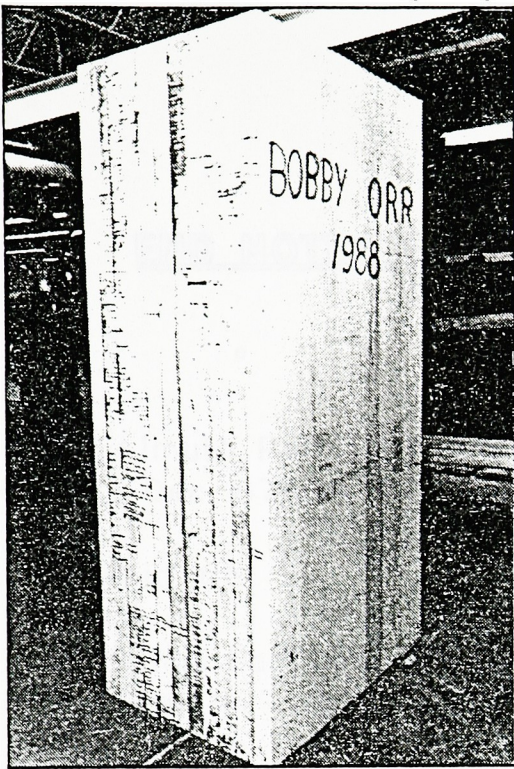
C.R.'Skip' Johnson rendered a lifesize ore car, titled Mine Car Disaster. Hugh 'Huff' Wesler rendered a 1914 Mack Tanker Truck. David Holzapfel rendered a Chair Tank, a fairly comfortable living room chair. Bryon Hansen rendered a Velocipede. Dana D. Warwick rendered the insides of a very large clock measuring ten feet by twelve feet and weighing some 1100 pounds.





*Three Bicycles*, 1984-85, linden wood, laminated, carved, 46"x70½"x114", by Fumio Yoshimura.





JEAN DUFFY PHOTO



PLATE 11

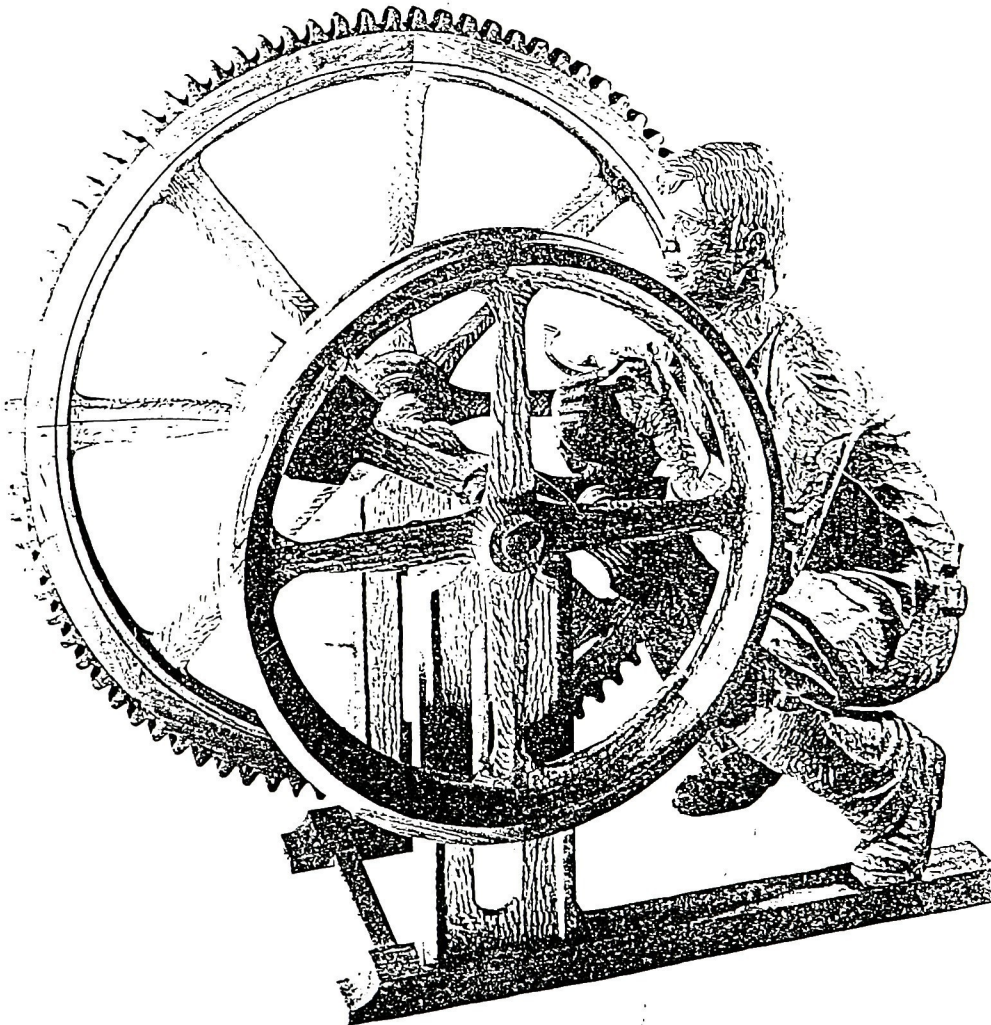


PLATE 12

## END NOTES FOR CONTEMPORARIES

5. Almuth Palinkas, "Three Bicycles," American Craft, (Dec. 87/Jan. 88): 20.
6. Ibid.,66.
7. Donna Hartman, "The Amazing World of Patrick Bremer," Woodshop News, (Jan. 1990): 22.
8. Anonymous, "The Machinist," Fine Woodworking, (May/June 1979): 18.
9. Ibid.
10. Wendell Castle, and David Edman, The Wendell Castle Book of Wood Lamination, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company,1979), 50.



REALISTIC EMERGENCE

THE AVIATOR

CLASSIC ARROW

## **A "Successful" Business**

My story really began four years ago as I closed the California business that I had built from the ground up, nurtured and enjoyed the fruits thereof for eight of those ten years. In the early years of the business, life had been a challenge and provided real excitement, with each day providing its own adventure. Then success set in and the days came and went like a warm, and perhaps too pleasant, summer day. One day flowed into the next, nothing of note to distinguish one from another. I bought a fast motorcycle, and then I built my own sport airplane to bring excitement back into my middle class suburban life style. Fast motorcycle rides and exciting flights only intensified my frustration with the "success" of my business. Having an innate interest in aviation, I went on sabbatical for a year and enrolled in a technical school to experience the mechanical part of aviation. Dreams budded and old enthusiasm began to emerge. I hadn't found what I was missing yet, but I now knew I wanted to work with my hands.

A year later, with property sold, and our belongings packed, we were heading east being pioneers in reverse. Six weeks on the road allowed us to really absorb and taste America's culture in its different parts. We found a kinship here in the East, a cultural refinement that we had missed in the West. We wanted to be a part of this culture and feel and enjoy that which made this part of our country exciting and pleasant.

### **Two Years Later at the Kitchen Table**

Snow was falling as I sat looking out the window. In just three days it would be Christmas. My serious contemplation had caught my

wife's attention. I needed a project for the remainder of the school year. It had to be a special project. A project that I could become excited about. No more successful middle class suburbia chairs, chest of drawers, etc. I came here to do exciting things, not the run of the mill, the ordinary!

We sat and started to brainstorm. "Why not build an elephant", I said out loud. Then I laughed. My wife didn't. "Why not," she responded. "Oh, don't be ridiculous; It would take a ton of wood!", I argued. "But that would be really exciting!" she exclaimed, lending her full support. The wheels began to turn. Exciting. Yes, it had to be exciting! It must transcend the ordinary and become exciting. "That is why I'm here," I thought. "That's why I left the ho-hum lazy, sunny California."

I couldn't possibly let this new home and area become humdrum. Above all I must fight to keep life full of meaning, adventure and challenge. I quickly took the pictures off the kitchen wall, and taped up Christmas wrap with the white side up. I began to draw the grandest full size elephant I could imagine. It took up most of the wall and even part of the ceiling. Now I was alive with energy. The fire of vigor was racing through my blood and in a few days the elephant was underway in a huge styrofoam mockup. It would be an "emerging" beast. He would come right through the wall at the audience. His eyes would be racing with life providing the huge wooden head with a living quality all its own.

So here in the elephant was born my theme of *Realistic Emergence* for my thesis project which would follow a year later.

The full-size elephant head, made of beautiful cherry, became a notable piece at Rochester Institute of Technology and has won the acclaim of people far and wide, including the Chairman of the National

Republican Party, and the Vice President of the United States of America.

It was completed one day ahead of schedule in May of 1989 and now resides in the beautiful entrance foyer to the Burnett Park Zoo in Syracuse, N.Y.

### The Aviator

Having completed a "realistic" and full scale animal form, I felt that I should, for my own development, choose either "human" form, "object" form, or both, to round out my ability to do most any kind of form that I might be called upon to do in the future.

A combination piece of figure and object was chosen for my first thesis project, The Aviator. The Aviator consisted of a WWI pilot standing next to his WWI airplane, all in full scale, in the orange glow of the late afternoon sun.

The painting by Jim Dietz, entitled, "The Old Hand,"(See Plate 13.), is from the back of Sport Aviation Magazine, June, 1988, and was used as the design prototype for this project.

An important question now surfaced: How much do I copy this work by another artist, vs. how much do I make it my own?

I have had my own opinions about this question for some time as this question had arisen before in reference to my work. Being largely self taught in the arts, I had used the method of copying to develop my own talents. Having now taken several painting classes and design classes, I found that others had used this same technique for years. In fact, it used to be the way the fine arts were taught for centuries.

Many Japanese artists have felt it not only appropriate to copy but feel it a sacred and revered way to show respect to our creator who, in his infinite wisdom, created all the real beauty in this world. They might have expressed it like this: How can we expect to create something beyond the beauty of those creations by one having all



knowledge, wisdom and talent.

This may explain why the Japanese artist believes so profoundly in simplicity and yes, copying that which already exists in the world in such transcendent beauty. If we but compare how we clutter our environment with the always new and often times ugly art in America, with the pristine Japanese tea and rock gardens, I think we might want to re-evaluate just what we are doing with art in America.

I took it upon myself to do some legal research into this "copying" idea, with a copyright lawyer and found that as long as something is portrayed differently, then it is not legally copied. Also, as so many believe, there is really very little new in the world today that hasn't already been done by someone somewhere. "The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more. I prefer, simply, to state the existence of things in terms of time and/or place."<sup>11</sup>

In many ways I feel like a photographer when setting up my work. Rather than create something new, I move that which has already been artistically selected and perfected from the two dimensional form into a three dimensional form.

Following are some of the decisions that I made concerning the degree of copying I am willing to do to assure the success of this piece.

- a. The aviator's stance was very important if I was to portray the particular mood that I wanted for the character of the man. Even though I would try to copy this as much as possible, I also feel that this stance is rather typical of how an average flyer would probably wish to be portrayed in a photo or painting. I made no attempt, however to copy the

face, and I did in fact, leave out the gloves and hat that were clutched in the left hand of the flyer in the painting.

b. The late afternoon glow on the piece was also absolutely necessary. However, I don't suppose any one can credit themselves for being very original in using this heavenly glow to enhance their work.

c. Fortunately, the airplane itself, though quite nice in the painting, would not come across well in three dimensional form. Another plane had to be found that would be more suitable. Research turned up just the right aircraft.

## **The Aviator Research**

Several days of research in two libraries and in volumes of historical aviation books revealed the airplane that would be most appropriate for this project. It was, first of all, one of a long line of favorites of mine. Since I had been a child, I had studied and revered this great airplane that the famous Eddie Rickenbacker had flown. Second, it had lots of exciting detail in the areas that would be exposed to view, while many others of this time period were rather plain in these areas. It was a 1916 S.P.A.D. (*Societe pour Production les Appareilles Deperdussin*) 12. This was a French built aircraft and was very advanced for its time. With its closable louvered radiator, it was capable of making severe power dives to escape an enemy on its tail.

Now, I had to find a plastic model of a S.P.A.D., as well as a full scale restored S.P.A.D. I became concerned as I started to search for both. I called seventeen toy stores only to find that WWI models are no longer stocked. I finally found one some forty miles away. It was covered with dust from having taken up shelf space for such a long time. It was the only WWI model in this old, wood floor building. The

century old boards creaked under my feet as I entered and I fully expected to see an old cracker barrel in the corner.

My search for a full size restored S.P.A.D. was not easy either. I first went to the Geneseo War Museum only to find that they only dealt with WWII planes and models. I was prepared to fly to Oshkosh, Wisconsin, to the EAA Air Museum or even to France if necessary. I needed a full scale airplane, not so much to scale from, but to stand next to, and feel its "presence in time" so I might build into my own piece that feeling of "presence." Without this, I couldn't expect it to live in the hearts of those that would view it.

Finally, a full scale S.P.A.D. was found at the Old Reinbeck Aerodrome in Reinbeck, N.Y., a day's drive away by car. My spirits soared. I planned the trip and armed myself with note pads, pencils, tapes, film and camera. I assaulted the old aerodrome with a vengeance to perform probably the most important part of my total research. Many hours later under darkening skies, I headed home, tired but elated and well satisfied that I had what I needed, and I had firmly entrapped in my mind and heart "the presence" of this grand old airplane that would be so important to portray in my piece.

## **Work Begins**

When starting the elephant I had used a full scale mock up in styrofoam to begin the lay-out of this large piece. I decided that for this project a mockup would not be necessary. I began work with my pages of sketches and photos from the Reinbeck trip. Approaching this work without a full scale mock up was seriously questioned by my instructors, but I felt confident in my ability to work in this manner and continued to do so.

The work progressed well and rapidly for the first few months of



the project. Lumber was purchased in bulk quantities and the roughing out proceeded well.

I laminated the figure and propeller first, set them aside and started work on the engine cowling and fuselage front. This involved a process of cooping and dealing with lots of angles, which posed some definite problems when performing glue up operations. However, proper planning paid off here by spot gluing angled clamp blocks on the coopered pieces. This allowed the glue ups to be performed in an organized manner.

Probably the most difficult part of this section was properly cutting the angle across the back of the entire fuselage piece where it emerges from the wall. Bill Keyser came to my aid on this one, as he had several times before. With this section now three-fourths complete, I set it aside, and began work on the wheels and landing gear. This assembly consisted of two separate gear struts, two wheels, and a series of brass tubes, carved pivot joints, and two flat wood axle pieces that would span the distance between the wheels.

All of this work proceeded well with the exception of the turning of the wheels. Each wheel contained 28 board feet of wood before turning began and as careful as I was to cut it round, it was far from balanced when mounted on the lathe. A special lathe had been brought in to do this work and even with all its 400 pounds of mass, once turned on, the lathe wanted to walk all over the shop. The first wheel flew off the lathe at one point, fortunately causing no damage to anything or anyone. The second wheel came closer to causing damage as a large 12" slab tore out and flattened my face shield, and knocked me backwards several feet. Needless to say, the lathe turning proved to be the most exciting part of the project, and I was delighted when



it was finished.

The landing gear assembly was now also about three-fourths finished. I laid this section aside with the fuselage section so that I could begin work on the figure, by far the most dreaded and intimidating part of the project. One rule that I had learned from past projects was that it is best to bring all the parts along together in the same state of finish, rather than completely finishing any one. This certainly proved to be good advice here.

The figure began with a lot of chain sawing initially, then grinding with a body grinder. Features and gestures had to be roughed out and positioned carefully to not take away too much wood. Wood carving is almost 100 per cent a subtractive process. If the reader noted the word, "almost," here, some reading between the lines would indicate that on one occasion in this project, I reversed this process when the chain saw subtracted a wee bit too much material.

The nose of the aviator was carved and reground flat and carved again, to a new location three times before it was finally in its proper position. For days I labored over the smallest decisions, as I was so afraid of taking off too much wood. As work on the figure proceeded to be so tedious and slow going, I decided to take a series of photos as I proceeded so I could be uplifted by the progress made on days when I knew I would be depressed. It became a lot like crossing a rope bridge over a deep chasm— You just keep looking straight ahead, and keep going. Don't think about how far it is to the other side. Just keep looking straight ahead and keep moving.

The following journal entries shed some light on these dark and lonely days of figure work:

**11 Dec. 1989**

**With twenty-six hours into the figure, I was**

ready to start the head. It progressed well. Photos were taken at various stages of the carving process. This has been interesting and every bit the help that I thought it might be when this part of the job got tough.

13 Dec. 1989

Thirty-eight hours- I'm really tempted to panic today. I'm really getting frustrated with the tedious nature of this figure work. I don't know how the old masters did this kind of work. "I wonder how many small wooden toys I'd have to sell to make a living???"

15 Dec. 1989

Today, I'm down. I'm depressed. Hands! I hate hands! I just spent ten hours on the hands and I can see no progress. Ten hours times ten dollars per hour of shop time and that's a hundred dollars of nothing.

17 Dec. 1989

Double ditto! Add another 100 dollars to the day's trash.

19 Dec. 1989

Bruce Sodervick to the rescue. Bruce was instrumental in helping me to understand the role of a model in work like this. I'll be forever grateful for his helpful instruction.

I first brought in my ten year old daughter who just happens to have an excellent set of ears. She modeled for me on Saturday, and I was able to work out the details of both ears with her help in just four and a half hours. Wow. Progress! I'm feeling good today.

I've hired Steve Kaplan, a fellow wood worker, as a model for the hands. I'm making some progress. Now at fifty-eight hours into the figure, the hands are still just half finished, but I'm making progress. Steve has been a great help in uplifting my spirits, as this is lonely

work most of the time. I now have 382 hours invested in the total project.

6 Jan. 1989

I've made considerable progress over the Christmas break on the figure by putting in an additional seventy hours. The hands are almost finished. The coat and goggles are also almost finished and I'm pleased with these parts.

9 Jan. 1989

The hands are done!! I'm almost across that deep chasm. I'm feeling better, but I have no plans to fill the world with wood figures!!

With the figure completed, it having consumed some 140 hours of work, the sun began to shine again and I was able to feel like I was back to normal, feeling confident and enjoying my work again. The wings still needed to be started, but I did not have ten square inches of bench space to begin work on them. Though I knew it was wrong, I continued to postpone starting them until I had the fuselage and landing gear system completed, up out of the way, mounted on the wall.

Work now centered on finishing the landing gear system, the propeller, and the entire engine, fuselage and cowling section, with all its variety of details. This work progressed quite rapidly and, except for some minor changes and corrections along the way, proceeded on schedule. This part of the project became a very satisfying and an enjoyable part of the overall journey.

**It is up and mounted on the wall!!**

Finally, with a work bench again, the wings started to take shape. Basswood was finally chosen as the proper wood for the wings. It was chosen because it was much less expensive than mahogany, and lighter in weight. The wings were completed in a very short amount of time, and then were mounted on a wall in the machine room to be properly aligned.

One interesting note here is that the entire piece could not be assembled prior to the thesis show due to the size of wall space required to mount it all together. Some found this just a little too exciting for their comfort. I knew what it would look like when fully assembled. I seem to have an ability to do this. Perhaps it comes from having stood next to the real airplane and studied its "presence." I knew the problems that I would encounter in the final assembly so I felt confident that all would go well and proceed as planned.

A major consideration that had been a nagging question for a long time was how to finish the wings. Following are the options that were considered:

- a. Leave them finished natural to simulate the actual color of the aircraft fabric used in 1916.
- b. Cover them with aircraft fabric.
- c. Paint them with an opaque paint to match the camouflage pattern used on Eddie Rickenbacker's plane.
- d. Stain them with the same red mahogany stain and then blend using the undercoating system to match the colors on the figure and the fuselage and cowling.

The forth option was chosen. One of my goals in the beginning was to bring the same color tones into my work that the artist had put into his painting. This would not be an easy task as I lacked the



experience of a painter. I needed to develop and use hues that would give the impression of the golden glow of a late afternoon sun. To further compound the problem, I was under the constraint to have the wood grain show through. This limited my palette to dyes and stains with the possible addition of a diluted opaque color tint system. Experimentation began. Each item of clothing on the man had to be treated differently. I began by undercoating and then applying additional coats of transparent stain over this to achieve the desired results for each part of the clothing.

Once this was accomplished, the rest of the work had to be treated likewise to bring it all together in the end. The figure and the fuselage, all of mahogany, were easily coordinated as I was working here with the same kind of wood which would accept the stains and tints in a uniform and predictable manner. The basswood however, posed some problems in matching the other parts, as it accepted the stain in a very different way.

## AFTER THOUGHTS

All things considered, I think the late afternoon glow attempt worked well and is fairly believable. It has also given the piece a certain depth and richness that wasn't there when just coated like a piece of furniture with the red mahogany stain. It portrays the mood that I had hoped it would.

A three dimensional work of this magnitude requires attention not only to the frontal surface but also to the sides, top and bottom. I enjoy this aspect and perhaps that's why I feel so limited when trying to do a painting. I can't get into a painting, but I can get into a large sculptural piece, and I find that aspect exhilarating. I can become a part of it and perhaps it then also becomes a part of me.

Like old Gepeto and his little wooden puppet, I also want my pieces to take on a life of their own, and live in the eye of the viewer.

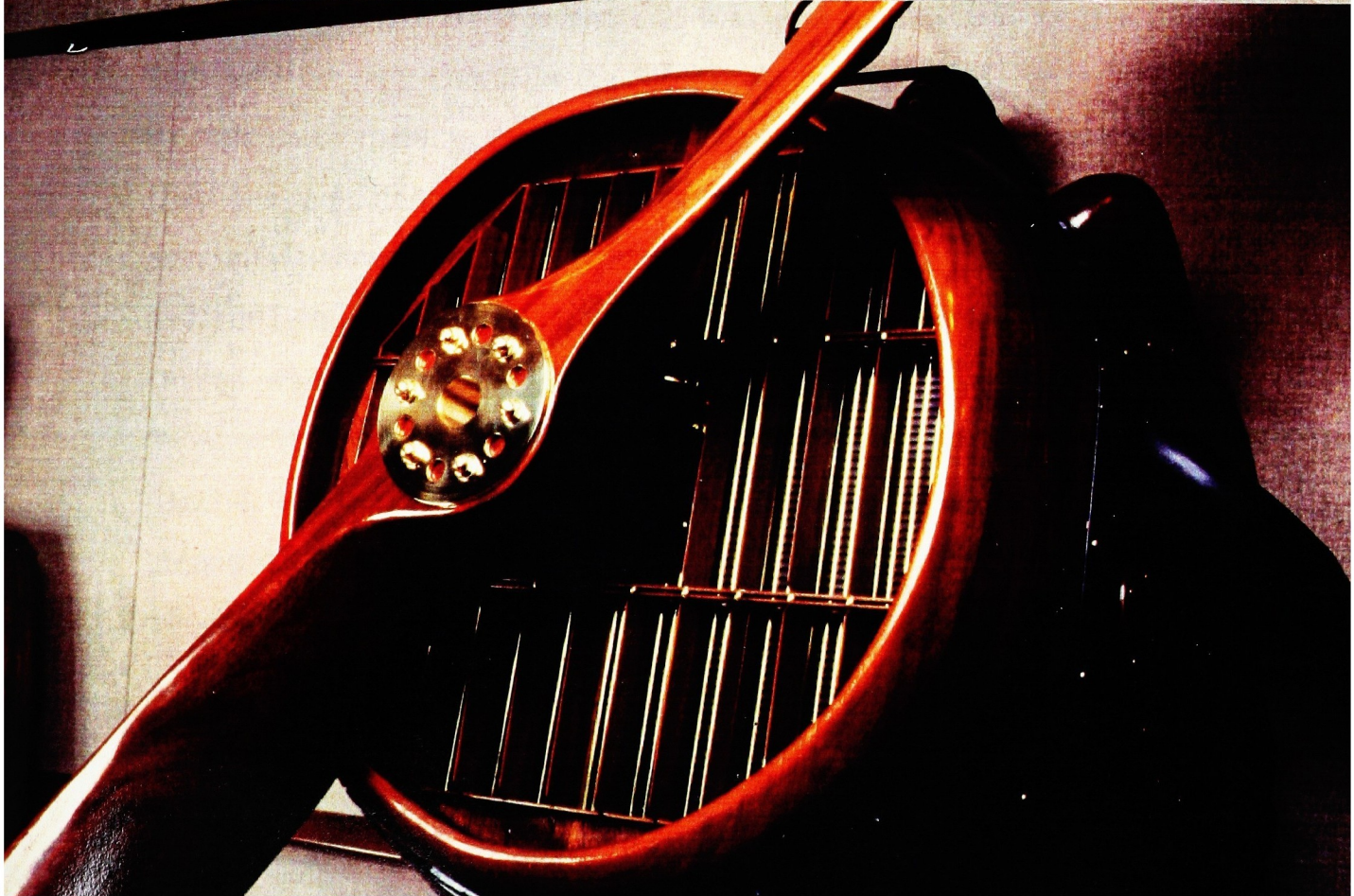
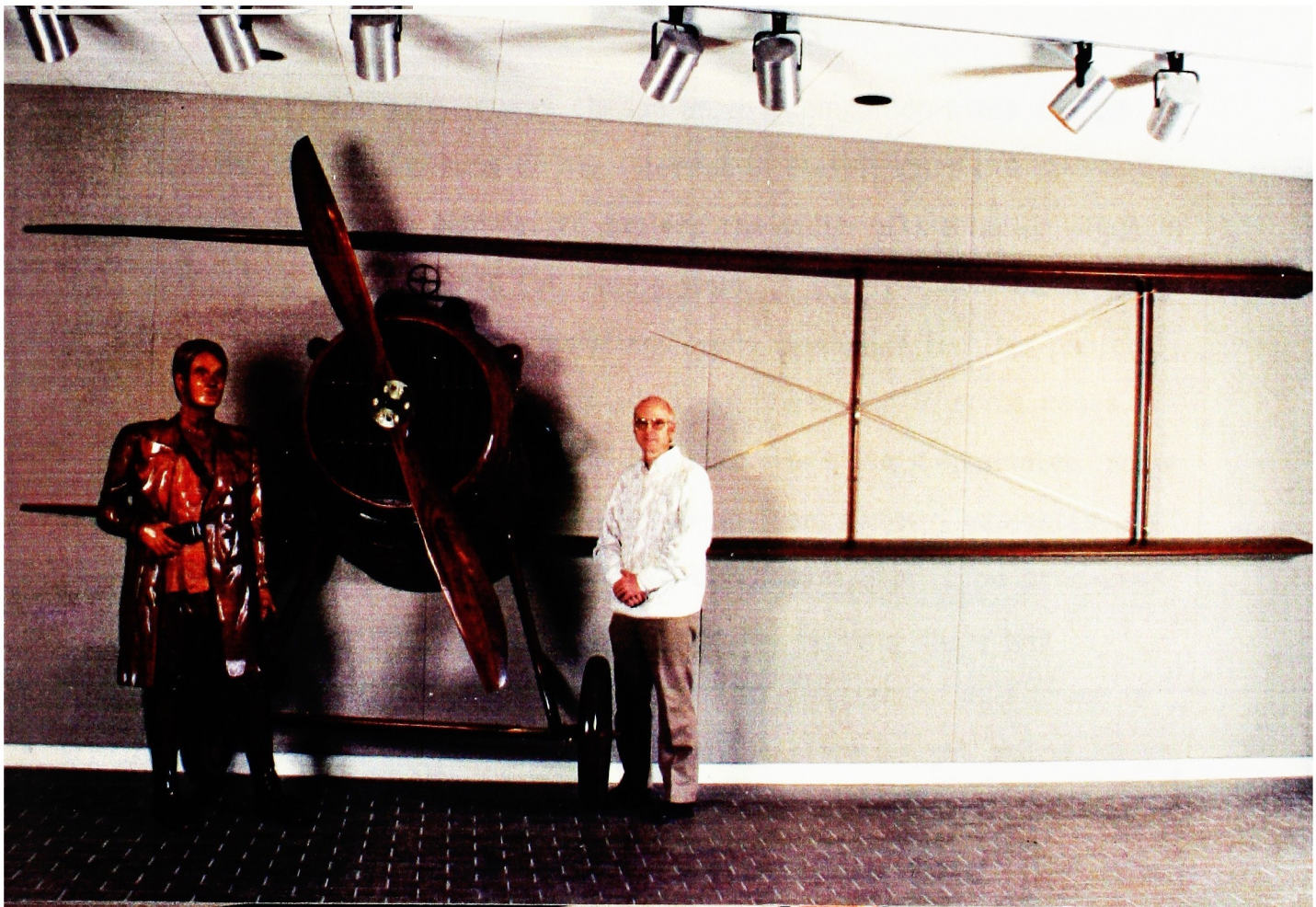
### END NOTES ON THE AVIATOR

11. Germano Celant, Art Povera (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986), 110.
12. Douglas Rolfe and Alexis Dawydoff, Airplanes of the World (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 70.











The Pierce Arrow was chosen as the companion piece to The Aviator, partly because of my interest in classic cars but primarily because it was an attempt to explore the value of a smaller piece in opening up new markets for future work.

Accurate full scale renderings were developed for this project. Full size patterns were then made from these and in some cases, templates also. Some parts of the auto were stack laminated, some coopered, and some parts were made up from resawn laminates. All of these processes were "additive," or "assemblage" type processes. This type of work moves along quickly and is very enjoyable.

Early on a decision had been made to use considerable brass in this piece. The brass details would not be store bought and stuck on, but actually cut, formed and manufactured for this particular project. This involved learning many new skills in working metal. This was a very interesting challenge and one that gave me knowledge that I'm sure will be very useful in the future. In terms of time and money it is still much more economical to buy ready-made metal items when they are available. Window shopping at White Wire and other specialty hardware stores netted several brass items that would have been difficult and costly in time and materials to make. The wood chosen was American black walnut for two reasons. First, this was an American car so I felt it appropriate to use an American wood. Second, the use of considerable brass in the piece demanded the strong color contrast that could be obtained with the deep, rich tones of walnut.

I suppose some might ask, why Careening Classic instead of Classic Arrow or some other title? It was decided while in the critique of The Aviator that the "car" should have some action to it.

The Aviator was somewhat static even though it was expressing the movement through the wall. This attempt to show movement posed a new challenge that I really hadn't dealt with before. Even though the drawings of the car showed the car coming through the wall at an angle, some additional cause and effect results would be needed if action were to be self-evident. The title came about as a result of this search for action. It was decided that the car would be in a very tight turn to the right as if trying to avoid entering the room but not quite succeeding. This would then result in the car leaning sharply to the right as a result of the centrifugal force acting on a car. This leaning of the chassis would cause one of the car's leaf springs to be tightly compressed, while the other would be fully expanded. The force of gravity, in this situation with the car's weight being shifted to the right, would also cause a deflection in the right hand tire. These are the little "fun" things that make a project like this enjoyable, and thus the title, Careening Classic.

Because I was using walnut, a rather expensive wood, considerations had to be given as to the most economical way to do each part. This was interesting in that it helped me to consider other ways of doing a job. A good example of this was in the construction of the headlamps. The traditional way to do a turning like this would be to stack laminate the piece, rough it out on the band saw and then turn it on the lathe. Doing this job in this traditional way would have cost \$21.00 for each headlight because of the high volume of wood required. The process that I decided to use was to cooper the piece first (like a barrel, or wood bucket) which required very little wood. This was then lathe turned with very little wood wasted and resulted in a cost of just \$5.24 each. Another piece that was a result of this search for an economical solution was the axle bar that was built up

from a group of small waste pieces rather than from a single board, which would have been much easier. This also resulted in a considerable saving both in cost and in conservation of a beautiful wood, that is in itself, limited in supply.

The decision to use Watco oil on Careening Classic was a result of some dissatisfaction with the tung oil finish on the The Aviator. Though I was pleased with the color tones of the tung oil finish, from a tactile point of view, I found this finish to be less than desirable. I want the viewer to be able to enjoy the smooth finish of a piece as well as the overall view. Something that is smooth and shiny begs to be touched. Then why not let it be touched and thus be more completely appreciated and enjoyed by the viewer.

## AFTER THOUGHTS

I think the attempt at action worked well, and I suppose that for this piece I may have gone far enough. However, in the future, I may want to go even further in developing a feeling of action in my works even if this means stop-action type of poses. I'm excited about this new future possibility but for now I feel it was important to get the basics of the car construction down before branching off in a more "artistic" rendering of a car in action.















## Conclusion

It has been my intent from the beginning to show that full scale, realistic sculptures exhibiting the theme "Emergence," would bring about some emotional reaction from the viewer. Dominance, the elephant sculpture, though not an official piece in the thesis work, did and does continually cause reactions on the part of the viewers at the Syracuse Zoo. The Aviator, in the Bevier Gallery, evoked responses from viewers, many in the realm of: "That's eerie." "That's powerful." to the more normal responses of, "That's fantastic." The figure that has claimed a spot in Dr. Johnston's office certainly has his own story to tell. I imagine that if he were real, he would have a very big head indeed.

I feel that each piece succeeded in "emerging" even though each differed in how this was accomplished. The elephant is seen emerging from a growth of jungle vegetation in its zoo setting. Its massive bulk, intense eyes, and impressive stance reads as movement and dominance, thus its name. The airplane, more elegant and detailed than the elephant, appears to be more static than the elephant until one realizes that the wings on the left of the piece have slipped from our view indicating that there just might, in fact, be more behind the

wall. We're tempted to try to pull away the wall covering to allow the rest of the airplane to come on through. In this piece the angle of the airplane coming through the wall was extremely important to get across the point of emergence. For the car coming through at an angle is important but here the most significant treatment to add the flavor of action is the leaning of the entire chassis. We are all familiar enough with cars to know that when a car is in a high speed turn, it will lean hard on one side. We know the viewer will sense motion as he views the car.

My objective was to do animal form, figure, and metal objects, all in full scale and rendered realistically in wood. Some have been interested in which were the most successful representationally. The figure was the greatest challenge and was without question the most critically judged. I think this is only natural since we have such close contact with the "figure" each and every day of our lives. Anyone's attempts at representing a figure in any form will be under the closest scrutiny by everyone that walks by. For some, the figure of The Aviator was very successful. Others had doubts but couldn't say exactly why. Most couldn't say exactly why. Those that really know the figure knew its faults, but applauded the piece as a first attempt. Personally, I was happy with the figure but I would like to get some expressed action in my next figure. The animal form of the elephant, in Dominance, was probably the most successful for the general public. However, like those who really knew the figure, those who really knew the animal could tell me exactly what was wrong with the elephant. Personally, I'm the most pleased with the elephant of the three pieces. For me it has the magnificence and quality of finish that I had desired. All in all it was everything I had wanted it to be. The car, Careening Classic, was the easiest to represent as it was

small, and I was very familiar with the detail on classic cars of this vintage. The new experiences with the metal fabrication were also intriguing in this project.

In the future I would like to continue doing various combinations of these three forms: animal, figure and object, but with more expressed action. I want to push to the limits the "emergence theme" as I explore limiting the amount of the object showing and whether it is coming into our space or leaving our space. Having enjoyed success with the theme of emergence, I feel very strongly that the "emergence theme" will be a very important focal point in my future work. For me it adds another dimension to the finished piece, and I find this exciting. Perhaps in the future, this work that pushes the limits of our existence into another time or space, will be called "four" dimensional work.



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"The best ship I ever flew was the Spad, built by the Societe pour Aviation et ses Derives, whence it took its name. The final spad could do 130 miles an hour, climb to 22,000 feet and stay together no matter what maneuvers you put it through." \*

Eddie Rickenbacker

\* Edward V. Rickenbacker, Rickenbacker, An Autobiography, London, Printice-Hall, 1967 116-117