



Isaac Witkin: *Skysaw*, 1979, bronze, 12 by 27 by 10 3/4 inches; at Hamilton.



Jone Hightstein: *Jone*, 1977, wood, steel, 11 by 37 by 54 inches; at Droll/Kolbert.



Jone Hightstein: *United*, 1978, aluminum, 53 by 71 by 82 1/2 inches; at Droll/Kolbert.

and browns and the dark, seaweed-green of the rocks. He does not seek to imitate, as though he did no work to betray the character of his subject and the severity it imposes. The lumpy rock forms are novel indeed, and the marks often have a shapelessness that could not be imitated.

Chief could be said to issue from that entirely non-abstract side of Callagane when the claims of the public spectacle were irrefutable. Accordingly to regulate the sensations of the Massachusetts coast directly the covered, veggie filled horizons of the sea, when they occur, seem to bolster the act of looking where most painters would rationalize a straight horizon.

A 28 by 44 inch oil, *Emergon Point*, 8-30, contrasts the pale greens, whites and rose of sunrise sky and water (so different from the colors of sunset) with the ruddy, reddish browns, purples, blacks and greys of the foreground rocks. A reddish wash enlivened by a thick, fatty stroke that opens to a pale yellow hair is the luminous, rising sun.

There are not safe paintings, and Chief occasionally fails. There is a moment of spatial coherence where a passage may follow. It seems that on the other side might be sufficient to his painterly technique and the paintings take on a hypothetical character, being painted as if they were such things. But at that best Chief's paintings, many senses attention, which results them to be thoroughly experienced and more ambiguous than they may seem.

—Robert Rauschenberg

Isaac Witkin at Hamilton

Since World War II most sculptors have either carved/modeled/cast or welded/constructed their pieces. Isaac Witkin is one of the few artists who has done convincing work of both sorts. He recently exhibited nine bronzes assembled from sand-cast elements. They are related to his wood and fiberglass pieces of the early '60s and to a statement he wrote at that time. "I am concerned to catch an essential dynamic—a tension, a movement, a rhythm or growth—and to hold it at its most forceful moment of posture. I believe in the potency of sculptural simplicity and economy, where what I wish to say is concentrated in the essence of one central idea." His ideas are visual, not metaphysical. Note also Witkin's use of the words "catch," "hold," "forceful" and "potency." Both his statement and career suggest the temperament of a mastiff. His work, whatever its problems, has been tenaciously his own.

Witkin has the perfect history for a formalist sculptor: birth in the British Commonwealth, study under Anthony Caro at St. Martin's, work for Henry Moore. In 1965 he succeeded Caro as a teacher at Bennington College and started to work in steel. In the late

'60s and early '70s he had a terrific run of very physical steel pieces, in which he showed a sure control of scale, of negative space, and of multiple viewpoints. But around 1973 his work began to look grandiloquent. His outside constructions started to show a loss of touch and a tendency to windiness and compositional slackness.

In his recent bronzes Witkin's scale is right, and he is back doing what he has always done best—conveying the sense of a place. The sand-casting process frees his considerable and neglected abilities as a shaper. The steel he used earlier comes in standard shapes, mostly suggestive of planes and vectors. It can only be altered with effort. But bronze forms are easily made from scratch. In bronze Witkin can take elements from thick to thin, can shape and direct edges, can energize his surfaces, and can make his shapes seem natural rather than forced. He has had an abiding interest in translucent, light-bright color, but was long stymied because steel doesn't take or hold such color easily. In bronze almost any hue is possible, and he has, with the patinator Ron Young, given each sculpture a finish as suggestive as his titles.

The bronzes are sophisticated exercises. Witkin appears to be practicing: each piece poses—and most resolves—a different compositional task. Like his early work, the sculptures are generally frontal. In the ruddy brown *Declaration* he seems to want the six stacked, horizontal bars to stay in front of us without rising or falling. His arrangement of the elements and our tendency to divide them into pairs and triplets keep us centered on the piece, but not so bound that we lose our sense of the edge and the whole. In *Source* he uses cast elements similar to those in *Declaration* to opposite ends. The piece surges up and down like the blue-green water it suggests. *Weekend at the Parkers* simultaneously establishes juncture and cleavage. The parts wheel and turn in the air like acrobats. You feel the open light and sky. In *Utah* a flat, seemingly cracked plane balances on two roughly cylindrical forms. The surface suggests sandstone; the shapes could be worn by erosion. A pancake stack of bronze planes at the bottom reminds us that the piece is not a rock formation, but a sculpture encompassing a range of things.

—Wade Saunders

Jone Hightstein at Droll/Kolbert

In 1976 her two best U.S. one-show before was the Jone Hightstein presented a gallery space dominated and a doorway sealed by the presence of a concrete sphere 8 feet in diameter. The installation was perhaps Hightstein's most stuporous contribution to Hamilton. For subsequent European exhibitions he favored large, heavily shaped concrete mounts that more strongly lit a courtyard or park, thus highlighting the tension between their