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Grégoire Ferland
Recent Works

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Grégoire Ferland
Recent Works
Galerie Espace
March 11-25, 1989

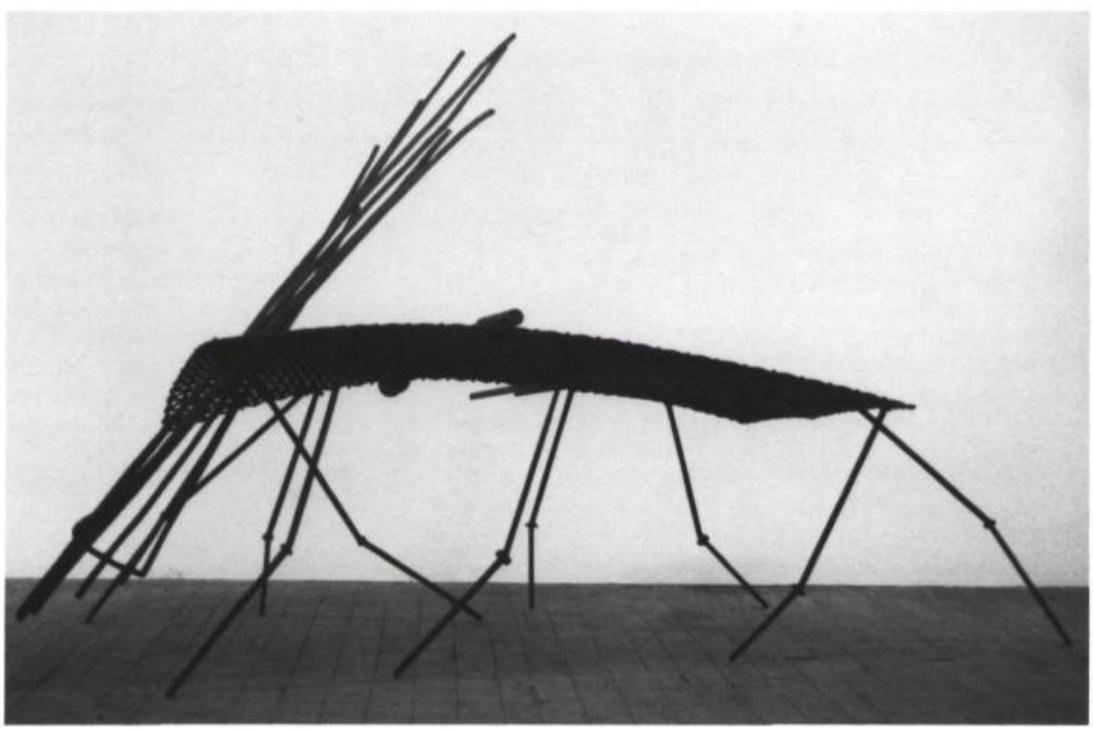
Grégoire Ferland's recent sculptures are curious personifications which seem to defy any functional interpretation of the sculptor's message. They express a simpler message which is that the fragility of life and the human spirit is threatened by the blindness of our social, political and economic "systems". In looking at the way Ferland extends material mass/weight to its limits on tenuous and delicate limbs of metal rods, we feel that our rational world has been pushed to its limits and that man's more imaginative creative spirit – his dynamo – is all that is holding it all together. Impulsive and unpredictable, Ferland is not a mythmaker or shaman, but sees his expression as integral and human.

There is a sense of the resolution of the inner self with the social self in his work. This is projected through an instinctive balance between the materials he uses - their own inherent culture – and the way they draw out into real space. Joseph Campbell in "The Power of Myth" illustrates man's essential identity by drawing a circle with a line through it separating the conscious and unconscious states of any human being. In the conscious region there is a square representing man's ego – his supposed centre– and below the line is a point which is our true centre – partly biological and purely physical and impulsive – our creative essence. We live in an age of authority which makes it increasingly more difficult to "know oneself" in the Platonic sense, but Grégoire Ferland's art is clearly attuned to this dilemna. His expression is a search for origins within man's inner self, which is also his place within a living universe.

Largely self-taught, Ferland apprenticed originally with M.J. Laroche at Cap Santé where he learned old casting methods. He has also researched the use of high temperature thermal spray techniques which reduce the costs of casting in metal tenfold. He prefers to work in steel, a material whose solidity and malleability allows him to juxtapose heavier elements such as I-beams with a variety of other metal forms such as rectangular grates, rods and poles. The exteriors are corroded, acted on by time. The finished result is a kind of dialogue between the heavier mass forms which are an equation for the force of physical reality and drawn space – the inner imagination. This personal unself-conscious exploration is anathema to current trends in the packaging of ideological statements.

Recuperation and the use of product cast-aways has been around for a long time – much longer than the current trends will admit – but it was never called that. We can see it in the works of Anthony Caro in 1960 – a sculptor Ferland admires for the absence of theoretical ballast in his work and Caro's respect for the role of sculpture in a living, social environment. The paradoxes which exist between material structures and the fragility of life are apparent in *l'Abri*, where a surprising, leaf-like metal shape hangs suspended, balancing tenuously on elongated curving metal rods which project out into the gallery space. *Figer dans le Rock*, an earlier work, has less of this living narrative and is composed of three thick metal I-beams which work in relation to each other as mass upon mass. We feel the impasse of practical reality – the weight of rational living which holds our natural, creative forces of volition captive as unreleased potential for dynamism. While formalist in his "truth to materials", Ferland's narrative expressions defy narcissism. In *Lourdeur*, a large metal grill floats atop heavy structural I-beams which sit incongruously atop tiny metal legs. Like a large insect, it seems transfixed in a state of tentative, hypnotic motion. The work seems to have its own integral presence, an identity, and we don't really know who is looking at whom.

Grégoire Ferland, *Mouvement primitif*, 1989. Acier. 292cm x 172cm x 175cm.



More than anything, Grégoire Ferland's series of large-scale sculptures at La Galerie Espace are an attempt to explore the core of our identity as personal and social beings, where our volition remains as part of a universe in a constant state of mutation, continuously held in check by the oppressive weight of the structures we have created. These works are not explosive as statements but dynamic for their ability to suggest our origins within ourselves, our nature, through the interplay between materials used and the artist's imagination. Grégoire Ferland will be exhibiting at 14 Sculptors Gallery in New York from June 6 to 24.

John K. Grande