

Nakshi Bindus: Recent Sculptures

Michael Peter Cain's exhibit
NAKSI BINDUS
RECENT, SCULPTURES:

REPOUSSÉ COLLABORATIONS FROM INDIA,

opened on Friday, November 2, at Unity Gallery, in the Library of Maharishi University of Management, Fairfield.

As a contemporary Western sculptor moved by the symbolic power, sensuous embellishment and inner vitality of traditional Indian & Nepalese sculpture, Cain shifted from study to art-making through an apprenticeship during his 1996-7 Fulbright to South Asia. Thereafter and during 5 brief subsequent trips to India, he collaborated with several traditional Indian artists. During the last two years, he has created about 20 substantial collaborative hammered sheet metal sculptures in India & Nepal.

Cain says, "The artworks synthesize the sensuous profusion of ancient temple embellishments with the rigor of western geometric abstraction. The works support and promote traditional Indian & Nepalese crafts and enrich contemporary western art with aspects of the beauty and transforming power of South Asian sacred images."

The creation work was supported in part with a grant from the Iowa Arts council, a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs and through a School of the Arts Artist's Residency at Maharishi University of Management.

NAKSI BINDUS, RECENT SCULPTURES: REPOUSSÉ COLLABORATIONS FROM INDIA will be shown both in India and the United States.



Nakshi Bindus: Recent Sculptures Review by Peter Freund

Michael Cain's stunning tour de force one-man show is the must-see show of the year at Unity Gallery at Maharishi University of Management. Cain's other-worldly pieces draw the viewer into a new realm of experience, a new reality. The pieces intrude on one's consciousness, intrude, because they do not exist in space, rather they create their own space. What is missing in all of these pieces is a relationship to the earth. They do not obediently sit as objects should, rather they drift quietly in their own reality, as if they would be more at home floating around the gallery, unconnected to the earth or the ceiling, completely self-existent.



A familiar theme, collapse of infinity to a point, and expansion from point to infinity, is here embellished and decorated and given solid boundaries. But even with the solid boundaries, the work seems more inside, more subjective, than objective. Here is a taste of self-referral in unity consciousness.

There have been wall-mounted pieces in shows before, but none that seemed as massive as Mount Mandara, the huge mountain that served as a stirring rod for the gods and demons when they got together to stir the ocean of milk. Do we see the snake Vasuki coiled around the mountain? The attention is inexorably drawn to something outside the field of relative time and space. The piece creates its own space-time, its own reality, and the wall drops off, and the room disappears, and the piece remains, overshadowing the viewer with its portrait of an ancient reality.



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"In the first age of the gods the existent was born of the non-existent; after that the quarters of the horizon were born, and after them the upward-growing trees. The earth was born from the upward growing tree, the quarters were born from the earth; Daksha was born from Aditi, and afterwards Aditi from Daksha." Rik Veda 10.6.4-5.

Here, the earth is seen born from the upward growing tree. The piece is not earth-born like every other man-made sculpture. No, this sculpture came first, and the earth was made afterwards.



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The eternal whirlpool of the Rik has been captured in bronze, and can now be seen by anyone, floating without concern for gravity, the master of space and time.

The lively field of all possibilities, completely embodied in the Rik, is here evident, frozen in time, yet still evoking the sense of infinite dynamism.

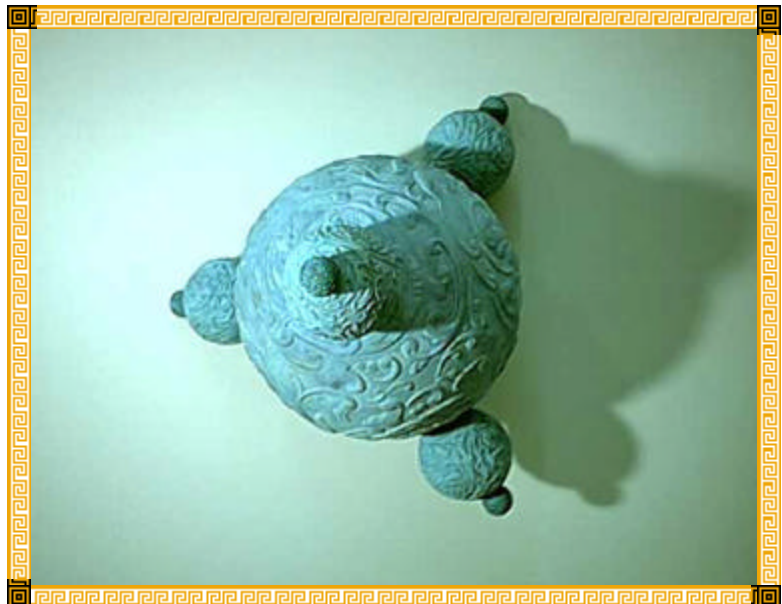


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Too wide for the camera, this piece hints at the infinite playful variety of organisms that abounded in the Ediacarian age, 100's of millions of years ago on earth. The abstract creative power of nature has been made tangible, palpable, has taken form as it did in the earliest periods of creation.

Cain's mature artistic vision seems to be established at the farthest limit of reality, where boundaries give way to the Infinite. Here we are reminded of the most elemental forces of nature--atoms coming together to form molecules, or electrons circling a nucleus, or quarks coming together to form a baryon. There is orderliness, harmony and precision, and the implicit recognition that if the attention could pass beyond the rigid boundaries of the work, it could see there abstract unlimited possibility, the raw material of Creation.



This final piece reminds us of the Nasadiya Sukta, Rik Veda 10.11.1. The object collapses to a point at its beginning and at its end. It transcends manifest existence, and captures the holistic value of Being which is one without a second. Like the seer of this sukta, the artist has "discovered in his heart the connection between the existent and the non-existent" and he brings to us this cognition of a field of life beyond death and beyond even immortality, and brings it to us in a manifest form which inspires in each of us a relationship with the source of cosmic life within.



Rik Ved: "The non-existent was not, the existent was not; then the world was not, nor the firmament, nor that which is above the firmament. How could there be any investing envelope, and where? Of what could there be felicity? How could there be the deep unfathomable water? Death was not nor at that period immortality, there was no indication of day or night; That One unbreathed upon breathed of his own strength, other than That there was nothing else whatever.

"There was darkness covered by darkness in the beginning, all this world was undistinguishable water; that empty united world which was covered by a mere nothing, was produced through the power of austerity. In the beginning there was desire, which was the first seed of mind; sages having meditated in their hearts have discovered by their wisdom the connection of the existent with the non-existent. Who really knows? Who in this world may declare it? Whence was this creation, whence was it engendered? The gods were subsequent to the world's creation; so who knows whence it arose? He from who this creation arose, he may uphold it, or he may not (no one else can); he who is its superintendent in the highest heaven, he assuredly knows, or if he knows not (no one else does)."

Translated by H.H.Wilson.

