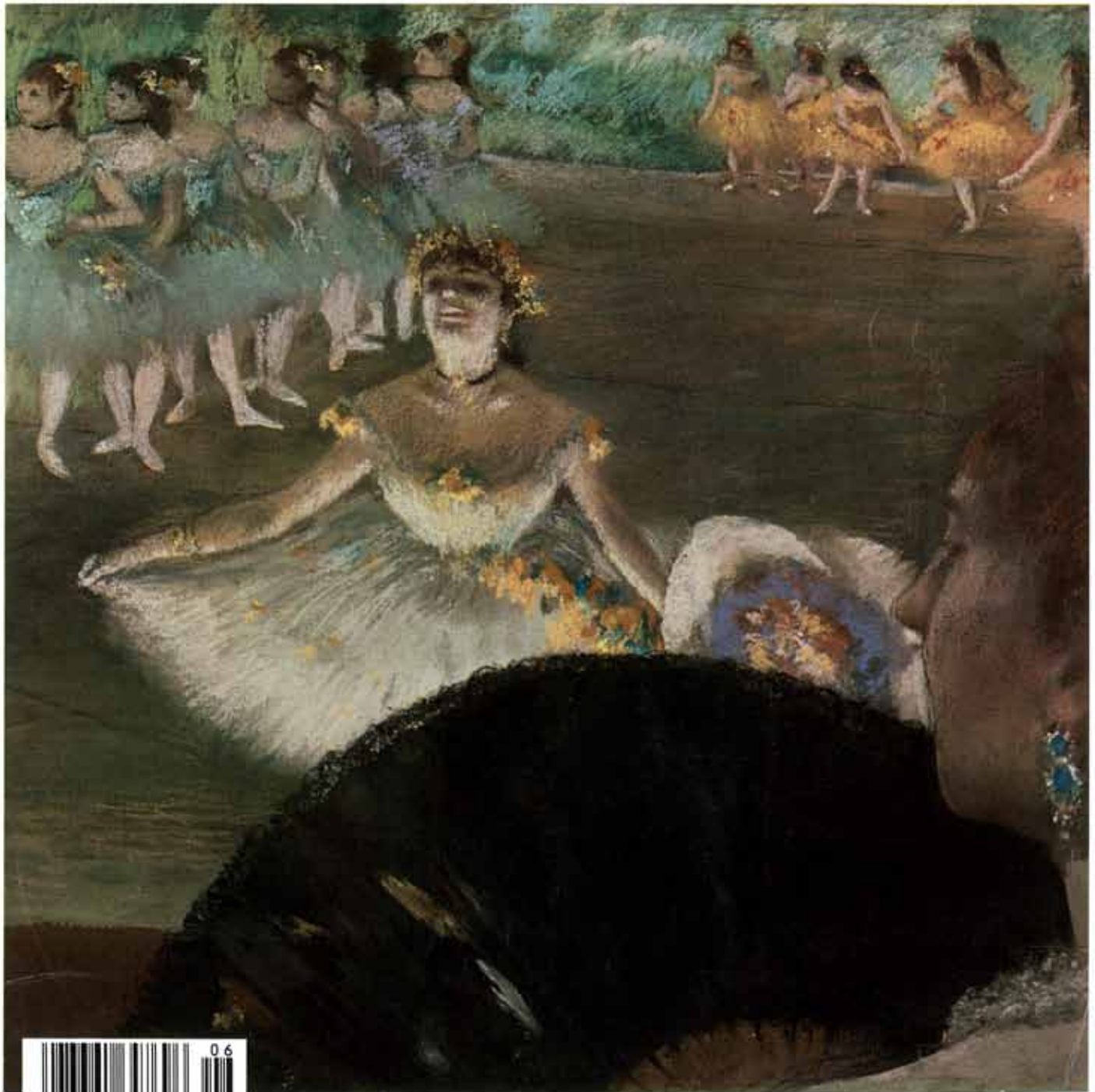


Art in America

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Rodchenko/Comeback for Bronze/Degas and Photography/Criticism II
Frank Gehry's Architecture/Outdoor Sculpture/Chinese Bronzes
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SUMMER 1980

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Joel Shapiro: Untitled, 1975, cast iron, 3½ by 7½ by 7¼ inches; edition of two, plus one artist's proof. Paula Cooper Gallery.

Isaac Witkin: Declaration, 1979, bronze, 22 by 25 by 8 inches. Collection Jack Scherer.



Lynda Benglis: Come, 1970–1974, bronze, 15 by 47 by 35 inches; edition of two. Collection the artist.



Hot Metal

More and more sculptors have turned to casting in metal—particularly in bronze—motivated by a desire for permanence, a renewed interest in “touch,” even by economics. Here, an overview of present-day casting as practiced by some of the artists responsible for its renaissance.

BY WADE SAUNDERS

Sculpture is closing in and warming up. Extended, angular forms are giving way to softer, bulging ones. To make these forms, sculptors are casting metal, most particularly bronze, with increasing frequency. Tactile values and plasticity are again popular, and are natural to bronze. Hand shaped work is in vogue; people imagine that a touched surface is necessarily a felt one. These and other explanations for the switch from other materials to bronze kept appearing in conversations I have had recently with artists, many of them previously known for their associations with Minimalism, welded metal construction, non-traditional figuration, and process-based sculpture.

European sculptors of an older generation never stopped casting. Some Abstract Expressionists like Reuben Nakian and George Spaventa cast off and on through the '60s, as did many traditional, basically figurative sculptors. University art departments, particularly those beyond the Hudson River, were staffed with hot metal freaks throughout the '60s and even the '70s. For them, casting connected to an easily understood tradition. It was a highly visible, technically demanding, charismatic process. Pouring metal was gutsy. Their reasons for casting are thus different from those now fostering bronze's comeback in New York. I am referring to its recent use by Joel Shapiro, Isaac Witkin, Michael Steiner, Nancy Graves, Robert Graham, Lynda

Benglis, Marjorie Strider, and numerous artists from the vanguard circuit who previously worked in less conventional materials.

Implicit in the earlier attitudes of these artists was the sense of bronze casting being conservative, somewhat pompous, tending—from Henry Moore to Ernest Trova and Arnaldo Pomodoro (extreme cases)—towards conspicuous consumption. Artists who have worked in untested, often frankly impermanent materials only suited for display indoors now wish to make their work permanent. Many cited the great number of public commissions: more exterior pieces are wanted now than at any time since the Civil War and World War I monument crazes. Bronze is durable outdoors, while steel needs to be painted periodically if it isn't to rust away. The physical quality of bronze, its softness and seeming translucence, permits it to be both large and intimate, to exist simultaneously at disjunct scales, useful qualities if a piece is to be seen from near and far.

The fragmentation—and the openness—of the current New York scene also figures in the resurgence of bronze, as does the increasing prosperity of certain sculptors who first showed in the 1960s. In that decade younger sculptors, who couldn't afford to work with bronze anyway, sought out new materials for their cheapness as well as for their dissociation from past art and ideas. Felt, plywood, galvanized steel, lead, neon tubing, latex, foam rubber,

Robert Graham:
Untitled, 1979,
bronze and
white paint,
93 inches
high. Robert
Miller Gallery.

urethane foam, and all manner of plastics and resins were among the industrial materials which became popular.

The absence of avant-garde cast metal work from the '60s and early '70s suggests a tight situation. Bronze was regarded as played out, timid, soft. When Richard Serra and Bill Bollinger did cast metal, they used lead or iron, handling it with immediacy and pouring it to freeze a gesture. Even the representational sculptors coming to prominence in those years—Marisol, Edward Kienholz, George Segal, Red Grooms, Marjorie Strider, Nancy Grossman, Anne Arnold, Robert Graham, Manuel Neri, Luis Jimenez, Duane Hanson, John de Andrea—avoided bronze.

Bronze is traditional. So, of course, is stone, but stone requires the sculptor's own skill, patience and time. It's hard to job out stone carving like bronze casting because the skilled carvers are just no longer available for hire. It has also been suggested, off the record, that the imagined value of bronze as metal (though trivial in fact) has always been psychologically attractive to collectors in periods of economic instability. Bronze castings have good manners, are easy to like, are welcome in the home.

Bronze is hard to see for itself. It invites misapprehension and thus misuse. It is rich in associations, having been used seemingly everywhere and always: used for religious artifacts, utilitarian objects, monuments, tools and weapons. Bronze was long ago supplanted by iron and steel and now aluminum as metals of choice in warfare and industry, so it lacks the coldness and use value we often associate with those materials. Bronze is a civic metal and many people apparently imagine that we are coming to a civic time. Each bronze connects with every other bronze, independently of its own merit, and so arrives with a certified genealogy.

Color has reappeared in sculpture these days with a vengeance, and bronze castings take color beautifully. They can be patinated to almost any hue, and patinas get richer over time, unlike steel finishes. Bronzes can also be painted, and there is a tradition of polychromed castings. In contrast, polychromed steel sculptures have often had a rough time critically. Frequently color is seen as working against the apprehension of syntax—assumed to be crucial to constructed steel work. David Smith's polychromed steel pieces have been criticized for lacking visual

unity; Robert Hudson's wildly painted sculptures were hardly ever discussed. Color is an important fringe benefit of bronze casting.

Investment casting, the method commonly used for bronzes, is by its nature conservative and invites caution in its use. Its cost—around \$10 per pound for the finished piece—usually limits size. Few works go beyond eight feet or so. Often artists have said they wanted to work larger but were constrained financially. Investment casting is slow, taking from two to 12 months to do. One reason for the high cost is that it is complicated: an original has to be completed in clay,

Serra and Bollinger helped make the casting process viable. Gesture, gravity, process—issues they examined—aren't easily achieved with bronze, though, which accounts for the visual rudeness of their iron and steel pieces.

plaster, wood, wax, or other material; then a synthetic rubber mold is made of the original, and a wax made from that mold; the wax version is refinished and placed in an investment; the wax is burned out over several days or even weeks; and bronze poured into the investment; the bronze is removed from the investment and is chased to look like the original; a patina is applied and sealed. This process is outside the artist's control at a number of points. The final cast is always in danger of being a partial likeness of the original, in many ways analogous to a copy of a painting: accurate perhaps, but hardly the same thing.

Rodin's work provides a standard for investment casting. He continually possessed and repossessed his pieces: in the conception, in the clay or plaster, in the wax, in the bronze. You feel he knew every nook and cranny, every bubble and ridge in his bronzes. It is much easier these days to get quality castings, but seemingly much, much harder to have and keep meaning in the process. Previously sculptors had their own foundries or stayed very close to the foundry work. Today foundries are so

compartmentalized and casting techniques so refined that sculptors are consumers, not makers. Certain sculptors now casting—Shapiro, Witkin, Crozier—fight to keep their pieces alive at every point in the process. Sculpture has historically been cast in editions. Since modeling is comparatively slow, especially as compared with today's fabrication processes, the artist can support himself by casting and selling older pieces while he models newer ones. Photographers have been quick to adopt this approach of working in editions as they've gotten into gallery showing. The sculptor can do an edition and thereby distribute among all the castings the high, one-time charge for making the rubber mold, and so lower his per-piece cost. Paradoxically, the more work there is to sell, the more easily work can be sold: volume alone can often create market. Eighteenth- and 19th-century French sculptors—Houdon, Barye, Carpeaux—would reproduce certain pieces as often as they were wanted. The edition was open; 30 or more copies might easily be cast without noticeable loss of quality. Upon an artist's death his molds might be bought by a foundry and more pieces poured. In a recent instance reported to me by a French sculptor, the French government, in its role as executor, is having Rodin's *Gates of Hell* cast for an American collector. (The edition authorized before the artist's death had never been completed.)

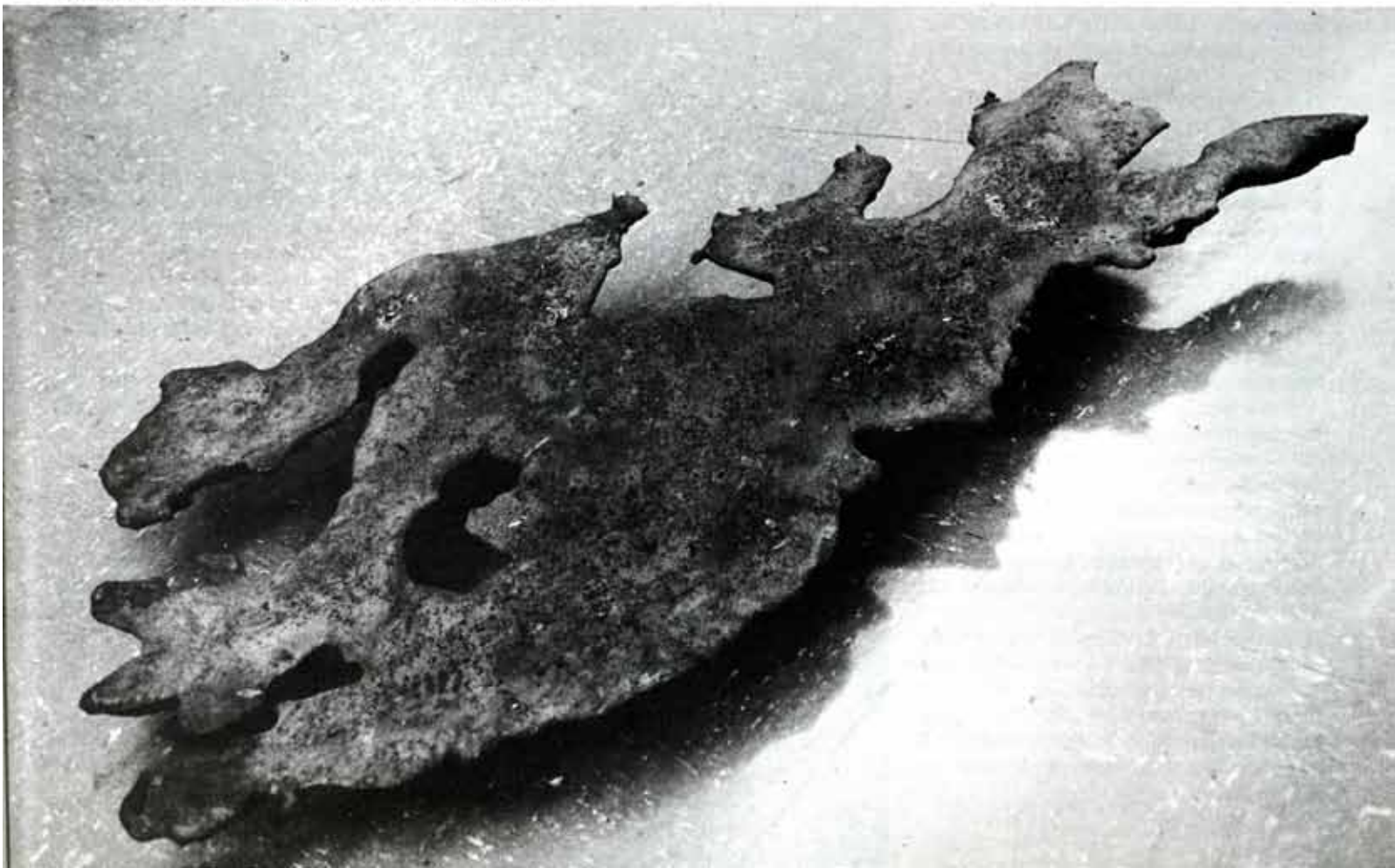
As in prints, artists are entitled to pull an artist's proof from each edition. In practice the AP almost never functions as a technical or trial proof, although that was its original rationale. APs are most often poured after the edition is completed, and function as a way for the artist to retain some equity in his own production—or if the piece is popular, to further distribute it. Contemporary sculptors who do editions frequently seem to cast in multiples of three, with nine generally being the upper limit. In "Western" bronzes (horses, cowboys, and the like), where editions often run to 25 pieces, several artist's proofs may be cast, as well as so-called foundry proofs, which are intended to serve as finishing models for foundries, but may end up on the market.

A case history may be instructive here. A sculptor recently had a set of 22 medium scale bronzes cast directly from his wax originals. These bronzes were marked Artist's Proof, and rubber molds were taken from them. Waxes will be made from these molds. The



Richard Serra: Casting, 1970, thrown lead, 19 by 108 by 179 inches. Collection Jasper Johns.

Bill Bollinger: Lake Winnepesaukee, 1973, iron, 60 inches long.



sculptures will be issued in editions of four. The Artist's Proofs are circulated for exhibitions; when a client wishes to buy a piece, a new bronze will be cast. The bronzes are priced at \$7,000, with the actual casting costing around \$2,000. The sculptor pays one-third of the price to the foundry up front, a third when the metal is poured, and the final third on delivery. As the edition sells out, the price of a piece will be raised to \$10,000. There is a concurrent set of six large bronzes in an edition of eight each. They cost from \$10,000 to \$12,000 to cast and are priced at \$27,000. Thus a single set of the 22 smaller and six larger pieces requires an outlay of at least \$110,000. In terms of production costs, comparable or larger figures obtain for several of the artists I'll discuss. Few sculptors were able to front that kind of money in the '60s. You have to sell to cast.

The last (or perhaps first) factor in the resurgence of bronze casting is the growth and change of the art casting industry. In the last two decades, the number of foundries casting sculpture has probably tripled, and the number of skilled employees gone up four- or five-fold. There is even a foundry, the Johnson Atelier, run largely as a school for aspiring casters. Three bronze foundries located in or near New York survived the 1930s depression. They each employed around 25 people, oftentimes immigrants who had served apprenticeships in Europe. Pieces were cast as they had been for hundreds of years. Time-hallowed techniques dominated the situation. Around 1960 some younger people, with engineering backgrounds, realized that the ceramic shell technique, a casting process which had been developed in World War II for industrial use, could be adapted to produce cheaper, faster and more uniform cast sculpture. Now reproductions could be economically cast in real bronze, instead of in fancied-up plasters or metal-loaded resins. Both the reproductions and the sculptures reproduced vary widely in quality. Some of the best ceramic shell foundries subsist primarily on reproductions—a Frederick Remington for every home—and others count on reproductions for a steady and predictable 30 to 40 percent of their income.

The older foundries still don't do much ceramic shell work, while the newer, larger ones rarely cast with traditional investment molds. The new foundries have attracted, trained and developed young American workers

who came into the industry wanting to use their hands. Their craftsmanship is excellent. Though increasingly run on business principles with sales managers and the like, foundries retain elements of patronage: large jobs tend to displace smaller ones, rich customers poorer ones. Some sculptors get fast service; others can wait for months.

Affinities are apparent among sculptors who cast. Isaac Witkin, Michael Steiner and Nancy Graves work in bronze for the range of plastic manipulation and surface that it offers, and for the visual properties of the metal. The same reasons apply to Lynda Benglis, though she has had pieces cast in lead, tin and aluminum as well as bronze. Their casting is part traditional, part innovative. Cast figurative/referential sculpture has surged back with Robert Graham and Bryan Hunt. Martin Silverman and William Crozier also work representationally, but do so in a less slick manner. Earlier, and setting the stage for much that followed, Richard Serra, Bill Bollinger and Joel Shapiro all came to casting from some form of process work.

Though neither Serra nor Bollinger worked in bronze, they examined and rethought the casting process and helped to make it intellectually viable. Though not recently seen, their cast sculpture, done in lead or iron without investment molds, is in sharp contrast to the rich and appealing qualities of bronze. Compared to their pieces, many recent bronzes take a lot for granted. The issues that interested Serra and Bollinger—gesture, gravity, process—aren't easily gotten at with bronze. The tight connection of concerns and activity and the visual rudeness of their work opposes the sedate and agreeable uses to which bronze is now frequently put.

Richard Serra's work provides a benchmark. He did six thrown lead castings in 1968–70. Only one of these works still exists. Serra figured out what previous casting entailed as a procedure, and then stood it on its head. For example, traditional castings are hollow and usually bulge out from an implied or existing void. The elements in the surviving Serra piece are solid and seem to sag in. Serra's lead has tarnished down to a deep, flat gray. The



Bryan Hunt: Step Falls, 1978, bronze, 9½ feet high; edition of three. Whitney Museum.



Nancy Graves: *Archaeoloci*, 1979, bronze, 30 by 19½ by 27 inches. Knoedler.

piece is set in a corner. Two elements jut out perpendicular to the wall on one side. A lead plate, standing on edge, comes out from the corner at a 45-degree angle; an element formed by throwing lead against this sheet and the other adjoining wall is in place next to it. Two elements cast earlier in this same angle between the corner plate and the wall have been turned over and laid along the wall. Lead splatter is dispersed on the wall and floor around the solid parts. The sculpture has an almost gravitational pull.

In casting, hot metal is normally introduced into a mold all at once. The actual pouring is thus antithetical to shaping; the metal fills a created void

and so duplicates a pre-existing thing. We see only the metal that was in contact with the mold, metal which is usually patinated and preserved. Serra made his piece incrementally, a ladleful of molten lead at a time. He established parameters—a lead sheet, the floor, two walls—but then continuously shaped his piece within them. We see the mold surface in several of the parts, but we also see a new, active surface, a surface simultaneously depending on and effacing the underlying one. This surface is a series of discrete parts coming together to make a whole, while a traditional cast surface is a whole which is sometimes inflected into parts.

Casting is partly about making congruent and independent things that can be distributed. Serra shows he knows this by casting the corner three times—doing an edition within the piece. Yet in his sculpture the parts are not congruent, but similar. They are not an image of something but an instance of it. They must be kept together to make the whole. The sculpture is absolutely site specific, embedded. It wouldn't be the same if moved or reinstalled. Casting is usually jobbed out; Serra did these pieces with friends. How radical Serra's casting was can best be illustrated by the response of Philip Leider, who, writing in the *New York Times* in 1968, mistook a similar cast lead piece for being made with heavy silver paint.

Bollinger, Shapiro and Witkin have all worked with sandcasting, which is less expensive and, in some ways, more flexible than investment casting. In sandcasting, sand with an added binder—traditionally clay and water, now more commonly synthetic resins—is rammed up against the original or pattern to make a mold. The sand behaves like fresh brown sugar. The sand is removed in sections, the pattern taken

Bronze is rich in associations, having been used for religious artifacts, monuments, tools and weapons. Since each bronze connects with every other, so each sculpture arrives with a certified genealogy.

out to create a chamber, and channels are cut in the sand for the metal to get in and the air to get out. The sand parts are reassembled inside a steel box (or so-called flask). Molten metal is poured into the cavity. This technique is in wide use industrially. Automobile engine blocks and axles are sandcast, as are manhole covers and iron pots. The sand can also be worked directly, without a pattern, much as a child might make a landscape in a sandbox. Metal is then poured in the depressions.

Bill Bollinger got interested in gravity around 1970. He chose water as the material most responsive to gravity and did a show of water pieces. He came to see casting as a way of getting the

action of a liquid and freezing or stabilizing it. Bollinger worked with sand molds, digging parts of them out with a trowel, sculpting a negative, creating a space to be filled. You see all sorts of hand and tool traces in his work. In 1972 he sandcast the shape of Manhattan Island, and weird versions of the Nike of Samothrace and the Elgin Marbles.

He poured a series of lakes, fairly true to their actual, map shapes in 1973. The top, open surface of the iron became the lake surface. The pieces were tilted up after casting so the way the piece was shown worked against the very obvious way it had been poured. Present gravity contradicted past gravity. The pieces were scary, as though from outer space. They just barged in, rude as could be; you didn't want them to stay for dinner. Bollinger also experimented with pouring iron into oak forms. The oak set the edge of the iron, but the iron then burned into and eroded the oak. The iron documented the form of the wood it had altered. One part became the memory of the other.

Joel Shapiro started sandcasting his pieces in iron or bronze in 1974. He uses iron for its opacity, bronze for its translucency. Since bronze melts at a much lower temperature than iron it is easier to pour and control. The act of casting is more important for Shapiro than the particular metal poured. His work would be easier and cheaper to construct or machine than it is to cast. But it wouldn't be the same. Casting gives it a kind of solidity. A piece comes into the world at once. The hot metal pushes out against the sand, the cooling metal contracts. Sometimes the surface right from the mold remains. The metal inside strains against this surface, like a chick within a shell. This outward thrust contrasts with Shapiro's hermetic scale and placement, and with the frequent use of a dark, empty interior which sucks us in.

The psychological space of Shapiro's pieces has been dealt with admirably by both Rosalind Krauss and Roberta Smith—explained in terms of both form (his "signature" house particularly) and placement, which is either at eye level or on the floor. Much of the effect of these works comes from the double action of the casting method. Recent work articulates shape more—a running figure, a tree. These recent pieces are made in wood, then invested in ceramic shell, and cast in bronze.



Marjorie Strider: Peel Three, 1977, painted bronze, 30 by 24 by 12 inches. Photo Stu Chernoff.

Their meaning comes mostly from their form, scale, placement, and painted surface, not from the manner of their making.

Isaac Witkin uses bronze for its plastic qualities. He works in an open sand mold, carving a cavity into which bronze is poured. Casting permits him to shape his elements in a way not possible in his earlier constructed work. Working directly lets him give the bronze parts a tactility that steel or lost wax cast bronze rarely gets. His pieces are perforce unique because the outcome of such a pouring method is impossible to duplicate in its surface markings and in the ebb and flow of the metal. The sculptures are assembled from separately cast elements. A playful, experimental temperament and a

tough, experienced compositional sense come to the fore when he assembles the parts.

Michael Steiner turned to bronze in 1975 as a way of separating himself from the restricted terms of welded steel. He tears, twists, bends, folds, squeezes, wraps and slaps wax sheets together. Working quickly, Steiner cast about 150 unique bronzes between 1976 and 1978, in addition to the larger fabricated steel pieces he was making at the same time. These cast sculptures were sometimes nicely casual, put together every which way, looking like notes to himself. His foundry in Connecticut picks up the waxes and brings back the finished, patinated bronzes. The casting is excellent. The foundry uses both ceramic shell and traditional

investment—and having done so many pieces with Steiner, it can deliver what he wants.

But Steiner's recent bronze sculptures cast in editions are as embalmed-looking as any work being made today. Casting fosters this deadness. An assembled sculpture in wax is informal, and so visually and psychologically different from its replicated image (eight of them) in bronze. Steiner appears oblivious to this issue. Scale is also a problem: Steiner sometimes produces very large waxes for casting. But what is interesting and rough-and-ready when 12 inches high is often boring and self-indulgent at 90 inches. The formal ideas keep getting repeated and repeated, and there aren't many ideas in the work but formal ideas. Perhaps this constitutes radical abstraction. With all their arrested limpness, why not just resurrect Dalí?

Nancy Graves is doing two very different kinds of sculpture in bronze, one old, one new. She is going back into her bone pieces (mixed mediums, including steel, wax, marble dust and acrylic) from around 1970 and rendering them in bronze to make them permanent and to allow them to exist outdoors. There are numerous precedents for reissuing work: Rodin and Brancusi constantly translated pieces and ideas from one material or scale to another. Hers is a giant undertaking, involving three museums, three large foundries on two continents, and a great deal of money. She uses bronze for all the conservative reasons discussed above. Moreover, she can do things in bronze that were difficult or impossible in the relatively fragile original pieces. In *Fossil*, for example, Graves can get the bones way up off the ground.

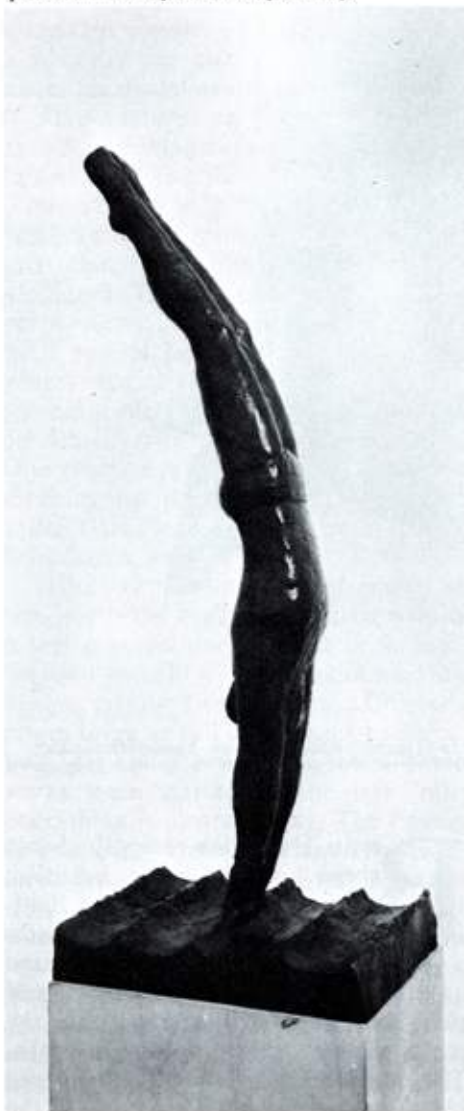
Her work has always been omnivorous, eating up animal and vegetable data, maps, charts, and all manner of information and spewing it back in sometimes exquisite mutations, and in all sorts of mediums. In these recent castings, the same process is applied to her own past work, in a kind of self-consumption. In the late '60s and early '70s Graves was interested in creating forms. In the '80s it seems to be a matter of conserving things she has made. The bones were a great invention ten years ago. They are still engaging, but look brittle now.

Graves's new work is playful, confident, naive. Working with one of the most adventuresome new foundries, she

cuts, bends and constructs wax pieces, which are then ceramic shell cast. These cast elements are welded into sculptures, in one case with added steel mesh, in another with bent bronze rods. The sculptures are then polychromed with very bright patinas and some paint.

Graves gains a nice quality from her free exploration of sculptural language. But a lot of her moves are awkward in three dimensions, growing as they do out of her drawings and paintings. The way she ignores gravity—"what I don't know can't hurt me"—comes out of a painter's, not a sculptor's, sense of structure. Some of these pieces don't reward scrutiny. Moreover, color acts very differently in real space than in pictorial space. Her sculptures often

Martin Silverman: Maine, 1979, bronze, 30 by 5 by 3 inches; edition of three, plus one artist's proof. Thorp Gallery.



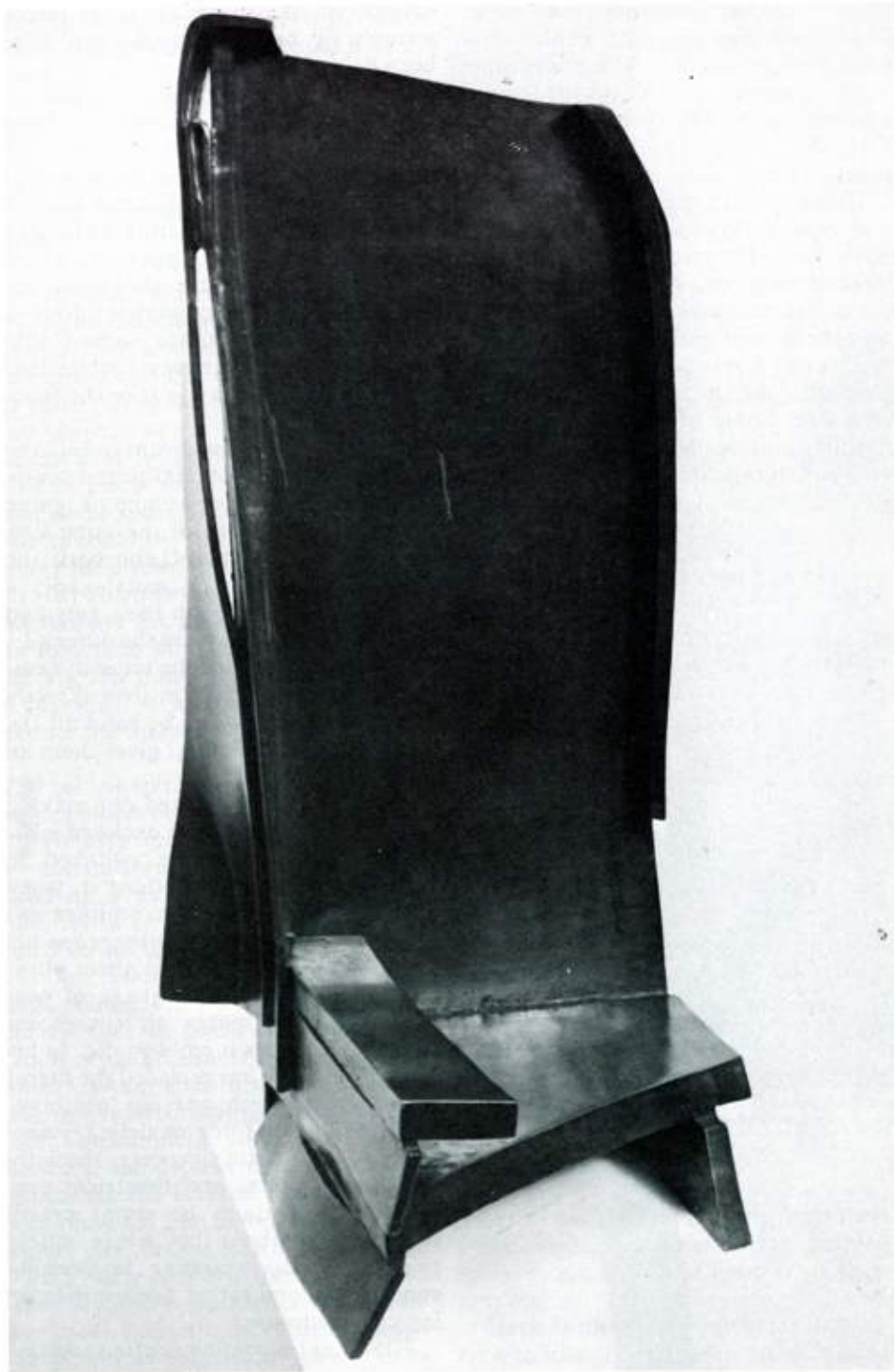
wind up looking like they're overdressed for the party. (If these pieces weren't in bronze, would they have been as popular?)

In 1975 Lynda Benglis transposed some of her poured urethane foam pieces into cast metal. Rendering them in metal had a symbolic function: the initial pieces were gestures, and slightly random ones at that; casting was a way of insisting on those gestures. There was something sinister about her encroaching foam sculptures, like a science-fiction substance turned into art. Making this excess permanent seems in a funny way to take the foam works to their limit.

The metal was also meant to help the pieces hold space. A 500-pound sculpture is harder to kick around or ignore than a 50-pound one of the same size. But casting has an esthetic cost: the pieces seem hollow in metal—only a skin over air, as though their guts had been sucked out. In foam the outer surface was a product of the inner dynamics; the pieces, explicit in their directly poured process, had to be solid all the way through. The metal gives them an unsettling artifice.

Robert Graham started out making tiny wax figures in small enclosed environments. I suspect he switched to bronze when he could afford it, when his reputation as a modern sculptor was established, and when permanence became an asset. His work is about physical pose, about the language of posture. Graham freezes an evanescent stance and makes it emblematic. In his bronze pieces he has replaced the literal environments with varying combinations of tour-de-force modeling, references to the casting process, specially designed supports and theatrical presentation. At times he seems pretty cold-blooded about his whole enterprise, carefully wrapping fashionable concerns around rather academic-looking cast sculpture.

His recent modeling is often impressive. I'd swear his cast figures have both fingernails and cuticles. He's not that interested in his models as characters: they are seen clinically. His casting is sensational and is crucial to the work's masterpiece aura. Graham has his own foundry. He leaves the little ridges where the bronze flowed into cracks in the investment, or leaves pins poking through the bronze (to support the investment inside). Sometimes, in a bow to process, he even leaves the pouring cup, sprue and vents attached to the casting. The sculptures comprise a fig-



Michael Steiner: *Tarim*, 1979, bronze, 30 by 14½ by 16¾ inches; edition of four. Emmerich Gallery.

ure and a support. The bronze supports give him some of the context his environments did formerly—a visual element suggesting a psychological situation. They locate the exposed, nude figure in a private space. The bronzes in his last show were lit to tell us we were looking at something important, but the pieces were headed out to take their place in the ordinary world.

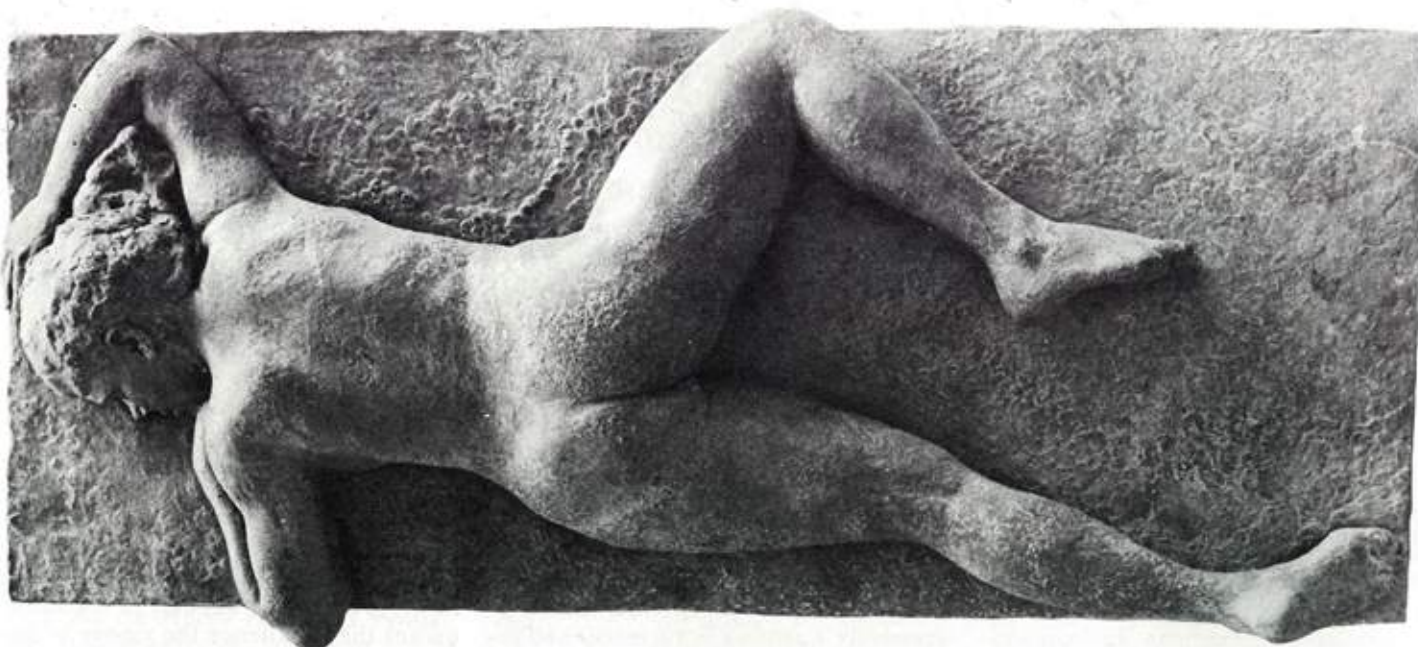
Bryan Hunt has recently shown three kinds of work: beautiful spruce and silk airships floating off the wall over our heads; a series of cast bronze sculptures based on lakes, waterfalls and quarries; and rich, dark drawings jammed onto the page, loosely derived from waterfalls. The sculptures are directly rendered ideas, unaltered in the making. In the

airships Hunt gets a sculptural or situational equivalent to the way a dirigible moves through space: seemingly without sound, as though it could pass through matter. His ships emerge as much through as from the wall.

It is a whimsical idea to take water from a lake, cirque or waterfall, congeal its shape, ripple its surface, cast it in bronze and place it in the gallery. Freestanding water is witty. But the bronzes, especially the large waterfalls, don't stay alive as sculpture. There is no touch in the surface of these syrupy cascades. Hunt's airships and drawings argue their shape and surface all the way down the line; the waterfalls, once their initial gesture is set, seem to accept whatever comes along. The falls are likable, large, expensive sculptures which don't take much actual, visual or psychological space. Bollinger and Giacometti both did pieces occupying the same sort of physical space, but their sculptures have a visual and psychological dimension that Hunt seems as yet unwilling to let intrude.

Martin Silverman's work is adventuresome and limber. For him bronze is as much a material of necessity as choice: he models his figures in plastilene, which is impermanent, so they have to be transposed to cast metal. The pieces are worked for light, volume and kinesthesia, rather than for anatomy. Plastilene seems to trap and then radiate light; the originals almost glow. It is hard to get bronze to do this, though Silverman tries by working back into the waxes and then keying up the patinas on the castings. His modeling is schematic: he carries a particular incised line indicating the belt and fly of trousers from figure to figure. Though the sculptures are figurative, they are worked up as shapes. He plays the swelling and interconnected parts of a diving woman's body against the constant rhythm of her long braid of hair trailing behind her and of the sculptured waves passing beneath her.

Silverman's volumes are often chunky, but the sculptures still put across the subtle sense of particular activities. Diving feels the way it does because of momentary weightlessness, and because the spine can move in an unaccustomed manner. A figure's pose originates with its spine, either straight or twisted. If the spine is straight the arms and legs parallel the body, as in a Kouros; if the spine twists, the limbs swing out into space. Silverman uses the spine to organize his pieces the way sculptors



William Crozier: Nancy, 1970-1974, bronze, 20½ by 45¼ by 45½ inches. Richard Bellamy Gallery.

in the Constructionist-derived tradition used axes.

William Crozier's modeling, casting and subject matter are extraordinary. He works slowly. He's finished 11 sculptures in 12 years, the average piece taking three years. Except for a bust of Robert Scull, the sculptures are nude figures on beds—seven reclining women, one man, two couples. Though horizontal, the figures aren't at rest. Most of the pieces are around ¾ life size. His modeling doesn't aim for Graham's icy perfection; it's a constant succession and refinement of provisional acts. Like Rodin, Crozier sometimes leaves the little clay balls used to test raising a surface. Like paintings with lots of glazes, the sculptures have a many-layered quality, so that a model's complex substance has somehow passed into and stayed in the sculptures, even if it isn't immediately discernible. The figures are modeled from the center out, pushed until too much is at stake to risk changing a thing. Though the bronze castings are obviously hollow, their surface expresses an interior life.

Crozier's casting procedure is the most elaborate in use. He fears the distortions that can get into a rubber mold taken from a clay original, so he instead makes a plaster waste mold, from which he casts a fiberglass positive. The fiberglass is flown to Germany where a rubber mold is made, waxes poured, and bronzes cast with the traditional investment method described above. His bronze has an intensity of surface unlike any other

recent work I've seen. The casting is so clean that almost no chasing is done. But looking at the pieces you don't think about his modeling or casting.

His sculptures are full of sex. Sex is shown as flowing out of and through the figures, suffusing them as a kind of vital force. The sex is in the whole body, not localized to the genitals. It is relational, even when the sculpture comprises a single figure. There is no lasciviousness or pornography; Crozier's figures are not built around fantasy. Instead of being generalized, they are specified. This person has a particular relation with herself or himself, with the artist, with a lover. One piece, a woman on her back, legs reaching up to pull down the sky, is called *Cloudbuster*—the name of a Wilhelm Reich weather device.

There are three avenues of energy in this work: the sculptor in relation to a model; a model working with or through her own sexuality; and a model working against gravity. In certain ways Crozier's pieces bring us full circle, back to Serra, Bollinger and gravity. Like theirs, these works were started in the late '60s. Everything is cleared away. The figures lie on a firm, narrow mattress. The sculptures describe the way a waking, conscious person resists gravity. Crozier convinces us that a living body strains up against gravity, and that this strain animates the whole body. He's not talking about muscle tone. Crozier gets all this energy to dwell in the clay. With meticulous attention he gets the clay to dwell in the bronze, to make it live.

Sculpture was a hand-sensitive art until the advent of welded steel construction. In carving the hand directs the chisel and controls the mark; in modeling the fingers are crucial. To say a person has touch is to say they have good hands. Handedness is not facility, though there is some of that in modeling, nor is it a watchmaker's coordination. Rather it is a root ability to feel and to shape.

Cast bronze, being most often derived from clay originals, is a shaped material. You have to bring clay to life and then keep it alive through numerous possibly deadening steps. This ability to vivify didn't count for much in '60s and '70s sculpture and is seldom taught now because it is rarely possessed or understood by sculptors teaching. A like touch—though not generative—is needed in internal medicine and *shiatsu*. Sensitive fingers will tell you things that nothing else can. Barring extraordinary gifts—Picasso, Degas—touch comes slowly.

If the sculptors I have discussed here continue to cast, the nature of their personal touch—vibrant or cold, demanding or lazy, adventuresome or dependent—will increasingly define itself. Like Brooklyn, like sex, bronze casting takes a long time to know. There is technique, then something else. □

Author: Wade Saunders, a sculptor currently casting in bronze, is exhibiting at Diane Brown Gallery in Washington, D.C. until June 28.