

# Emerging N.E. artists who are 'Worlds Apart'

**WORLDS APART: EIGHT SCULPTORS.** *The Lois Foster exhibition of "emerging artists" from New England. Rose Art Gallery, Brandeis University, through April 22.*

By Robert Taylor  
Globe Staff

A limited number of sculptors and a representative sampling of their work — the usefulness of the Rose Art Museum's annual selection of New England artists (now the Lois Foster exhibition, in tribute to a dedicated patron) — presented since 1975, is evident.

"Worlds Apart" is not an omnium-gatherum of regional artists. Concentrating a handful of talents, it chooses and refines the possibilities in place of a comprehensive panorama. The title is apt; these artists present to the reviewer a variegated prospect, but if one finds it impossible to generalize, to divine from these auguries what trends will transpire in the protean realm of contemporary art, the exhibition — yearly alternating between painting and sculpture — possesses an internal coherence. The museum's purpose, as the Rose's director, Carl Belz, points out in his statement, "is not to predict future greatness but to acknowledge a conviction in the quality and the vitality of art being made right now."

Perhaps the most striking piece — certainly the most dramatic — is Beth Galston's installation using narrow straight strips of Plexiglas and projected light. The metallic strips, suspended from the ceiling of a darkened room, cast patterns of endlessly revolving shadows while flecks of light dance along the Plexiglas foil like the sequins of a dance hall chandelier. It's not unreasonable to imagine yourself here, stepping into a purist drawing; the vertical lines lie evenly spaced on the wall, now and then intersected by spinning projected light. It's also an experience akin to entering a fun house hall of mirrors — but the mirrors are missing, absorbed by darkness, although the suggestion of their frames persists.

## Creates a mood

The work raises questions. Why is it a sculpture? To me, for all its flickering charm, it is more of a performance piece with the spectator as the protagonist. The sense and articulation of space obviously belongs to sculpture; yet the purpose of the installation is to create a mood, a romantic harlequinade of light in which volume and mass defer to atmosphere. The object doesn't exist, only our sense of its context.

If this suggests the traditions of Moholy-Nagy and the technologies of the visual, Jerry Beck's tableaux landscapes, comprised of found objects and mixed media, spring from American folk art and surrealism. An outside bird gazes upon a birdhouse, a path staggers through a graveyard toward a tiny altar-like church, a diminutive tepee stands beneath a relatively gigantic tree-twig. The landscapes which deliberately evoke the tabletop hills and valleys of a toy railroad, imbed oblique slants of consciousness — they look terribly vulnerable but also have a throwaway deadpan humor.

Pier Gustafson's life-size gas-ranges, step-ladders, sofas, snow shovels and a fire-door come out of an immediate studio environment. Each, however, is constructed of paper and painted in pen and ink washes, and by restricting his range to black and white, the artist implies these might be drawings or photographs that fool the eye. There is a nostalgic quality to furniture from the black-and-white era of our visual culture; one can associate the furnishings with a time when black-and-white was the primary means of reproduction. Illusionism is basic to the work, however, and the contrast between the extreme fragility of the materials and the apparent solidity of porcelains, wood and steel has its own piquancy.

## Ebullient color

Chris Hearn is a minimalist whose painted wood sculptures zig-zag diagonally against the wall; here statement is pared down so that we can concentrate on the movements of angular elements and the alterations between line and plane. Gary Barker, on the other hand, accumulates solids and curves and right angles in small, elaborate geometric constructions which in outline imply figuration and in detail the abstract inventions of a Picasso or a Miro. The tension established between these elements, particularly in the ebullient color and severe edges of the forms, allows the artist to make a sweeping bow in the direction of his predecessors while retaining his own identity.

Much the same sort of contrast exists in Harry Brock's painted construction where bright and playful visual incident multiplies, and the narrow wall sculptures of Dexter Lazenby, constructed from wood layered with delicately toned papers and tinted with oil paints. The refinement of Lazenby's forms and the subtlety of his color give his Brancusi-like surfaces a meditative aspect, objects of contemplation related to natural forms such as an egg or polished stone. Brock's lusty sequences remind us of proscenium stages with layers of form carrying the eye into deep interior spaces. Finally, with David Raymond's steel sculptures, some galvanized for use outdoors, the geometry of latticed forms is treated in a classical way, with a sense of balance, restraint and order. Worlds Apart these sculptors may be, but at Brandeis they enjoy peaceful co-existence.