

## Ron Kostyniuk

Anne Severson

Number 38, Winter 1996–1997

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/9807ac>

[See table of contents](#)

### Publisher(s)

Le Centre de diffusion 3D

### ISSN

0821-9222 (print)

1923-2551 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

### Cite this article

Severson, A. (1996). Ron Kostyniuk. *Espace Sculpture*, (38), 42–43.

# ron kostyniuk

Anne Severson

brightly coloured basic geometric forms are constructed with both anthropomorphic and architectural considerations in Ron Kostyniuk's model series of 1991-94. The Pythagorean dictum "Man is the measure of all things," is the concept that engages these artistic explorations from man to architecture.

In the early stages of this body of work, Kostyniuk starts with single upright models in his Towers series. In the small 11" (27,94 cm) column in *Promenade* (1991) there are references to the loftiness and monumentality of the ancient pyramids, to the dominating arches of the Mesopotamian Gates. They allude to the Eiffel

Tower of 1889 that captured the world's imagination through its bold conception.

For all these ponderous architectural references, the human characteristics hinted at in *Promenade* become lighthearted, unique and more individual townhouse-like with whimsical human characteristics, as in *Jerry, Larry and Dan* (1992). Now the brightly coordinated glossy colours and simple assembled shapes relax our minds and invite our imagination to pick out individualities. These playful comments on Kostyniuk's acquaintances use podiums to raise them to eye-level. Now the viewers are invited to walk around, and envisage themselves holding the toy-like models, giving them voices, creating dialogues. With these anthropomorphic figures, I envy Kostyniuk as he has taken his playful imagination rather earnestly.

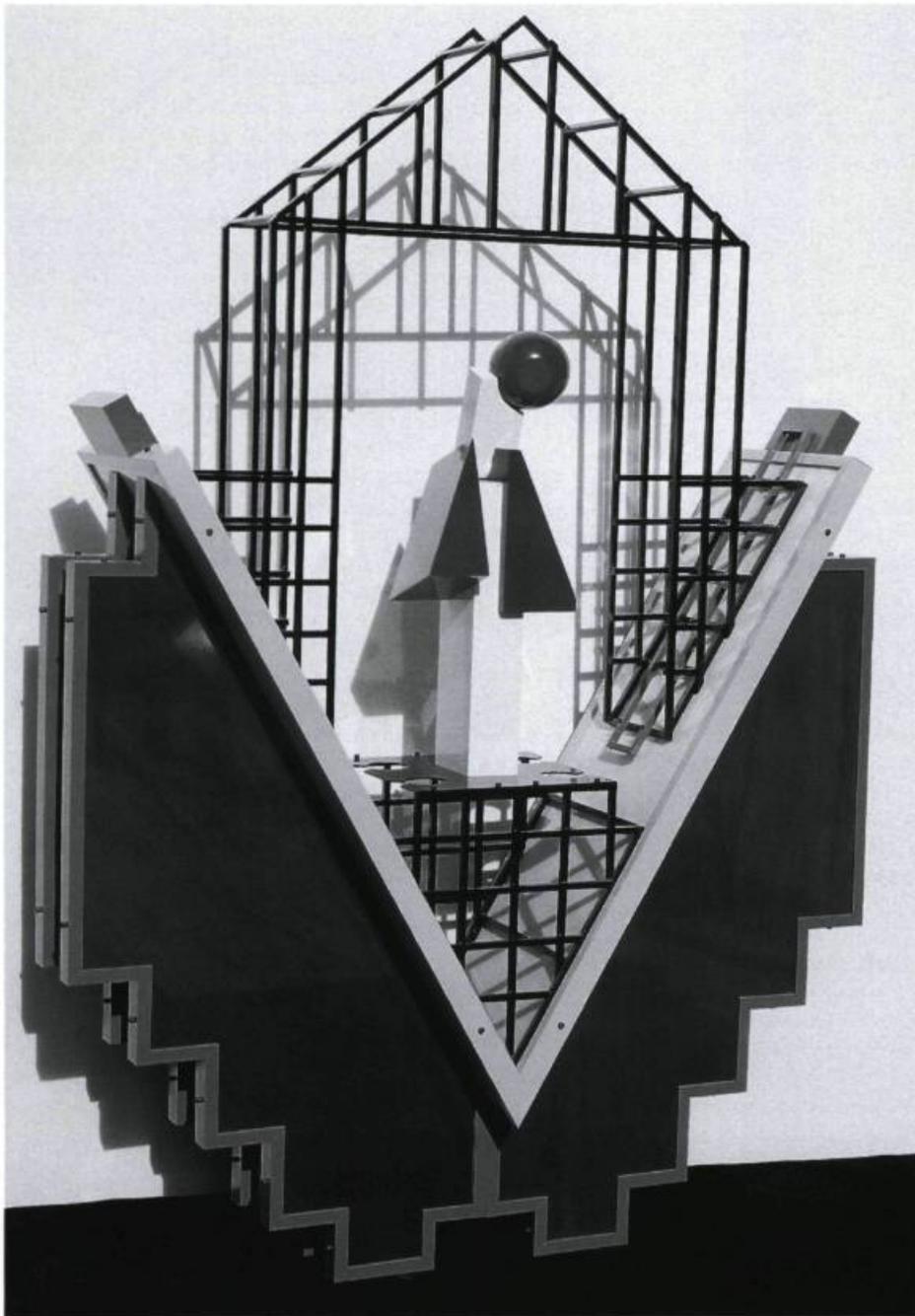
Suddenly, all delightful colour is abandoned in the aluminium Duplex series. A more serious abstract complexity in the single models leads reflectively to their relationships in space. In *Jan and Chris* (1992), his wife and son become positive shapes in negative space.

In the next, much larger, series of explorations, *Urban Landscape*, the intervals in space between these anthropomorphic architectural models become more important. In the colourless aluminum group of models in *Family* (1992) it is the relationships between models that now explode as a focus. Nevertheless, the models themselves never lose their individual personalities or solid architectural references. If a man's home is his castle, Kostyniuk has emphasized his independent self by extending his own likeness to his castle.

Seemingly satisfied with the intellectualization of the models' stiffer abstracted form and spatial relationships, Kostyniuk now returns to his customary bright eye-catching colour usage. A more relaxed *Fiver* (1992) is a small informal village arrangement that complements the neighborhood streets of *Friends* (1992). In both of these, there is a hint of casually accepted individuality interacting informally as bobbing heads and waving arms contribute to a greater cohesive community.

In strong contrast, a formal semi-circle *Colleagues* (1993) on 53" (134,62 cm) pedestals portrays a complete lack of fra-

Ron Kostyniuk,  
*Enclosure / Jeannette VI*, 1993. Natural wood, enamel on MDF / Aluminum. 81,28 x 119,38 x 22,86 cm. Photo: R. Kostyniuk.



ternization. The isolated structures are arranged equidistant from each other and demonstrate a pretentious display of specialization while obscuring any status, or lack thereof. A looser arrangement in *More Colleagues* (1993) makes a frail attempt to alter formalized isolation, but communication still doesn't formulate until the chilly *All the President's Men Revisited* (1992). Power relationships between strong individuals seem so forceful and antagonistic that isolation appears preferable.

Moving on to Kostyniuk's next series, *Enclosure*, leads to the final development in these anthropomorphic architectonic model compositions. There are no longer any attempts at integration with others for communal comradery and security, instead there is isolated protection of the individual. *Variations on Jeanette (I-VI)* (1993) still express uniqueness, but now the radically streamlined models are isolated, surrounded by protective cage-like relief barriers on a wall. Relationships with others are radically altered, even eliminated. If these models remain as individual architectural structures, are these protective enclosures meant to expand individuality into the surrounding compound of these now isolated buildings? The models have regressed to less complex, weaker forms that seem to be in need of protection. It is easy to see that the spreading enclosures have become far more important than the individual inside, but are these models protected (if so, from what?), or put on display, or imprisoned?

Kostyniuk says they are just shapes, colours and space and "it's a lot of hard work". Certainly his exceptionally fine craftsmanship and finish is awesome. It's also troublesome to the point of detracting from interpretation. He shys away from deeper levels of personal explanations. This distancing by the artist may be intentional to draw viewers away from private issues and focus more on remote formal concerns or intellectual concepts on a larger, more architecturally complex scale.

As Kostyniuk warms to this intellectual analysis of his work, he says "through the creative process, art externalizes the human spirit". Today his home/gallery intersperses his formal artworks with his large personal collection of geometric rock crystals, the perfect curves of sea shells, and the colours of his butterfly collection. His impeccable spatial arrangements of these natural collections emphasize the hand of man working with nature. Family treasures of Ukrainian painted Easter eggs consider the colourful geometric with nature's forms. Kostyniuk believes that art "provides for a sense of identification with the universe". His form of confirmation reaches out to a greater whole. Through his art,

expanding individual man integrating into architecture, his ultimate solution is buildings viewed as the art of sculpture. "Architecture should be gigantic sculpture", he exclaims. He believes that one of the best examples is the Sydney Opera House in Australia. He expands on the Spanish architect Gaudi, master of fantasy in his whimsical Sagrada Familia. His favourite is Paolo Solari whose beautiful structures, complexes that could hold 50, 000 people, were models more sculptural than architectural.

"Given these fantasy scenarios for buildings, and given the fact that architecture should be gigantic sculpture, I began building these little models and gave them a more human-like character. How often do we see architecture as having a human presence? I see it usually cold and impersonal, uninviting. It is more interesting to give them human characteristics". In fact, Kostyniuk believes that using the decree of man as the measure of all things is appropriate to human dwellings. "So working from this, I started making sculptural models using the human form as basic visual thrust".

Kostyniuk reflects on his art in the greater context of the universe, starting with the integration of art and architecture. The first known attempt at integrating art and architecture was during the prehistoric period with the paintings on the walls of the Lascaux caves. This amalgamation continued throughout Egyptian, Assyrian, Greek and Roman times, culminating in the Medieval period. The Gothic cathedrals with their windows and facades were more literally narrative than supportive pillars.

By the Renaissance, in the fifteenth-century, arts were becoming distinguished from each other, separating into crafts, painting, sculpture, architecture and so on. Architecture by itself became more important as a spiritual entity meant to carry the people away to another world. While the churches such as St Peter's in Rome were structurally impressive, inside the sculpture and painting were distinguished as important entities in themselves.

By the early part of the twentieth-century, there was a resurgence of interest in integration of art and architecture. The sculptural fantasy of Antoni Gaudi's *Church of the Sagrada Familia* in Barcelona, started in 1883, is reminiscent of the synthesis of sculpture and architecture of Medieval's Gothic Cathedrals. Frank Lloyd Wright's houses consolidate both the inside and outside elements of the house plan into a single integration of space, mass and surface by designing not only the buildings, but also the art and furniture as well.

Idealistic Constructivists principles emerged with the outbreak of the Russian

Revolution in 1917, and were applied to architecture by Vladimir Tatlin in his Model for *The Monument to the Third International*. "By its very nature, constructive art has allied itself closely with architecture, because of this close constructive methodology" says Kostyniuk. Influenced by constructivism, the De Stijl group of Mondrian and Van Doesburg called for a complete synthesis of architecture, painting and sculpture. In theory, architecture became sculpture and sculpture became enclosed architecture. In practice, success was evident with Rietveld's *Schroeder house* in Utrecht built during 1920. The Bauhaus geometric, founded in 1919 by Walter Gropius, worked toward the integrative ideal of unity of architect, artist, and also craftsman.

Today, who can deny the sculptural qualities of Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp or Wright's circular snail-shaped Guggenheim Museum in New York? Integration toward art and architecture looks promising in the decorated interiors of public transportation stations as in Moscow and Mexico City. Most recently, Toronto's new Downview subway station has a glass mosaic tile installation, *Sliding Pi*, by Arlene Stamp of Calgary.

Differing approaches to contemporary blending of architecture and art can be distinguished. Most often, the building is constructed, then artwork is purchased. Increasingly, integrating concepts start when the architect, usually working on large corporate buildings, has allocated space for site-specific art. Working towards a utopian ideal, Kostyniuk sees a "collaboration of art and architectural minds at the concept stage", where they work together during planning stages of building, the art and space worked out together. Along these lines, Kostyniuk is presently working closely with architect, David La Chapelle of BLK in Calgary to create a sculpture for the Canadian Embassy in Algiers. "We're integrating ideas together, an unusual scenario, although not unheard of".

Kostyniuk continues, "A popular current idea advocates that integration lies in the fusion of both through the fusion of the concerns of light/colour/space/structure inherent in both art and architecture into a multi-viewable, multi-ordinal aspect...the integration of an art into an architecture that will parallel architectural style".

Kostyniuk's anthropomorphic architectural models may seem hard to imagine as prototypes for future architecture, but how could the Gothic cathedrals have imagined the Bauhaus? His recent models, dwellings for man, can be seen within the larger context of universal society as he states that art "functions as a bridge between man's intellect and his soul". ■