

## Romancing the stone

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lumière stroboscopique pour éclairer sa sculpture de sorte que notre cerveau perçoive la scène : une main laisse tomber un livre qui se transforme en oiseau, lequel meurt et se métamorphose de nouveau en boule de papier froissé qui rebondit dans une poubelle de plastique. Barsamian n'a pas créé l'illusion de la troisième dimension sur une surface plane en abordant le problème irrésolu de l'animation tridimensionnelle. Il a plutôt créé l'illusion du mouvement sur un objet en trois dimensions.

Il a démontré qu'il faut tenir pour essentielle la qualité unique d'un art qui n'est véritable qu'en fixant des enjeux pour l'avenir. Nous sommes en présence d'une technologie qui bénéficie d'une qualité primitive en surpassant celle de l'ordinateur dans la forme et en la précédant dans le temps, lorsque l'écran n'était ni moyen, ni fin. Cette image en est une du futur, assurément; elle n'a pas d'âge, dans ce sens, elle n'existe pas, elle est pour demain; ne lui manque qu'un seul élément pour s'ancrer au présent. La durée.

En terminant, notons la présence accrue d'artistes canadiens à *Images du futur*, cette année, sans doute la plus significative des réussites de cette exposition : son effet d'entraînement et sa vitrine exceptionnelle pour les créateurs d'ici. Les critiques suivront.

Habituellement, *Images du futur* rend hommage à un groupe d'artistes, identifiés en fonction du lieu de leur provenance. Cette année c'est New York; l'an dernier, c'était la Californie; en 1991, l'Allemagne. Un jour, on songera au Québec, ou à Montréal, pour combler la place. ◆

Daniel Carrière

### Romancing the stone

The recent sculptural works of Thierry Delva that took place at the Brenda Wallace Gallery in Montréal this spring shows the Belgian born sculptor taking a new direction in his work. If you compare it to his "Cultivar" exhibition of 1991, which was largely inspired by Art Deco forms, the materials are the same, but the subject matter and the manner in which they have

been put to use has radically shifted. Previous assumptions about this man's work and its likely evolution were given a jolt when confronted with the unexpected turn that these untitled new works represent; perhaps a synthesis of Minimalist and Readymade art. They are Minimalist in their adherence to the principles of Minimalism, i.e., the forms are prosaic and unremarkable; simple squares, rectangles and cylinders, cut and shaped out of stone blocks that could be easily mistaken for cement or concrete. Gone are the floral-like patterns and shapely curves that were present in the author's "Cultivar" exhibition of 1991, with its honed and polished plant and leaf forms blossoming out of their stone columns, a moment of inspiration at the culmination of his stonemason apprenticeship on the Nova Scotia Province House project. These new works are representations of domestic objects one can find readily in one's backyard, in the kitchen, or on the factory floor. Their Readymade association is palpably clear, although one can see a struggle between Brancusi and Duchamp, precariously balanced, yet neither one dominating the other. These fossilized domestic objects are like archaeological artifacts, whittled away with the passage of time, an echo of a time immemorial that is even now our present age. These cups, pails, and jars are made from Mary's Point Sandstone, Wallace Sandstone, and Indiana limestone; cheap and readily available sedimentary stones that lend themselves well to the carving of ornamental detailing. Here they have been removed from their normal use and deconceptualized, suggesting an "excess" of contained material. Their weight and value is allusive; the materials were chosen by the author for just this effect. Their "excess", according to Mr. Delva, is the "key" to understanding the intention of the work.

The method used in the production of these pails, cups and jars are those of the banker mason or stone cutter, and are firmly grounded in the principles of geometry: «by working a series of surfaces tangent to the curve, large at first and gradually becoming smaller, until the required shape is produced»<sup>1</sup>. Although the materials are much different, shaping these tangents

to the curve is similar to adjusting the tension and balance of the spokes on a bicycle wheel. The process of production, while straightforward, is singular and labor intensive, each object is revealed as a container by its shape and scale. The carved edges and the natural smoothness of the stone surfaces (though rough to the touch) are almost abrupt in their nakedness. They are stark and disembodied, producing a kind of pathos that, according to the author, was unintentional. This pathos resides partly in the hidden quality of these objectified containers of the custodian's tools. Its impersonal yet real objectness is modified and transformed by the curves and edges that line their rims and lids. They invite us (or dare us) to open them up and look inside. But they have an impene-

Thierry Delva, Recent Work, 1992-93. Installation view. Various sizes. Sandstone, limestone. Photo: Steven Holmes. Courtesy Brenda Wallace Gallery, Montreal.

the edges are clues to this tridimensionality, they are a challenge to our ability to re-see, to re-think, to stretch our vision and stimulate our awareness of the daily objects that surround us. These containers do have something to tell us, prosaic as they are. Their shapes and configurations are part of our visual, tactile, physical world. As Marcel Duchamp so candidly remarked some thirty-five years ago: «all in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his/her contribution to the creative act»<sup>2</sup>.

These squat solid stones — we are obliged to squat to fully examine and appreciate them — play hide and seek with us; they are reso-

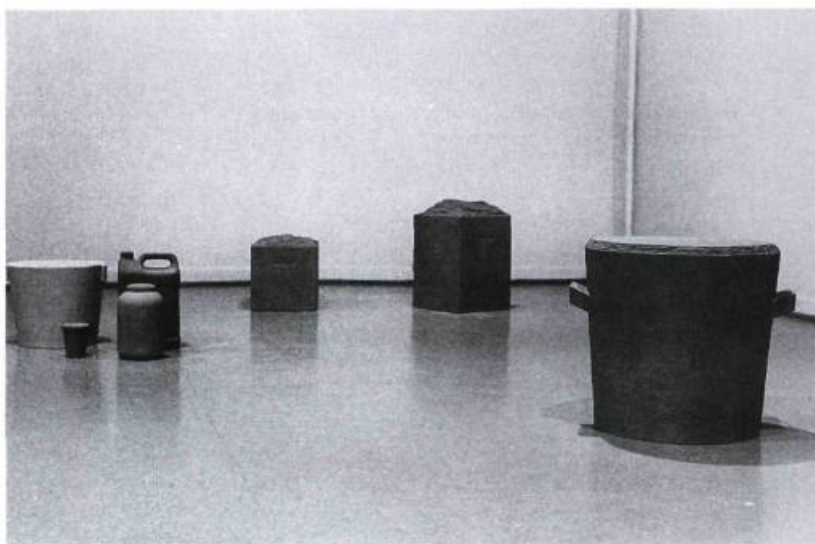


table side as well which demands a leap of imagination on the part of the spectator to penetrate to their inner dimensions, their "isness". Their inner surfaces are blocked from our normal perspective patterns. We see them as two-dimensional objects, yet somehow, somewhere, their three-dimensional reality is there, sealed from us like the treasures of an Egyptian tomb, we can only relate to their outward appearance, their exterior proportions.

Mr. Delva suggests that the cutting of the edges is a signpost pointing towards these works tridimensionality, but we have to mentally lift off the lids to discover this reality. The cracks on

lute in their mysteriousness. Are they hollow inside? Hidden treasure? Who knows. Lift the lid of your mind and you may find out. ◆

Richard Riewer

### NOTES:

1. E. G. Warland, *Modern Practical Masonry*, The Pitman Press, Bath, U.K., 1953, pp. 108-109.
2. Marcel Duchamp, *The Creative Art*, a paper presented to the Convention of the American Federation of the Arts at Houston, Texas, April 1957.