

Bruce Beasley  
Sixty Year Retrospective



# Bruce Beasley

## Sixty Year Retrospective

### 1960-2020

Foreword by Gary Garrido Schneider,  
Executive Director, Grounds For Sculpture

With essays by Bruce Beasley,  
Tom Moran, Marlena Doktorczyk-Donohue  
and Lawrence Weschler

 G R O U N D S F O R S C U L P T U R E

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## Director's Foreword

This volume is published on the occasion of the exhibition *Bruce Beasley: Sixty Year Retrospective, 1960–2020*. The opportunity to exhibit such a large and compelling body of work from this internationally renowned and pioneering artist has been a great privilege. The exhibition at Grounds For Sculpture presents a comprehensive survey of more than 60 works spanning Beasley's long career, including his earliest compositions in welded cast iron to his most recent work designed, in part, with virtual reality.

It is not often that museums and artists have partnerships that last for decades, but it is a tradition at Grounds For Sculpture, where support for contemporary sculpture allows for the development of long-standing relationships. In 2018 I was part of a team of GFS staff invited to visit Beasley's Oakland studio to consider partnering with the artist on a career retrospective. The organization's relationship with Beasley dates to 1993, when Brooke Barrie, GFS's inaugural director and curator began corresponding with him about a proposed exhibition. This led to a studio visit the following year, and an opportunity for the institution to exhibit *Dorion* as a short-term loan. Now part of the permanent collection, *Dorion* is a prime feature of the Sculpture Court, where the stainless-steel composition is reflected in a small pond and appears to float in the sky. Bruce has remarked that it is one of his favorite public installations of his work. I have been pleased that more recently, through the generosity of a private donor, we have been able to acquire an additional Beasley work for the collection, *Horizon II*.

Beyond demonstrating Beasley's amazing skill and inventiveness, the exhibition also shares how an artist's compelling need to create has manifested into a successful, yet never stationary, artistic career. He may not have imagined becoming an artist when he enrolled in Dartmouth College many years ago, but Beasley's early success upon his return to California became a catalyst to a long career punctuated by continuing experimentation. His pursuit of shape led him to push in new directions, along the way demonstrating his mastery over a broad range of materials.

This has been a rewarding project for all involved. This

catalogue represents the most comprehensive publication available to date on the art of Bruce Beasley. It includes insightful and scholarly essays by Tom Moran, Marlena Donohue, and Lawrence Wechsler, as well as Bruce Beasley himself.

A project of this scale would not have been possible without the dedication and close collaboration of the staff at Grounds For Sculpture. My appreciation goes out to the entire team. I extend gratitude to Tom Moran, chief curator, for making this exhibition possible and guiding it into the world. I also thank Faith McClellan, director of collections and exhibitions; Tracy Lee, assistant preparator; Dani Edgar, registrar; and Lindsey Young-Lockett, manager of exhibition production, for directing this project in their typical way, which is to make difficult things look easy, and the team of riggers, shippers, and other experts who lent their technical expertise to the exhibition.

I want to thank our generous financial supporters who helped make this project possible, including Bank of America, the Brooke Barrie Art Fund, and the following Exhibition Supporters: the Birney Family Foundation, Gordon and Lulie Gund, and Barbara Lawrence and Allen Laskin, with additional support from the Atlantic Foundation; the Johnson Art and Education Foundation; the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts; and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation. I would also like to thank Margaret and Herbert DuPont and Lynn Glaser for their support of this catalogue.

Most importantly, we owe a great deal of thanks to Marlena Donohue, director of the Bruce Beasley Foundation for the enormous gift of her time and scholarly expertise, and I would similarly like to recognize Beasley's studio assistant Albert Dicruttalo. Lastly, I want to thank Bruce Beasley for generously sharing this incredible body of work with GFS visitors. His enormous dedication to a lifetime pursuit of sculptural exploration has contributed immeasurably to the field of contemporary sculpture.

Gary Garrido Schneider  
Executive Director  
Grounds For Sculpture

## Artist Acknowledgments

I'd like to acknowledge first and foremost my wife, Laurence, helpmate and mother of our two children. She has supported my efforts, been beside me for the last 49 years, and is the creator of many of the beautiful patinas that give my work their unique cadence. I owe her thanks for being the entry point for my own involvement in prehistoric art, and all who care about the earliest marks made by our first ancestral artists owe Laurence gratitude for single-handedly initiating and leading the fight to save the cave art of Lascaux.

Albert Dicruttalo is a serious and accomplished sculptor in his own right, and a friend and colleague who has been my right hand for 26 years. He is a person of depth and integrity, highly skilled, and deeply trusted. The work we do is widely varied; challenging, sometimes mundane, often exhausting, and always requiring attention and stamina. We work together using cranes and forklifts, involving heavy loads that are dangerous to us and with any error could destroy a finished piece. The work that Albert has assisted me with for nearly three decades demands absolute mutual trust. There isn't anyone else I would want to do this with.

Marti LeBlanc has worked diligently as my executive assistant for 30 years. She frees me from my desk and competently, intelligently handles critical details so that I can maximize my time in the studio. Highly skilled and trusted with all office tasks I try to avoid, she is intuitive and sensitive, and knows when to press for my attention and when she can spare me and handle what comes up on her own.

Marlena Donohue is the dedicated director of the Bruce Beasley Foundation and a professor of modern and contemporary art history at Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles. From her first interview with me as a critic covering my Oakland Museum retrospective some years ago, she has come to know and understand my work and the true nature of my engagement in it better than anyone else.

I must also acknowledge three colleagues, without whom my work and world would have been far less rich. Eduardo Chillida, the artist I admire above all others. A man who was as deep and full of integrity as his work. I know of no other

artist who worked in so many different mediums and found in each an expression that was uniquely his own. The iron pieces—grappling with space, strong and dynamic; the wood pieces—rough and almost frightening in their intensity; the stone pieces—with such serene presence; the clay pieces—so contained and intimate; and the monumental works in concrete, with such strength and presence that they feel like they must have just appeared out the land by themselves. It was my greatest honor to have known him.

Giò Pomodoro, an Italian master sculptor and deep lover of all sculpture from all eras. We talked endlessly about what sculpture is and isn't, and what it can be and what it cannot. Together we hiked the abandoned quarries in Pietrasanta, which had been cut into the mountains, and we marveled endlessly at how nature was slowly blending and softening the geometric precision imposed by man.

Kenneth Snelson, an American artist who more than any sculptor I know really created his own unique language. His sculptures taught me much; they are so strong and yet so light, vigorously engaging yet containing space at the same time. This was a man who endlessly pondered the basic structure of matter itself, and was such good company and found humor in every adversity.

And finally, I would like to express my profound thanks to everyone at Grounds For Sculpture, but in particular Gary Garrido Schneider, executive director, Faith McClellan, director of collections and exhibitions, and Tom Moran, chief curator, whose intelligence, warmth, and fully committed and exceptionally professional support allowed this 60-year retrospective to move from an idea many years ago to a stunning reality today.

Bruce Beasley,  
Oakland, California

# In Retrospect: The Artist in His Own Words

## Bruce Beasley

When I look back on 60 plus years, I realize what a fortunate person I am to be able to spend my life engaged in one of mankind's oldest endeavors—turning material into human feelings.

I have devoted a career to engaging in the emotional language of shape; I say the emotional language of shape, because that is what sculpture is to me. Geometry is the intellectual language of shape, and sculpture is the emotional language of shape—much the same way that acoustics is the intellectual language of sound, and music is the emotional language of sound.

I found my calling as a sculptor early. It was at Dartmouth College in 1958, and I was 19. I had been pushed by college counselors to pursue a career in rocket engineering. This was based on my having built hot rods in high school, the idea being that a rocket program was the assumed professional extrapolation for a college-bound lad who built race cars; but in truth, I was looking for a path in life for myself.

I had always built things, ever since I was just a kid, and that connection to the manual, and to the work of the hand, was deeply important to me. I had enthusiastically taken shop classes throughout junior and senior high school. These courses were considered “trade track,” even though I was officially on the college track. I saw that the world that I was expected to enter was divided into those who made things and got their hands dirty, but didn't decide what was made, and those who were educated, wore clean clothes, and didn't make things, but told others what to make. I didn't like that separation of the hand and the mind, and it didn't address another element that was missing: what I call the emotional or spiritual side. I didn't see a place for myself in that world.

So when I discovered sculpture at 19 it was an

absolute epiphany. It was the first time that the three elements of using the hand, the head, and the heart came together in one activity. There was no question about it. That was the path I was going to take.

From the beginning, I realized that I did not previsualize sculptures and I didn't find that drawing was a way to explore sculptural ideas—it was two-dimensional and lacked the opportunity for real engagement with tangible form. I had to just start working with three-dimensional shapes directly and hope something came of it. At first, I thought that was a serious limitation. But I did find that although I did not previsualize a sculpture and had to play around with shapes to jump-start my creative process, I did have a very strong and almost physical sensation when a composition was “right.” I realized that my way of working was really a process of exploring relationships of various shapes where, along the way, I might “find a sculpture.” I consider it exploring versus preconceived creativity.

From the very beginning, I was interested in exploring arrangements of existing shapes, but I was only interested in the shapes themselves and how they interacted with each other. I was not interested in any context or feeling associated with the original use of the object. That was the genesis of the broken cast iron pieces like *Tree House* and *Lemures* (figs. 1, 2, 3).

It was 1960 and I was at scrapyards in West Oakland, where I had gone to buy some steel to make a welding table. A large pile of used, cast iron sewer pipe from dismantled houses was being broken up. I had not realized that there was a form of iron that would fracture and break rather than bend. I saw that each of those broken pieces had two voices. One was its original cast shape,



which was curved and controlled, and the other was the broken edge that meandered randomly across the curved shapes. In addition, there was a color difference. The curved cast surfaces were aged and dark, while the broken edges had exposed new iron that rusted to a bright orange. It was as though the dark curved shapes were the base notes and the orange rusty edges were the high notes. Could some visual poetry result from the interplay of these two voices?

Another thing I learned from this early series was that the variety of possible arrangements I had to play around with was greatly enhanced by virtue of the pieces having been broken. A

pile of broken pieces of cast iron pipe had much more potential for me than a pile of unbroken pipe. But along with the visual interest that the cast iron fragments inherently possessed was a downside, in that the thin, fragile cast iron was difficult to weld, limiting the range of possible configurations. But this was the first process of working that had resulted in sculptures that I felt were really mine, so I knew I was on to something.

The first really important exhibition I was in was *The Art of Assemblage* in 1961 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. It was important to me for many reasons. This was a seminal exhibition that coined the term “Assemblage”

Fig. 1. Bruce Beasley, *Lemures*, 1961. Collection of the artist

Fig. 2. Bruce Beasley, *Horae*, 1960. Collection of the artist

Fig. 3. Bruce Beasley, *Tree House*, 1960. Collection of the artist



Fig. 4. Bruce Beasley, *Hephaistos*, 1963, cast aluminum, 45 × 36 in. Private collection



Fig. 5. Styrofoam models

as the process of using found objects and nontraditional materials that many artists had been doing for a long time. *Tree House* was selected for the show, and I was thrilled to be exhibiting alongside Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, David Smith, Robert Rauschenberg, and other artists. When I saw the exhibition, I was struck by something that I had not consciously thought about and which the catalogue did not mention at all. I saw immediately that the exhibition could be divided into two groups: one in which the sense of the original use of the found objects was an inherent part of the artwork or its narrative, and one in which the found objects were used solely for their formal visual interest. I had not articulated that distinction prior to this, and I was definitely in the latter category—my interest was shape.

I realized that I had unconsciously restricted myself to a single group or family of found objects in order to maximize a sense of structural or material unity and minimize any sense of the object's original context that had carried over. Therefore, while I wanted the cast iron works to extend further into space, the very nature of the material did not allow that possibility. Rather than add wood or steel to the work, I looked for a new, single material that would also have the combination of formal curves and random edges, and also reach further out into space.

The cast aluminum sculptures came next (fig. 4). I realized that Styrofoam packing cases had much the same quality of a formal underlying shape but with even more variety, and by cutting them I could achieve the sense of the broken edges of the cast iron pipes. I bought a bandsaw, collected a lot of foam packing cases, and started cutting them up at random. I wasn't making aesthetic decisions; I was simply making a big pile of Styrofoam scrap, just like the pile of broken cast iron.

It was much easier working with the Styrofoam. It was lightweight, and I could just pin pieces together to see possibilities rather than having to weld pieces together as with the cast iron (fig. 5). Styrofoam allowed me to be more spontaneous, but when I'd finally discovered a finished work, it was still in Styrofoam—not in a lasting material like the cast iron.

The "exploring" process of finding a sculpture out of the Styrofoam scraps was better than the "exploring" process with the cast iron, because it was easier to try different things. But the disadvantage was that, unlike with the welded cast iron pieces, where I had a finished sculpture when I "found" the work, when using Styrofoam, I would have to conceive another step to cast that work in metal.

The varying thicknesses of the Styrofoam pieces made them impossible to cast hollow,



Fig. 6. Bruce Beasley casting in his studio foundry

Fig. 7. Autoclave

and they would be far too heavy to cast in solid bronze. The solution was to cast in lighter weight aluminum, a new material for me. My lesson here: any discovery of added means, methods, and technologies is worth it if it gets me to that moment when a work comes to life. For me, technology is handmaiden to creativity (fig. 6).

I have followed this approach ever since. For me, the real magic is finding human feeling in the arrangements and intersections of shapes that when taken alone have none. It is like a composer who is searching for a new melody on the piano. The composer doesn't invent any of the musical notes—they are all available on the keyboard. No single note carries human emotions, but combinations of notes—chords, arpeggios, etc.—do. The composer tries to find new combinations of the musical notes that sing to him and that then might sing to us as well. And the composer uses tools and technologies as well. The development of musical notation was transformative for composition, and the piano is a tool that organizes and places the musical notes at the composers' fingertips.

It is the same for sculpture. There are tools and technologies that we use for the genesis of our work, and tools and technologies that we use for the final realization of our work. I have come to think of them separately, but that separation was a new realization for me. David Smith was

the most influential sculptor when I was starting out, and for him the welder was the tool for both the genesis and the realization of his work. But I have my tools for exploration, and I have my tools for realization. Since my sculptures come from exploring combinations of shapes rather than previsualizing, any tools or technologies that make my exploration more spontaneous or give it more depth, well, these are cherished and worth any added work to get a sculpture into its final, permanent state.

I think that if I did not have such a strong sense of knowing when it is right, then having almost endlessly increasing possibilities might be confusing rather than liberating. But I love having more possibilities. For me that means there are more sculptures and a wider range of voices to find, and I know they will let me know when I find them.

The genesis of the cast acrylic sculptures was my desire to explore the containment of light as a sculptural medium. The only tool I could imagine to contain light would be a transparent medium. There were reasons that neither glass or plastic resins could do what I imagined I needed, so I had to invent a new process for casting transparent acrylic at a scale and thickness not previously possible—not for the sake of invention, but to achieve the aesthetic goal I was seeking (fig. 7).

The impetus for the cast bronze sculptures

I began in 1987 was my desire to explore the vocabulary of the new shapes that were created when cubic or rhomboid solids penetrated each other. I saw that cubes had a quiet solemnity when viewed alone but spoke with a new and emotionally more complex voice when they penetrated each other. I tried to explore these new voices through cardboard models, but they were awkward and time-consuming and I needed to explore hundreds of possibilities (fig. 8). But my clumsy attempts told me there was something there worth pursuing. I realized I needed a completely new tool, which led me to become involved with the earliest computer 3D modeling programs. I do not naturally take to working at a desk and on a computer, but it was the only way I could explore this new language. And this new language spoke to me so strongly that I kept at a computer process that I really did not take to at all.

Eventually, I wanted to expand the exploration of penetrating solids with curved as well as planer surfaces. The computer software to do that existed, but the problem was that the way I had been able to get the intersecting planer solids out of the computer and into the actual haptic world did not work with curved shapes. This led to my being an early adopter of 3D printing—I could print models of my ideas—and helping to develop the first large-scale 3D printers.



Fig. 8. Bruce Beasley making cardboard model

Gravity is both the sculptor's friend and enemy. It is our friend because mass and gravity are inextricably connected, and mass is what gives sculpture its sense of presence as it exists in the same real three-dimensional world of humans. It is our enemy because gravity makes building things very complicated. We need clamps to hold pieces in place for welding, and we need cranes, hoists, and forklifts to move things around. I always joked that I dreamed of having a gravity-free studio to make the sculptures, and then I would take them out into the gravity world for them to live in.

Another impossible dream had been to have a tool or process wherein material would flow out of the end of my hand so that I could create shapes in space from its movement—to be able to treat a solid material gesturally, so to speak.

Well, sometimes dreams come true. I had vaguely followed the development of virtual reality (VR), but it was presented as a possible way to view sculpture and that did not interest me at all. Rungwe Kingdon, founder of the Pangolin Foundry in the United Kingdom, knew of my career-long pursuit of tools to enhance exploration of shape, so he invited me to his foundry to try VR as a shape-making tool. His instinct was spot on, and VR became the genesis of the Aeolis series.

In VR I have a gravity-free studio. The visual sense of being in a real three-dimensional space is very good. I can create shapes by the movement of my hands and arms. I can conduct shapes that come out my hands like a conductor does for music. The shapes wait in space, where I leave them; I can move them, stretch them, penetrate them through each other without any interference from gravity. It is almost deliriously spontaneous and direct. (fig. 9)

However, getting a sculpture from VR into metal is not easy or spontaneous at all. But it is possible, and the results are worth all the extra time, effort, and expense of getting the sculptures out of the gravity-free studio and into the real world.

The origin of the Aurai collages arose from the computer process that gets sculptures originated in VR into the real world. Throughout

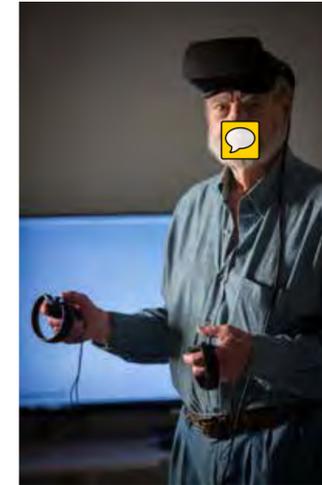


Fig. 9. Bruce Beasley working with virtual reality

Fig. 10. Bruce Beasley working on collages in the studio

my career I had never liked working on paper or canvas, because by their very nature I had to start with their limitations. That beginning limitation inhibited the very exploration that was my way of working. In the complicated computer process of getting the VR sculptures out of VR, I saw shapes that I thought could be interesting as two-dimensional elements. And I realized that if I printed a large number of those various shapes and cut them out, then I could explore their arrangement, letting the final one be what determined the final proportion and size of the paper or canvas to which they were glued. This was basically a two-dimensional version of how I was working in three dimensions, where the artwork determined its own size and proportion. (fig. 10)

So here I am at 80 plus, having spent a very rewarding 60 years exploring the visual vocabularies of geometry in order to find combinations of shapes that talked to me. Sometimes they have been easy to find, and other times they have been elusive. I don't know why the ones that talk to me do so. I have never wanted to question why some do and most don't. I am just very grateful that there are ones that do.

And now I can go into my new, gravity-free studio and continue to explore combinations of shapes that I have made with the movement of my own body. Some of them end up as sculptures

and some of them even end up as collages that can go on a wall.

Who says old dogs can't learn new tricks?

#### Creating Forward

When the COVID-19 pandemic prevented my exhibition at Grounds For Sculpture from opening, my first reaction was disappointment, but hey, I'm a big boy, and good things in life often go awry. But then it seemed like the virus was some sort of evil miasma that was crushing everyone, and what I was experiencing was quite small compared to many others.

It seemed like the virus had its hands around the neck of the very body of joyful creative expression. Museums, galleries, concerts, and theaters closed; art students faced temporarily shuttered studios, and on and on. It seemed like all the arts, which I feel such an honor to be a part of and which I have always viewed as the best part of our all-too-flawed humanity, were under attack by this damned, spiked, tiny ball of evil.

I said to myself, "OK virus, you may keep me from exhibiting but you're not going to keep me from making sculpture." So, for this past year, while my exhibition has been closed, I have been making new sculptures that shake their fist at the coronavirus and celebrate the human condition.

# Bruce Beasley: Innovation and the Primacy of Form

Tom Moran

The majestic 100-foot sculpture, comprising six massive stainless-steel rings, commands your attention. At 60 feet high, it towers over the main plaza of a medical complex in San Jose, California. The installation of *Sanctuary* is complete (see page TK).

As always, Beasley has planned the fabrication and installation of the sculpture in meticulous detail, knowing it will represent him for decades to come. Now a spry 82, Bruce Beasley continues to enjoy important projects and an international reputation for his long career in the field of sculpture.

Like clockwork, Beasley arises and starts his day in one of three studio buildings that constitute his live/work compound in the South Prescott section of Oakland, California. In January 2020, in preparation for Beasley's retrospective at Grounds For Sculpture, six large tractor trailers pulled into the complex and loaded up tons of sculpture, in preparation for the long cross-country winter journey to New Jersey. The trucks carried 60 pieces in bronze, aluminum, stainless steel, and granite, in sizes from 7 inches to 23 feet high. Many of the works, including three large sculptures and four of Beasley's stunning new canvas collages, were created specifically for the retrospective.

The works were installed beginning in February 2020, and a special preview was held in March for collectors at the New York Armory Show, but the COVID-19 pandemic forced the postponement of the opening until 2021. Only the outdoor works could be seen, and they were well received. Now, almost a year later, visitors will be able to view six decades of Beasley's most important works, many from his private collection that have not been exhibited before.

Bruce Beasley occupies a critical place in the field of abstract sculpture, tracing his legacy to such noted artists as David Smith and, particularly, Eduardo Chillida, the renowned Spanish sculptor who became not just a colleague but also a dear friend (fig. 11). Beasley strives to make sculptures that possess only the essential elements—material, color, texture, light—that embody the totality of the form and the emotional language of shape. He rejects the notion of a signature style, but his focus is on the observer's experience of shape, movement, spatial perception, and scale. He draws upon the cube and stretches its boundaries, articulating the gesture in three-dimensional space while he builds his forms into stunning compositions.

Beasley's search for new forms in three-dimensional space has led him to pioneering applications of technology to fine art. When he finds that traditional processes are confounding his vision, he adapts, augments, or invents new materials, means, and fabrication methods. As an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley, he spearheaded the building of a bronze-casting foundry from discarded parts. After graduation, he became the first sculptor to build a one-man foundry for ceramic shell-mold casting of bronze in his private studio.

Once in the world as a professional artist, he honed his technological skills. In the 1970s, he pursued and solved the problem of making perfectly clear, transparent, and structurally uncompromised acrylic. In the 1980s, Beasley was recognized as the first sculptor to research and pioneer computer-aided design (CAD) for sculpture. He also helped create a new and more efficient "burn out" process for casting his geometric bronze sculptures, and in the mid-



Fig. 11. Bruce Beasley and Eduardo Chillida in La Jolla, California

Fig. 12. Bruce Beasley, *Chorus*, 1960, welded cast iron, 14 x 24 in. Museum of Modern Art, New York

2000s, he became an innovator in the field of 3D printing. To do this, he designed and oversaw the building of the largest digital printer exclusively for fine art sculpture in California. Today, he has not only advanced fine art applications of CAD, but he has also become a leading practitioner and developer of virtual reality (VR) in the creation of his art. Giants in corporate technology, from Autodesk to Google, have taken note. Even as Beasley continues to pursue skills to enable his vision as a sculptor, his goal remains that of achieving a humanistic expression of shape that is emotive and affirmed by nothing but his intuitive cognition.

Beasley's works have been included in more than 200 exhibitions, and he has had works commissioned for the City of Oakland; the State of California; the 2008 Beijing Olympics; Stanford University; University of California, Berkeley; and other locations at home and abroad. His many large-scale projects for public commissions and private collections have resulted in rich collaborations with fabrication experts in the United States, United Kingdom, and Asia.

## The 1960s

### Sculpture on Two Coasts

In post-World War II New York, the art world was focused on the painters of Abstract Expressionism, and sculptors had to find a way to coexist or reemerge from the shadows. With the encouragement of art critics and dealers in the early 1960s, a number of disparate artists with a growing interest in sculpture were making new forms of art. This period marks the beginning of an era of explosive new directions in sculpture. Sculptors who were establishing reputations include Stephen de Staebler and Peter Voulkos in the Bay Area, and Tony Smith, Donald Judd, Claes Oldenburg, George Segal, and others in New York City. By the late 1960s, these men, as well as a cadre of women sculptors, including Beverly Pepper and Louise Nevelson, were being commissioned for art to be installed in public spaces—a fact that would have seemed impossible prior to that for social, political, and

financial reasons. In a relatively short period, these artists would be contributing to what became a new postmodern renaissance in scale, style, materials, and fabrication methods. A very young Bruce Beasley was part of this future.

Bruce Beasley's destiny as one of the world's most relevant contemporary sculptors should come as no surprise. While still an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley, his work *Tree House* was selected for *Art of Assemblage*, a seminal exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1961 that also featured work by Pablo Picasso, Robert Rauschenberg, and pioneers in diverse new media (see page TK).

### Sculpture Calls

Beasley had not been thinking of a career in art calling when he enrolled at Dartmouth College in 1957. Counselors had recommended he pursue rocket engineering, because of his intellectual curiosity and experience building hot rods. Understanding that his fascination was for shape, not necessarily science, he took an art





class. He discovered his dislike for drawing in two dimensions, and he convinced his professor to allow him to submit five sculptures, instead of fifty drawings, for the final exam. Notably, he completed the sculptures without ever having taken another art course. The sculptor Winslow Eaves was in residence at the college, and with his guidance, Beasley created his first work in bronze.

The experience demystified bronze casting for Beasley and launched his love of three-dimensional form and sculptural processes. It was an epiphany. California's reputation as a vast laboratory full of opportunity, driven by the aerospace industry and "car culture," was well known to Beasley. So, in the fall of 1959, Beasley transferred to the University of California, Berkeley, where he majored in sculpture. There he was required to take an entry level class in clay modeling. While he was disdainful of this requirement, he finished his final project in clay but, outside of class, cast it in lead (a far more challenging medium) just to prove that he could, and submitted it.

Beasley had a good experience at Berkeley, and he became an important asset to the university. In 1960, he introduced arc welding to the sculpture department and, in collaboration with fellow student Staebler and their teacher Voukos, helped create the first bronze foundry in a



Fig. 12. Grouping of cast iron works at Grounds For Sculpture

Fig. 14. Cypress Street studio

university art department. Beasley also continued his work in sculpture with Sidney Gordin, William King, Eduardo Paolozzi, and others, including the art critic Harold Rosenberg. Even then, Beasley recognized that working in three-dimensional space is fundamentally different than painting. Sculpture is intrinsically linked with techniques and processes involving a range of materials and necessitating physical challenges, whether the artist is working in metal, stone, wood, or polymer.

### The First Cast Iron Sculptures

While still a student, Beasley rented a small space off campus where he could experiment freely. One day, while in a local scrapyard, he noticed a huge pile of shards and shapes from old, discarded plumbing. He purchased a load of the pieces and brought them back to his studio, where he dumped them on the floor, enthralled by the formal relationships they created. Beasley began to break the pieces and assemble them into compositions. When the results felt right, he welded them together. This early method of working helped define Beasley's approach to making sculpture: he finds rather than preconceives work. In the process of making the cast iron works, Beasley felt a true sense of discovery and joy, and achieved his goal of activating a viewer's emotional recognition of shape (fig. 12).

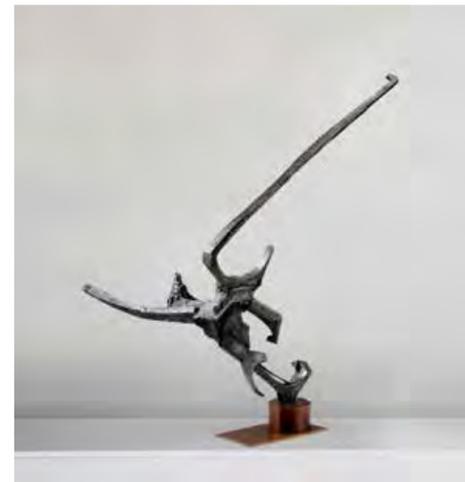


Fig. 15. Bruce Beasley, *Icarus*, 1963. Collection of the artist

Fig. 16. Studio foundry

Beasley submitted several powerful cast iron works to an open juried show for an exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA). They were seen and greatly admired by the influential guest juror Dorothy Miller, chief curator at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. The works were selected for SFMOMA's exhibition, and Miller contacted William Seitz, another important curator at MoMA, about Beasley's sculptures. Seitz selected one of the welded cast iron works, *Tree House* (1960) for the *Art of Assemblage*. Suddenly, Beasley was exhibiting with Picasso and other legendary artists. The museum acquired *Chorus*, and Beasley became the youngest artist represented in the collection, which, to say the least, was very encouraging for him (fig. 13).

Another aspiring artist may have responded by relocating immediately to New York, but Beasley visited the city and its environs and realized that it would be impractical for him to make sculpture there, especially large works. He had seen one of his sculptor friends carrying sacks of plaster and other supplies up four flights of stairs and knew that he would be better off finding a larger and more affordable studio in the Bay Area of San Francisco. At the time, land in the California countryside was cheap, but, as he was more of a city person, he realized Oakland might be the best place for him.

### The Studio and a New Foundry

In the early 1960s, Beasley was renting a 1,500-square-foot old metal shed on Cypress Street in West Oakland for \$75 a month (fig. 14). The neighborhood was partly residential, but there were also some industrial buildings and a few junkyards. So, no one took notice when Beasley proceeded to build his own bronze-casting foundry in 1963. He adapted the ceramic-shell process for casting bronze and aluminum sculptures. However, this first working method involved the creation and maneuvering of large heavy molds and required many hands.

He had read about a process for casting small intricate parts in thin but strong molds in a trade journal. Soon, he worked out a system in which he could cast large pieces within a ceramic shell, maneuvering the process single-handedly—the first sculptor to do so. At the time, it was unheard of for a sculptor to have built his own foundry and cast his own work. *Icarus*, one of Beasley's iconic cast aluminum sculptures, was exhibited at the Paris Biennale in 1963 and was awarded the purchase prize. European sculptors were stunned that a sculptor from California had built his own foundry and was updating traditions of continental abstraction (figs. 15 and 16).

### The Aluminum Pieces

Beasley eventually purchased an old building on



Lewis Street in West Oakland, now the hub of a large complex of studio and work buildings. The space allowed him to begin an ambitious series of new work. He had accumulated a vast amount of Styrofoam packaging; Beasley was attracted to its peculiar shapes, voids, and appendage-like forms, designed to transport things safely, not for use in art. He began cutting fragments of the material, completely altering them and then scattering hundreds of pieces across the studio floor (fig. 17). Then, he reassembled the forms, rotating each as he recognized a relationship or visual possibility, attaching one to another and then another with straight pins. Beasley built out the compositions further, segment by segment, in extensions that appeared, at times, to be limbs or skeletal fragments. The resulting forms were fundamentally different than the iron pieces, which are curvilinear and centered around a nucleus. With these Styrofoam constructions, Beasley began the theme of the extended and segmented gesture, producing works that swept winglike out into space. Eventually, Beasley cast the finished constructions in aluminum at his foundry.

#### The 1970s

##### Light and Transparency

Beasley recounts several dreams in which he envisioned sculptures that were completely



Fig. 17. Bruce Beasley working with Styrofoam

Fig. 18. Bruce Beasley sitting on *Apolymon*, 1970

transparent. He wondered how to create a sculpture that would capture and hold light without the type of internal source that Dan Flavin and other artists associated with the Light and Space Movement were making. Beasley set out to find the right material, concluding that acrylic was the only one that is truly transparent. He contacted DuPont, the manufacturer of acrylic under the trade name Lucite, but during a meeting with the engineers was told that what he wanted to do was impossible; cast in thicknesses greater than 4 inches, the material had been known to crack and bubble. Undaunted, the artist began investigating how to solve the issue. Then, out of the blue, Beasley was selected as one of four finalists to submit a proposal for a monumental sculpture intended for two new state buildings in Sacramento, the first state government public art project in California. Beasley used his fascination with light and cast acrylic to produce a 2-inch-thick, pedestal-scaled sculpture for the jury, now titled *Stamper's Lighthouse* (see page TK).

Impressed by the complexity and beauty of Beasley's proposed project, jurors asked if he was sure he could actually make such a piece at the scale he was proposing. The artist assured them that he could, but as he left the room that day, he did not actually know. He flew to Wilmington, Delaware, to meet with the DuPont engineers,



who again told Beasley that his project was impossible. Intrigued by his convincing small-scale achievement, however, DuPont agreed to provide all the materials for the piece; they could not do more because they did not know how to achieve his goal. Soon enough, truckloads of raw materials began to arrive at the studio. Beasley knew that to solve the issue of the trapped air pockets and random shattering required controlling the pressure while the material was curing. His idea was to use an autoclave and fashion it with a pressure-proof observational lens. Autoclaves are high-pressure vessels that require special licenses (see fig. 7). Against the advice of experts, Beasley bought a large used autoclave and over the course of a few months was able to carefully witness and then correct the specific event—a chemical reaction occurring at a precise temperature, pressure, and time—that accounted for the anomalies, something all the chemists had missed. That observation allowed Beasley to make the proper adjustments and solve the curing problem with the acrylic.

*Apolymon*, the resulting large-scale and groundbreaking work in clear acrylic, was installed in California's state capitol in 1970 (fig. 18). Beasley's discovery changed the plastics industry. His innovative process to make thick, perfectly clear, large acrylic castings was subsequently used to make public aquariums



Fig. 19. Bruce Beasley inside his bathysphere

Fig. 20. Bruce Beasley, *Small Dorian*, 1980, Collection of the Artist

and undersea vehicles, like the deep-sea bathyspheres used by NASA (fig. 19). Generations of architects and artists have benefited from Beasley's refinement of acrylic. Beasley observed, "I have always felt that the hoopla over my having discovered a process that industry considered impossible was less important than what I felt was my real discovery—namely, giving a new voice to sculpture by capturing light."

#### The 1980s

##### Stainless Steel and Aluminum

In the 1980s, Beasley began working with a new material and a new series of large-scale sculptures, in which the ideas of spatial extension and light could be studied through faceted compilations of flat, multisided, stainless-steel planes (fig. 20). He began by creating planar, geometric forms from polygonal flat shapes crafted first in cardboard and then in delicate balsa. These were easy to fit together, so the artist could play with infinite mathematical possibilities. He arranged and rearranged the modules in numerous configurations that eventually began to attain the essence of stretching away from the center. The sculptures from this series are like complex geometric puzzles that suggest molecules or the junctures of joints. Surely, Beasley's scientific background and love of

nature was one guiding inspiration. This series demonstrates Beasley's refined buffing and grinding of the metal, which captures and controls surface texture and reflected light with such precision that both properties do not confuse and compete, but rather unify each works' cohesive vision.

The stainless-steel works were fabricated in his spacious welding studio, which was built adjacent to the original studio building on Lewis Street. *Dorion*, one of the most successful large works from the series, was exhibited and acquired by Grounds For Sculpture; as part of the permanent GFS collection, the piece seems to hover in a perfectly proportioned pool that optimizes the work's reflective beauty. *Dorion* is a centerpiece of Beasley's retrospective, and the artist considers its installation one of the finest (fig. 21).



*precise cardboard model of each of the possibilities of the intersecting forms that I wanted to try. I just knew there had to be a way I could explore these intersecting shapes that was more spontaneous and had some joy in it rather than spending all this time cutting and gluing cardboard for each arrangement of shapes I was investigating. My solution came from the HP tech. The computer was a real departure for me. For the first time, this kind of computer tech allowed me to separate discovering the shape of the sculptures from the process of physically making them. I had a computer program that could isolate each face of the sculptures and turn them into a paper pattern so I could reassemble them in wax for casting or in bronze plate for fabricating.*

Fig. 21. Bruce Beasley, *Dorion*, 1986  
Grounds For Sculpture, Gift of The Seward Johnson Atelier

The computer modeling allowed Beasley to be more productive. Over the years, he has learned how to harness the technology to explore and expand his vocabulary of forms and build shapes in the virtual space of the computer screen, and he eventually developed the means to create the patterns required to fabricate sculptures in bronze.

Beasley's distinctive series of bronze works in small and large scale based on infinite iterations of cubic shapes were enhanced by his growing facility with CAD, but finished pieces are anything

#### From the 1980s and Onward

##### Computer Modeling

Beasley has been widely recognized in the field as the first sculptor to use CAD to investigate aesthetic solutions. He began his research in 1988. With help from his friend Donald Glaser, the renowned Noble Prize-winning physicist, the artist began working with 3D computer solid-modeling software programs. The early versions, however, were very time-consuming and difficult to learn because they were command based. Making a simple cube took him hours. There were so many manuals, Beasley recalls, there was not enough room on his desk. In 1990, Hewlett Packard launched a new version of its computer and modeling software that fit Beasley's goals, and the company provided it to Beasley for free. This new technology gave him more spontaneity and freedom to explore.

The artist reflected on this moment:

*I was investigating a new sculptural vocabulary involving intersecting cubic-like forms. This new vocabulary was new for me and it called to me very strongly, but it was daunting to explore because it required making a painstakingly*



Fig. 22. Bruce Beasley, *Stone Horizon*, 2000. Collection of the artist

Fig. 23. Bruce Beasley, *Horizon II*, 2006. Grounds For Sculpture, Purchase with Funds Provided by the Birney Family Foundation in Memory of Leeshan Birney and Mayling Birney

but mechanic. Instead, they invoke Beasley's love of nature, geology, and landscape (fig. 22). They represent an expansion from the cube into highly sophisticated geometries that multiply not only in mass but in intricate cadence, scale, and shape. Some pieces grow vertically and some horizontally, each with luscious and uncannily precise interactions of edge, and colored patinas that vary from wash-like, mottled, and monochrome. One can sometimes sense in these works visual associations to the Rockies, the mesas of the Southwest, or caves and quarries. The delicate handling removes the works from an industrial reading; these seem more like natural forms. *Horizon II* (2006), a remarkable piece from this series, was already planned for inclusion in the retrospective when it was purchased by a generous donor for Grounds For Sculpture and installed on a lush, earthen mound beside a pond (fig. 23).

##### The Granite Sculptures

Beasley had discovered master stone carvers during his travels to China in 2008, when he was invited to create *The Gathering of the Moons* for the Beijing Olympics (see page ). By the mid-2000s, his facility with CAD and 3D printing allowed him to produce powerful work in granite, such as the quiet, stunning grouping of four *Duende* sculptures. Using CAD to "find"

the most resonant compositions, Beasley then carved all granite works first by hand, without any computer assistance. Once careful artistic hand tooling had rendered the exact work he was after, 3D technology permitted the artist to produce accurate models. These were sent to the best international stone-carving studios in Portugal, Italy, and China, where the large-scale, one-of-a-kind finished pieces were executed (see page TK).

No matter the technology, Beasley's focus is on developing shape and extending the form in three-dimensional space, using new and traditional materials that he believes are uniquely essential to the experience of sculpture.

##### China Beckons

Beasley aims to defy gravity and to make heavy sculptures seem light and airborne, as evident in his *Disk Cantata* series, which are massive, seemingly weightless ovals in stainless steel. To delve deeper into understanding the circular forms, so as to push the sense of weightlessness and "open up" the shapes, Beasley moved from closed disks to the intersecting rings in the *Rondo* series. The *Rondo* sculptures involved fabricating each of the tubular stainless-steel rings separately—some monumental and architectural in scale—and then joining each arch into intersecting compositions that dynamically occupy and reveal space and nature (see page TK).

### 3D Digital Printing

Beasley is always open to processes that might offer him additional tools and opportunities to expand his abilities to explore and discover new possibilities in form. By 2010, he undertook the *Coriolis* series, followed by the *Torqueri* series in 2012, born of Beasley's desire to tackle the challenges of pushing yet furthering the presence of curved forms. To do this, he had to solve the problem of translating curvilinear shapes out of digital conception into the real world—a far more complicated task than with hard-edged cubic sculptures. Beasley recognized that the prospect of 3D printing applied to sculpture would allow him to establish the curvilinear forms and really open the possibilities of form in other ways. He began the journey behind the *Coriolis* works by computer printing a group of small-scale plastic sculptures for an exhibition at Autodesk, in San Francisco. The forms were made by a nozzle



continuously extruding a durable polymer to the artist's design.

Beasley decided that this early group, shown in the material directly from the 3D printer, was a way to legitimize the standard 3D-printing resin as a material for fine art sculpture, for models. Beasley designed and oversaw the building of his own large-scale printer, the largest in the state at the time. Eventually, Beasley was able to print the parts of the sculpture that would normally have been produced through the traditional lost-wax casting process. This innovation made the castings lighter and more accurate, and less expensive to produce.

### The Stainless Steel Torqueri and Virtual Reality

The technique of hammering metal into relief, or repoussé, has been used for centuries to add decoration to objects. During his trips to China, Beasley became well acquainted with the metal shops there, staffed with highly skilled artisans who used the ancient technique. Combined with virtual reality, hammering metal would lead to a new series of sculptures that represent Beasley's most recent exploits in harnessing gestural forms in space.

In 2017, while working at the Pangolin Foundry in England, Beasley experienced the use of virtual reality for envisioning sculpture. The creation of the *Torqueri* sculptures in stainless steel represents the harmonious unification of Beasley's vision and computer-modeling skills with VR, coupled with his comfort in working with the craftsmen in China to fabricate these new works. This series is based on the vertical and sideways twisting of the robust lines and cubic tendrils that expand and coil into space. The final surface treatment is of paramount concern to Beasley in these works. The soft directional buffing of the steel finishes, such as in *Torqueri XIII*, enhances the movement of the light and evokes sensuous, tall, torch-like thrusting movements. The spontaneous feel of organic motion mimics what might be observed in large thrushes of vines, as they knot unpredictably, then grow at times to great lengths (fig. 24).

Fig. 24. Bruce Beasley, *Torqueri XIII*, 2018. Collection of the artist

With VR, Beasley, wearing a headset and with controls in each hand, can draw forms in virtual, gravity-free space with any type of line thickness, and apply curves and twists as he shapes each sculpture. Thousands of possibilities are within reach. The user has complete freedom, which makes this VR technology unique. Thanks to his long experience at making things by hand, Beasley knows how to develop sculptures in computer modeling and with VR that can then be realized in the repoussé technique.

### Aeolis: The Convergence of Form and the Void

Throughout his career, Beasley has demonstrated an ability to play with and reveal not just the solids but also the voids. His most recent series is *Aeolis*, a group of bronze and iron works, which combines the language of the *Coriolis* and *Torqueri* pieces. In these sprawling, sculptural yet drawing-like pieces, the artist has uncannily opened the edges along the thick and knotted planes. The edges are highlighted and distinguished from the solidity of planes, revealing dark voids and plays of negative space cut into solid segments. *Aeolis* works excite and captivate with energy and fluidity, as well as a sense of mystery and complexity. This handling creates an unexpected tension, as if the sculptures cohere yet are about to come apart and break, frozen in that moment (see page TK).

### Collage and the Gesture

As Beasley heads into his seventh decade of exploring possibilities in sculpture, he has initiated a series of large-scale works in two dimensions, the *Aurai*. This effort has been made possible through the artist's comfort with and mastery of VR, which allows him to draw in space in ways that Picasso and David Smith could only dream about. With VR, Beasley gestures as the movements are instantly captured by the software. The resulting lines and shapes are then output to a large printer. The prints are then trimmed to the edge of the lines and placed on large tables in his studio. From there Beasley plays with the cut-outs, arranging and

looking, adjusting and replacing. The process harkens back to those first broken cast iron pieces he formed in the earliest assemblages. The compositions are large-scale collages in low relief, depending on how many layers he uses, and when he is finished, the shapes are mounted on canvas. These stunning wall-mounted works mark the first time Beasley has resorted to a form of two-dimensional drawing in freehand. Need I remind the reader that at Dartmouth he had negotiated to submit sculptures for the final assignment in his drawing class? Remarkably, his use of gesture creates the sense of visual energy paralleling what the Abstract Expressionists attained in the late 1950s and early 1960s—precisely when a young Bruce Beasley was entering college and then beginning his career as a sculptor.

It is ironic and fitting that the proven master of manipulating tactile things—shapes, materials, texture, resins—and the committed seeker of an emotional language of abstraction, finds the means through technology, with no pinning or welding required, to orchestrate and command such lyrical form in “zero gravity.”

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It has been an honor for me to work with Bruce Beasley on this retrospective. Over the course of three years, we met in Oakland often so I could look at his amazing sculptures, which allowed me to select a distinct and comprehensive presentation of this six-decade period. I am also thankful that Bruce was so willing to fabricate several new pieces for the locations I had in mind at Grounds For Sculpture. Spending long hours talking about the objects allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of his work and the processes he developed to make it. When we met for the first time in the 1980s, I had no idea that the future would set the stage for such a rewarding endeavor and friendship.

# Bruce Beasley: In Pursuit of Form

Marlena Donohue

In Andrew Mitchell's compelling *Heidegger Among the Sculptors: Body, Space, and the Art of Dwelling*, the philosophy professor notes that whenever an artist explores space as a material medium for exchange, one encounters the body's appearance in a world of spatial relations. At that point, our bodies and our notions of space/shape are interconnected, and as such our awareness of ourselves becomes participatory and transformative. To paraphrase Heidegger, Beasley's works invite us to "enter space [and shape] and to communicate and commingle in the physicality of the world."<sup>\*</sup>

Indeed, the works in this exhibition are in many respects an extension of Beasley's way of *being* in the world. The tenacious, methodical, and sensitive solutions the artist brings to community issues are echoed in his work and artistic choices. The content is never readable, for abstraction is the opposite of narrative, but his art reflects his lifelong, creative attitude that balances disciplined precision on the one hand, against an instinctive, insistent humanism on the other.

We see this in Beasley's artistic process, when after rigorous investigation, followed by a perfectly timed suspension of logic, he is able to intuit when a tangle of arcs becomes a work of art or a crescendo of cubes becomes what the artists Donald Judd called a "specific object"—that rare aesthetic thing, which, through the direct experience of form alone speaks about perception, time, space, and the point between dispersal and resolution.

The sidewalks, streetlights, homes, green spaces, and community in the historically

neglected section of Oakland, California, for which Beasley was directly or indirectly responsible for improving, came into existence by the same laser focus, vivid imagination, and deep emotional understanding that Beasley employs in his art. This aim to elicit complex visual and emotional reactions—none of which the artist intends but which are fortuitous outcomes—while maintaining a faithfulness to form has been a leitmotif for many abstract artists, including Beasley.

Beasley's powerful sculptures have been exhibited around the world, and he has completed projects for public and private patrons at home and abroad. His works are in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York; National Museum of Modern Art, Paris; National Art Museum of China; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, to name but a few. He has also been commissioned to create and install environmental-scale outdoor works for the cities of Shanghai and Palo Alto, and most recently on the grounds of the University of California, Berkeley, the artist's alma mater. A few years ago, Beasley was the only non-art historian invited to deliver a lecture at Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany, on the career and work of his close friend and inspiration, the Spanish Basque abstract sculptor Eduardo Chillida (fig. 25).

Beasley is, as they say, the real deal.

Like every origin story, Beasley's prefigures his destiny. When he was seven years old, while on a trip with his family, he became fascinated by an abandoned tractor (fig. 26). He was less interested in the object as a piece of machinery than for the way its rusted, disused parts became interlocking shapes and vivid geometries: "Even



Fig. 25. Bruce Beasley and Eduardo Chillida

Fig. 26. Bruce Beasley, age 7

then, I could see the complex wholes were comprised from simple abstract parts, and I became aware that these shapes could invoke in me such a deep, inexplicable feeling of visual pleasure, mystery, joy and more."

His "inexplicable feeling" as a child became his calling as an adult, when he turned from engineering studies at Dartmouth College to fine art at the University of California, Berkeley. Still in his early 20s, the undergraduate was chosen to exhibit alongside Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, Georges Braque, Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, Kurt Schwitters, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns in the Museum of Modern Art's noted 1961 Art of Assemblage show. Their work was heralded by critics and historians as a paradigm shift, a loosening of the stranglehold of Abstract Expressionism on the art world and opening the door for Pop, junk sculpture, installation, and other new genres. When asked about the experience, Beasley simply stated: "I thought it was great, for sure, the works in the show were by amazing people I'd read about and admired, but even then, I wasn't looking for a new trend. . .

I was just doing what I have always understood—moving and finding shapes that resonate with me: I am basically still doing the same thing all these years later."

With both rigor and poetry Beasley deploys the laws of physics, the voids and solids of geometry, as well as any and all advanced technologies that let him express himself in highly personal but nonrepresentational ways. His art has indisputable connections to the visual and philosophical traditions of modern and postmodern abstraction, but Beasley does not duplicate it. If he is a modern abstract sculptor, he is a delightfully authentic and individual one who resists easy labeling. As he says,

*It is a mistake to make me out as having invented the most dandy or perfect or emotive type of abstraction; that's just plain not accurate. Abstract imagery has been around since humanoids made cave marks. These are two ways—figures and shapes—with which humans have always expressed themselves. I value and appreciate both ways of making and seeing and they are not in*

<sup>\*</sup> See Andrew J. Mitchell, *Heidegger Among the Sculptors: Body, Space and the Art of Dwelling* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

*competition, but as an artist, I speak the language of non-narrative shape most naturally.*

In the classical world and during the Renaissance, an artist's value was equated with his capacity for verisimilitude. Aristotle noted that when artists accurately, realistically present us with images of the heroic and the vulgar alike, we confront our humanity. I believe Beasley would agree. In the early twentieth century, after the invention of the camera and multiple ways to capture realism, and in the face of existential anxieties linked to an industrialized world prepping for its first global conflict, European artists like Wassily Kandinsky, Kazimir Malevich, Piet Mondrian, and Naum Gabo and his brother Antoine Pevsner "invented" modernist abstraction.

In about 1911, these modernists transformed the use of nonrepresentational forms from something that humans have always used into the defining "innovation" of advanced modern art. As conceived then, abstraction echoed the Renaissance humanist notion that art could convey a truer, more honest reality, but now it was thought that this could only happen using visuals freed from association with the vagaries of the material world, apart from its brutalities and its conceits.

Beasley by no means denies or rejects any part of this rich complex legacy; in fact, he admires its diversity. Figuring prominently on his desk is a reproduction of Donatello's *David*. His home is filled with works of Eskimo, Buddhist, and Indigenous American art, as well as a Rodin sculpture and abstractions by his friends Chillida and Ingo Ronkholz.

In his own work, however, Beasley affirms with absolute clarity that he doesn't seek to re-create or even reference things as they look or exist in the world. This fact gives Beasley's work what I would call a superficial connection to formal purists from Plato to Malevich, for whom the highest form of beauty and truth exists beneath surface appearances, at the level of the concept or image at its simplest. Malevich's Suprematist abstraction associated the simple, perfect square—and there are lots of those in Beasley's work—with the modernist idea of *zaum*,

roughly translated as a state so pared down that it is "beyond sense." This radical renunciation of the world was said to be spiritually and morally uplifting and to confer transcendent and timeless qualities on simplified form.

Beasley agrees with the idea that simple shapes arranged just so can reveal something profound, maybe even inchoate—an association, a feeling. And Beasley shares the Constructivist interest in having the actual material rather than a narrative or subject carry the impact of the work. He would likely endorse the inseparability of form and content, meaning that for him, the content *is* the form.

When I think of Beasley's stated concerns over six decades of art making, I cannot help but think of the Pevsner brothers, who grounded the goals of modern abstraction in what they called fundamental principles. Key among these was the idea that sculpture be more than static mass, and that an art object can only speak accurately through the physicality of matter, time, space, and motion.

Each day, Beasley confronts with focused pleasure the haptic realities of form, materials, and process. To make his work he contends with weight, scale, rest, resistance, suspension—all the things that must be inventively maneuvered in creating a successful three-dimensional object. Beasley chooses titles like *Coriolis* and *Torqueri* (from the Latin "torquere," meaning to twist or spin), avoiding allusions to things, events, and people to stress physical forces. They anchor the artist's intentions and interests steadfastly in the arena of form—how it works, how it moves, what it is made of. But also, how it makes us feel.

Yet he rejects any theory that insists art is *exclusively* form, or that an artwork as it enters the world is *nothing but* form and its perception.

Many see sublime mountain mesas in the sienna patinas and textured planes of cubic works like *Solid Sequence*. These interpretations delight Beasley. He delights first and foremost in mining and finding shapes that call to him, and delights doubly in a six-decade job that sends art into the world where it does what it will do—potentially please, possibly confound, surprise, and always move us.

In addition, his work reminds us that kinesthetic, physical conditions, as well as

arrangements of pure form and their plastic processes, have psychological effects. Even without explicit pictures or stories, they can generate feeling. Perhaps this is because we are, after all, physical beings. Tension, expansion, compression, release, disequilibrium, fixedness—these are not only physical states but conditions of our emotional inner lives. Beasley's work taps into this deeply rooted form-to-emotion connection.

Beasley's mastery of form and feeling ties him to artists like Theo van Doesburg, Mondrian, Josef Albers, Walter Gropius, and, to an extent, the critic Clement Greenberg, who suggested that simplified, clear edges and vibrant contours could achieve a sort of visual utopia, an uplifted society and universal harmony. Advocating this geometric idealism from the other side, the German philosopher Theodor Adorno looked back at the atrocities of fascism in the 1940s, when art was used as propaganda for dictators or fodder for unthinking consumers. He concluded that only the autonomous work of art could advance culture, an object operating outside what he called a debased reality by maintaining its own rules of form, visual syntax, discrete functions, accomplishing the true role of art as a site of cultural, intellectual, and even spiritual resistance.

Beasley, however, is suspect of abstract art or any style for that matter that insists art is obliged to, or even can, heal or radically alter the world. He endorses a certain autonomy of form; he is not an artist who sees a story or an idea and then illustrates it. He finds an isolated, unified syntax or dialect of form—tubing, pieces of Styrofoam, cubes, rings—and experiments with dozens of visual phrases until that language renders a work of art.

Yet Beasley is singularly uninterested in paring down form for its own sake. The creative processes that bring his sculptures and collages into existence—namely, delighted inquiry and honed skill—are hardly reductive. If anything, his work is expansive, fearlessly additive. Beasley uses his imagination and any technology he can find, master, or invent to watch shapes and materials bend, cast light, amass, intertwine, interact with their own space and the spaces that contain them. The complexities he orchestrates

do not distract us from reality, they enliven our awareness.

Although nature is not his subject, his sculptures and collages have a direct proprioceptive relation to it. We actually *feel* their density, motions, push and pull in our bodies—that most natural of things. They also elicit associations with generative conditions unique to nature, like accretion and mobility. Beasley's intense respect for nature is everywhere in his life. In studios filled with rare fossils, geodes attest to the symmetry and brilliant order of nature. Among highlights in his life, Beasley includes walking along Italian rock quarries with the artist Giò Pomodoro, marveling at nature's inventive slicing and edging of rock, and a trip to Iceland in his 70s to experience the earthen line at the meeting of the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates.

In the writings of the Pevsner brothers and Greenberg—politically radical thinkers—there was an implied suspicion of art as sociology, a reminder that the artist is quintessentially and ultimately a mover of forms. Beasley likewise rejects the premise that artists' social views/activism must be brought into the studio; he has told me he "lacks the hubris" to claim he knows what might constitute social justice for all. As he explained to Lawrence Weschler, solving social issues for him has certain methodological parallels to his approach to art, but ideology, politics, advocacy do not enter into it (see Weschler's essay, this volume). He says he is that rare thing: a deeply political artist who eschews political art. "If there is link between my studio life and my political life," Beasley says, "it is remote and mainly that I approached inequities in my neighborhood the way I approach a sculpture: something intrigues me, I play with arrangements of parts until I 'see' a promising possibility, this excites further progress, then reason and imagination find ways to make it manifest."

This was his approach in convincing Southern Pacific Railroad to stop collecting exorbitant rents for their properties and sell the homes at fair prices to the families of the Black tenants in his neighborhood. And after he and son Julien assisted survivors during the deadly 1989



Fig. 27. Eduardo Chillida, *The Comb of the Wind*, 1970, cast steel, dimensions variable



Fig. 28. Bruce Beasley, *Apolymon*, 1970, cast acrylic, 108 × 180 × 72 in. State of California, Sacramento

Oakland earthquake, the artist used the failed steel of the freeway to make *Pillars of Cypress* as a memorial. This is because Beasley would never deny that art and social forces are under the same pressures of power and privilege. A new work, *In defiance of the Virus*, encapsulates the tenacity of biology, the anxiety of this pandemic year, and the resilience of the artistic will in spite of it.

Beasley is well read, and his family includes a world-renowned epidemiologist (his brother Palmer worked on key AIDS research) and a mother who painted, graduated college cum laude, and lectured before such things were done by women. His wife Laurence is a classical pianist, an expert on the prehistoric Lascaux caves who bravely addressed UNESCO on their preservation, and the producer of some of his sculptures' complex patinas. It is safe to say that Beasley is more than aware of all the art historical trends, art controversies, existential complexities that hover around work like his. Yet, he is not tethered to any of it; he makes what compels him. Hard stop.

Beasley has traveled to many remote corners of this globe, participated in Kwakiutl potlatch rituals, and collaborated with, been touched by, or befriended major artists of every ilk: the maker of famous junk environments, Edward Kienholz; the earthworks artist, Christo; fellow sculptors Mark di Suvero and Manuel Neri; ceramicist

Peter Voulkos, to name a few. If there is an artist he's been most impacted by it is Chillida, definitely a kindred spirit. Chillida incorporated the sea and the mountains as media (fig. 27); similarly, Beasley's *Rondo* series incorporates ambient landscape right into the works' rhythms and symmetries. Beasley's preoccupation with soaring motion reminds me of what Chillida fondly called his "rebellion against gravity." Like Beasley, Chillida was motivated by the pleasure of discovery, "I am always trying to do what I don't know how to do," he told the press at the opening of his show at the Guggenheim Bilbao.

Beasley, too, dives headlong, excited and with shocking success, into what he does not know. When he started wondering about shape, light, and transparency, experts at Dupont told him the large-scale acrylic casting that he needed for the work called *Apolymon* was impossible (fig. 28). So, Beasley fashioned his own in-studio industrial autoclave to figure out the exact pressure/temperature conditions needed to solve the problem. When it took too long to craft cardboard or wooden maquettes of complex cubic arrangements, his friend the Nobel laureate Don Glaser got him not-yet-public aerospace programs for computer-assisted design (CAD), and today Beasley is a master of it. When 3D printers were too small to deliver adequate volumetric trial sculptures, he helped to design

and oversee the building of the first larger-scale 3D printer for artistic use.

At 82 and ever inquisitive, Beasley blithely entered the domain of virtual reality (VR). VR technology permits him to create spontaneous, gravity-free gestures with his own hand in any configuration—thin, thick, cylindrical, hexagonal. VR gear in place, in a roomlike virtual space, Beasley literally draws gestures with his hand in the air. The wavelike shapes made by his direct tactile motion are saved to a computer. Those that resonate are studied, amended, rotated, overlapped, printed until shapes coalesce into new expressionistic sculptures or collage. This exhibition is the first public showing of sculptures—*Aeolis I* and *III*—created in this way.

Beasley is adamant that VR and, indeed, his career-long use of computers is no different than his sketching and drawing in any nondigital way. For Beasley the computer joins the pencil, charcoal stick, brush, chisel, and engraver's burr in the arsenal of legitimate tools used by fine artists throughout history to push the boundaries of production and media in ways that advanced art's practice and history. Brunelleschi devised a glazed surface with a peephole drilled through it to study and duplicate one-point perspective; Vermeer used the camera obscura; Man Ray "painted" with light on photo-sensitive paper; László Moholy-Nagy used prefabricated plexiglass and industrial metals. At first these tools seemed like assaults on the sanctity of the artist hand, as somehow interfering with the direct touch that underlies genius. Today, entire art departments are dedicated to these experimental interdisciplinary media.

The thinking and artistic sensitivity that Beasley brings to the use of digital technology as a creative catalyst and partner to aesthetics put him at the forefront of interfaces between fine art and our digital future. The Latin word *ars* refers to artful inspiration; the Latin *techne* suggests the skillful use of tools. Outmoded prejudices separate these; in Beasley's work, *techne* and *ars* are wed.

So, you walk this comprehensive retrospective, spread across acres of indoor and outdoor spaces, and you detect formal themes within similar visual families. Someone else, newly exposed to

Beasley, looks from the bronze, weight-defying *Coriolis* spirals to the chunky, jewel-like acrylics, or from the fragile, small-scale cast-aluminum series from the late 1960s that remind us of flight to the stalwart floor-bound *Duendes* looking like sarsens created by an ancient civilization, and concludes that these works could not be made by the same artist. This is because Beasley doesn't believe in signature styles.

*About this issue of repetition in abstract art, I like to refer again to my general music analogies. You have a limited array of notes—in this case shapes. You imagine, invent and play with these limited parts until there is a pleasing combo—like a chord in music. Like notes, I amass shapes into visual chords if you will—majors, minors, 5ths, and every eccentric variation in between. We do not say that Beethoven repeats himself because he speaks with the same array of notes; and I do not repeat myself simply because I am imagining an infinite range of expression with cubes and arcs—shapes that recur in nature. When my investigation into any arrangements of those notes becomes easy, if the struggle and joy of discovery is gone, I find another visual song.*

He won't continue a style for financial gain (he could sell acrylics all-day long and when asked why he doesn't, the answer is simply, "I am done with that.") He won't repeat himself to please critics/viewers who expect "a Beasley," nor will he change course under art-market hunger for what's momentarily "new" or "popular." He exhausts an idea—often after years and years—and when *he* decides no challenge remains, Beasley switches visual gears. For a decade, infinite cubic permutation fed his fascination with hard edges, planes, and cantilevering; when his curiosity turned to shapes in motion, the cubic work stopped and he introduced ellipses, then arcs, then the expressive ribbons in his newest work. A sworn sculptor who insisted he simply "did not" work in two-dimensional graphic media, he created stunning lyrical, low-relief collages with VR that hang beautifully on walls. We can only wonder what will be next.

# But For Real: A Conversation with Bruce Beasley on Art and Social Activism

Lawrence Weschler

Heading out to meet the sculptor Bruce Beasley, I'd been planning to talk to him about his conception of the sculptural vocation—what did he mean, precisely, when he described his geometric forms as “calling out” to him as they took shape in the vividly, sometimes almost epically, abstract gestures for which he is widely celebrated. And I was expecting to be doing so in what had once been—and not so long ago—one of the sketchiest, most blighted neighborhoods in the entire East Bay, which is to say West Oakland, wedged up against the teeming docks.

The neighborhood into which I instead alighted—the South Prescott subdistrict—comprised cozy, mostly century-old single-family units, and Beasley's compound, in particular, situated at the end of a tree-shaded street, was positively Edenic. A well-appointed home designed by the artist, brimming with Indigenous art, and next door, the multi-use workspace that he had purchased for working and living at the beginning of his career, back in 1962. Girdling the two structures, a fragrant garden, in part given over to the spacious display of a career's worth of Beasley works, and across the street, a huge gleaming studio, also designed by the artist, complete with a bridge crane and expanses of elegant glass for light, all to hold his still prodigious productivity.

When I commented on the exceptional and unexpected beauty of it all, Beasley pulled out a sheaf of photos, to prove to me that it hadn't always been thus. The images, from when he first moved here in the early 1960s, were more like what I'd been expecting: dismal streets with potholes but no sidewalks, junkyards filled with wrecked cars, derelict houses, empty lots strewn with refuse, and underemployed neighbors.

As we now returned to his home's airy two-story living room and took our seats, Beasley set about setting the table, as it were, for what he was hoping we'd be talking about: “There is a rather limited way that we define the political artist in our current climate,” he began. “There seems to be a presumption that including overtly political subject matter makes an artist ‘activist,’ and failing to do so suggests a lamentable failure of political responsibility, all of which comes with the corollary idea that merely by engaging political issues art has

the capacity to actually effect social change in some way. And I question all of that. I'm not denying that political art communicates and has a profound place in history—just think of Goya!—but what drew me to social activism fifty years ago was a desire to be part of a project effecting concrete, on-the-ground results, and I'm not sure that most of what passes for political art today does that.”

He paused before continuing: “I suppose this question comes up for me at this late stage in my life in part because of the heightened character of the discourse around these issues in the artworld generally these days, especially on campus, but also because I often wonder what that artworld would make of an artist like me who resolutely does not use social issues as subject matter in his artistic production but who has actually practiced social activism in a committed way throughout his working life. Am I then a political artist, an activist artist, or just an engaged citizen who happens to be an artist? I don't think art discourse and narrow definitions about political artists have investigated this question with any real depth. . . . And I'd hoped that we might try to do that today.”

He continued as to how two braided strands—art and activism—had long dovetailed across the length of his own life, though he'd long avoided discussing his history of activism in the context of his art, because he wanted to keep the two distinct from one another. He did not want his community activism to then invite forced politicized narratives of his decidedly abstract work. But on the brink of a 60-year retrospective, he'd come to feel that now might be the time for a discussion of the full breadth of his life as both an artist and a citizen.

Perhaps, I suggested, he might begin with a quick overview of how he'd gotten into art, on the one hand, and activism, on the other, and then, for that matter, into West Oakland, of all places. Well, he recounted, he'd enjoyed a normal childhood in Southern California, but from early on he'd been drawn to the world of the visual and the spatial, in particular. In high school,

Caption TK



he'd loved welding and shop as much as the college prep subjects in which he excelled, and he set off for Dartmouth College to study rocket science, which was thought to be the logical option for a precocious kid with both design and science interests. Quickly, however, he realized that missile dynamics was not his passion. "I was a seeker, I was seeking my place in the world, I just didn't know what it was." Things began to clarify in that regard, however, when he took a drawing class, the only such art offering at the school ("a holdover from this very Edwardian idea that an educated gentleman should be able to do a little sketching"). In lieu of a final group of drawings, he submitted a suite of three-dimensional objects. "And that was it. I had found what I'd been seeking: a way to combine the head, the heart, and the hand."

After two years at Dartmouth, he transferred to the University of California, Berkeley, one of the few collegiate institutions to offer a degree in sculpture, where he studied with Sidney Gordin, Peter Voukos, and others. By the time he got his degree, his sophisticated pedestal-bound assemblages (meshing together all manner of discarded tubing and welded parts) were already receiving awards and widespread recognition; in 1961, Beasley became one of the youngest artists selected by William Seitz for the celebrated *Art of Assemblage* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Beasley was also coming into his own politically in those socially charged times. These were the early sixties (the end of the quiescent fifties, especially in Berkeley), an era of swelling activism, and the artist threw himself into the various uprisings with gusto, starting with protests against the fierce descent onto San Francisco of the House Un-American Activities Committee. "Getting hosed down on the steps of City Hall was my baptism of fire, and my suffering such a fate even radicalized my moderate Rockefeller-backing mother, who wrote J. Edgar Hoover a furious letter insisting that her son was no communist." Beasley engaged in the Free Speech Movement from its earliest days; he eventually found his way into the battles around People's Park, where he was even present the day the police fired live shots directly over his head, killing a bystander in a nearby house; and, of course, he also protested the Vietnam War.

"I had always been politically aware; I came from a humanistic if Republican family who supported any free thinking—us kids were never required to agree with our parents. Back then, I was always involved as a demonstrator, as an informed voter, and liberal thinker, though I knew I was not a leader in that regard, not an orator or a college organizer who could motivate others into activism through fiery rhetoric and such. I have

always been inclined towards making things, towards concrete results—that is probably why I love sculpture. You actually make something that exists, even if my instinctive artistic language has always taken a pure nonnarrative shape. And even then, I couldn't see how my making social art could or would actually change things on the ground."

Thus, Beasley went on to explain, he knew on graduating that for him, his art and activism would remain resolutely separate. And he'd confirmed for himself that he was, above all else, an abstract sculptor. Now, as for deciding where this passion might best flourish, he knew he'd need space. He traveled back to check out New York, still a hotbed of abstract art—painting especially—but perhaps not as conducive for a sculptor. "You could get a loft, but in order to get any really serious materials you had to file permits for truck deliveries and so forth, whereas back West you could just buy a load of steel, say, throw it in the back of your pickup and haul it right to your studio, no questions asked. The real draw of New York would have been the prospect of Fame and Fortune, neither of which were my top priorities, and I just felt I could make better sculpture by staying on the West Coast."

So, alright, he decided to stay in the Bay Area—but why West Oakland? "Simple: sculpture." As Beasley tells it, Oakland had places that were cheap even if they needed work to fix them up—lots of abandoned and dilapidated factories and warehouses, the remnants of an area that had once been a thriving industrial power and transport base. "In the early 1960s, the neighborhood was 80% black, 20% Latino, and 0% white, except for me. It had always been poor, at best lower middle class. But culturally fascinating. Jack London grew up just a few blocks away. This was the place where the Southern Pacific Railroad terminated in the Oakland dockyards, and back in those days before containerization, there'd been all these warehouses for storing and repackaging products coming in and going out. Along with all those jobs. The national headquarters for the Sleeping Car Porters Union was right nearby. At one point the city fathers had the idea to recast Oakland as 'Pittsburgh on the Pacific' and rezoned the whole area industrial. Then with World War II, Kaiser Shipyards set to building Liberty Ships, and there was a huge influx of rural southern Blacks who were redlined into the immediate vicinity, though with the end of the war, those jobs also petered out, and the neighborhood fell on hard times."

Speaking of which, Beasley recalled how back at the start he'd taken to putting in new windows in the old, run-down grain milling factory he had just bought and was endeavoring to reclaim, and how each morning they'd turn up broken again. One day, he was working on the building when a rock came

crashing through a freshly installed pane. "And I just lost it," he recounted. "I came tearing down the stairs and out the front door, down the middle of the street, I began chasing two kids, maybe eight years old, who had thrown the rocks. I didn't really have any plan, I was just reacting, and when I caught one, I marched him back to where he lived and turned him over to his mother to be disciplined. And it was only then that I realized that this whole incident had taken place in front of the entire neighborhood, people on porches, men working on cars, etc. This was at a time of a lot of racial tensions and before that incident I had not really reflected on, given that context, what actions on my part might be appropriate given my status as the only white person in the neighborhood. But as things came to a head that day, I realized that this wasn't a racial issue, it was a troublesome kid issue, and I ended up doing what anyone should do in that situation, which was to take the kid back to his parents and not to involve the police. I think it was that incident that set the tone of where I stood in both my eyes and the eyes of my neighbors. This was my community—I didn't insist on being an 'instant' insider, but nor did I intend to be a long-term outsider."

It was simply a question of neighborly relations. A few months later, a group of radical white members of Students for a Democratic Society (from a group soon to turn into The Weathermen) moved into a house just around the corner and began trying to recruit Beasley, a fellow white radical as they imagined him, but to no avail. Finally, a group of them came over to confront him: why was he giving them the cold shoulder? "I'll tell you the problem," he responded. "How many of you do you have living all together in that house?" About thirteen or fourteen. "Half boys and half girls?" Yeah. "Well, here's the situation. Next door to you lives a lady named Mrs. Johnson, a lady who may not share your revolutionary values. And Mrs. Johnson has a fifteen-year-old daughter who goes to McClymonds High School, and what's important to Mrs. Johnson is that her daughter graduates from McClymonds High School and not end up in trouble. And Mrs. Johnson thinks that you are a terrible influence. I get it, and I live here now. I don't think you guys are going to be around very long. But I intend to be. So, if there's a side here, I'm on Mrs. Johnson's side."

The place was fast becoming not just his house but his home. These were his neighbors, and Beasley was beginning to see how, as neighbors, they might be able to join together to get things accomplished, one by one. The evidence of this would unfold in a series of specific activist "campaigns" that he spearheaded that would help change the face of Prescott.

For starters, the streetlights. West Oakland was the only part of the city that didn't have them, which was both a safety issue and a quality of life statement. "Now," Beasley explained, "we could have all marched on city hall with placards, making a ruckus, and likely got nothing done. But as a collective, we started strategizing. I was the only one with a college education, and I knew how to research things, that's what I brought to the table. I discovered that PG&E, the electricity company, had a policy that it would itself cover the expense of installing streetlights if the city would just pay the subsequent electricity bills. I thought that was going to prove a crucial piece of information, because I guessed the city was going to say that they didn't have the money to install streetlights.

"So, we organized a community meeting and invited the head of the city's electricity department to come and explain why West Oakland didn't have streetlights. I did not want to be the white guy leading the show—this was for all of us, and other residents would be much better at direct pressure. So, we spent several evenings rehearsing everybody's roles, and when the guy arrived, we were ready. They demanded to know why we did not have streetlights, and, sure enough, the guy said because installing streetlights was very expensive and the city didn't have the money for them, and then one of the residents—fully prepped—shot back, 'Well, PG&E tells us that they'd install the lights for free if the city would just pay the subsequent bills.' The fellow started sputtering and said that it was still the same issue, the City Council set his budget and they didn't give him the money. Then our guy demanded to know how much the city guy had asked for when he submitted his budget and how much he'd received. Well, it turned out that he'd gotten whatever he'd asked for. And then he was asked, 'Was it because West Oakland has the highest percentage of Blacks that he hadn't even asked for enough money so that West Oakland could have streetlights like the rest of the city?' We shamed him, and he left, stunned. And we had streetlights within six months.

"The thing is, I approached community issues the very same way I approached making a sculpture: trusting my instinct or my heart, applying logic, or using my head, and finally with my hands, which is to say, finding a concrete process I could undertake to get the desired effect. In the studio when, for instance, I cast bronze, as I say, my instinct tells me when a final arrangement of shapes 'speak'; but then I think through and research the ways of achieving that effect, whereupon I execute it across a very careful process. If there is any way my art and political life intertwine it is in that I approach both quite similarly: both reflect my personal approach to creative exploration."

Meanwhile, alone across the broader city of Oakland, Prescott, in particular, could claim no access to such other civic amenities as curbs, gutters or sidewalks. The original wooden plank sidewalks were missing or broken, and so cars were parked where the sidewalks should have been. It was all just exposed dirt, which was muddy in the winter and dry and dusty in the summer. By this point, though, Lyndon Johnson's Model Cities program had come into play. Significant money was flowing into the region, but the grants were spread around so widely that nothing significant ever got accomplished. Beasley and his fellow neighbors therefore mounted a campaign to run a slate for the district Model Cities Council, and the slate (including him) won, and amazingly, they convinced all the other council members to pool their small grants for two years to fund curbs, gutters, and sidewalks for all of West Oakland. "This was a really important improvement in basic livability and appearance," Beasley insists, "and proved a keystone victory in that it led to many other improvements like street trees, rezoning, and the elimination of red lining."

As early as 1966 The Black Panther party had established its founding headquarters just a few blocks away, at 14th and Peralta Streets. How, I asked Beasley, had that worked for the area? "That worked great," he replied, somewhat surprisingly. "They basically paid no attention to our neighborhood group, but on the other hand they were a perfect foil for us. On the one hand, they had these guys brandishing guns and talking about revolution and all, while over on our side, we were some neighborhood people who wanted a health center, or a park, some curbs, gutters, and street trees. By contrast we looked reasonable, so we got more than we otherwise might have. The Panthers were scaring the pants off people, advocating for things that they were not likely to achieve, whereas we were proposing actual stepwise changes that were doable. And like I've been saying, for me activism needs to produce concrete results, it cannot be just a studio subtext."

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By 1975, a decade had passed. Beasley had met Laurence Leaute, a veteran of the student uprisings in Paris of 1968, and convinced her to join him there in West Oakland. They'd married and were expecting their first child, Julien, and Beasley decided to try to buy the rubble-strewn vacant lot next door to build a play yard for the coming child. Thus began the Story of the Thirty Nine Parcels.

Having resolved to buy that lot, as usual Beasley headed downtown to do his research, and he determined that the

lot was owned by the Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR), who appeared to own dozens of other such lots, some inhabited, others abandoned, all around the eight blocks of South Prescott. Beasley made an appointment to meet with Oscar Osness, the Vice President for Real Estate in SPRR's San Francisco office, who summarily interrupted his inquiry about purchasing the lot to inform him, "Young man, Southern Pacific has a very firm policy: we acquire property, we don't sell property."

Beasley asked Osness what the railroad intended to do with the scattered properties and was told that, actually, they had once had plans for an expansion of their facilities, but those had been shelved, and that actually, if anything, the parcels had become something of a problem for them. So why, asked Beasley, wouldn't they consider selling them? To which Osness replied, blandly, dryly, self-evidently, "Because we have a policy of not selling land."

So, Beasley decided he'd just have to help them change their policy. He and Laurence began canvassing neighbors, especially those with properties adjacent to the festering abandoned lots, and they formed a committee to start demanding that the city insist that Southern Pacific clean up those vacant lots and then keep them regularly serviced. Which the city authorities agreed to do. Then, after a few months of forced cleanup, which was adding significant expense for the railroad, Beasley returned to Osness, who had in the meantime experienced a magical change of heart. "Okay," he said, handing Beasley a sheet of paper with 39 addresses and next to each one a number (400, or 800, and one 1,200). "Here's the deal, we will sell all of the parcels, the number is the price, all the properties must be sold in one transaction, and all for cash."

"You mean," Beasley asked, "I can't just give you a cashier's check for the lot I want to buy, and Mrs. Taylor can't do the same to buy the house she is renting?" "No," replied Osness, "All for cash, no negotiating, and all in one transaction. We want to be sure to get rid of all that property, we don't want to be left with any, and we won't dicker about the price."

Beasley gulped, the lump sum was not small, but he figured that at these prices, most of his neighbors would be able to come up with mattress money or the support of relatives, so he asked for a few months to try to gain the cooperation of the community. "Why," Osness asked Beasley, "don't you just buy up all the lots yourself? You know those are a great bargain." To which Beasley responded, "Because I can't do that. I live there and I am raising a family there. I can't suddenly become the guy who owns a third of the neighborhood. I wouldn't be a neighbor

anymore; I would become a real estate mogul." "You're missing a great opportunity," huffed Osness, as Beasley left.

Beasley's neighbors exulted at the news and quickly mobilized at the prospect of transforming their status from renters to homeowners virtually overnight. To assure the transparency and to avoid co-mingling of funds of the entire operation, they took out a safe deposit box and one by one filled it with individual cashier's checks made out to Southern Pacific, and by the end of two months, they had all managed to meet their goals with the exception of four elderly retired railroad-porter tenants (all residents of \$800 parcels, each of whom had only been able to come up with \$400).

Beasley returned to Osness and presented the situation: couldn't the huge corporation grant the four senior tenants the outright gift of the remainder of the amount due? "Nope," said Osness, sternly, "I told you, it was all at once and no dickering over the price." Well then, could the corporation grant each of the remaining four \$400 mortgages? (Granted that such ridiculously small monthly premiums would cost more in paperwork just to process.) No, Osness insisted, he had stated the rules. At which point Beasley said, "I have this list on your own letterhead showing the addresses and the prices. I happen to know that you are renting those run-down houses to your own retired Black Pullman Porters for \$60 dollars a month, which comes to \$720 a year, which is 90% of your asking price of \$800. Do you really want me to hold a press conference and demonstrate, with figures *on your own letterhead*, that SP has been getting a 92% return by renting slum housing to their own retired Black employees?" Beasley smiled at the memory. "I had heard the expression 'if looks could kill,' but I only really understood it for the first time when Osness glared at me after I said that."

Southern Pacific did write those last four niggling mortgages, the deal went through, and on April 10, 1975, they all gathered for the transfer at the neighborhood school. SPRR showing up with a thick stack of 39 deeds, the tenants breaking open their safe deposit box, and the exchanges getting made sequentially, one after the next. "That evening," Beasley recalled, "many people became homeowners for the first time in their lives, and South Prescott became the neighborhood with the highest percentage of homeowners in all the Oakland flatlands. And that really transformed South Prescott. Houses got repaired and painted, and trashy vacant lots became gardens. And a burgeoning and palpable sense of solidarity spread throughout the neighborhood."

Beasley paused for a moment before continuing. "But I want to make clear, I wasn't doing any of this out of any sense

of selfless devotion or privileged charity: the streetlights, the sidewalks, the trees, cleaning up the lots, an area for a garden—my family benefited just as much as anyone else in the neighborhood. And that growing sense of neighborhood solidarity in turn benefited all of us."

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The years passed, the actions continued, the Beasley family grew (a second child, a daughter, Celia, joining the brood in 1977), and on its separate track, Beasley's art career continued to flourish. Then on the balmy evening of October 17, 1989 (when across the Bay the Giants, the National League baseball champions, were getting set to contest the first game of the World Series), one of the worst earthquakes in California history suddenly struck, with West Oakland as an epicenter and serious damage just a few hundred yards from the Beasley home. Assessing that everyone at home was safe, Beasley and 14-year-old Julien went racing out only to discover that just a few blocks away, the top span of the elevated Cypress Freeway had pancaked down onto its lower tiers, crushing cars and passengers, leaving the lower span looking as if it, too, was on the verge of collapse.

Bruce and his son rushed back to the studio, grabbed construction vests and hardhats, and returned to the scene to join the neighborhood's spontaneous rescue efforts. After the highway department trucks arrived with huge wooden beams, others still, including Beasley and Julien, assisted in helping to pile those beams under the tottering span to secure the scene. "It was fascinating to watch the difference in how specific city agencies and the wider community at large engaged," Beasley recalls. "Neighbors were arriving with ladders, anything that might help in the rescue efforts, while the police were busy pushing folks away, trying to establish a secure corridor and take control, claiming there was looting; I was there and I can tell you, there was no looting. Meanwhile, the fire department was welcoming all the help they could get."

The collapse of that more than a mile long stretch of the Cypress Freeway ended up costing over 40 lives and proved "a lasting trauma" for West Oakland. For his part, Beasley went back in the days that followed and gathered up long twisted bundles of thick-gauge rebar, some of the very strands that had so catastrophically failed in the collapse, which he melted down, casting the molten steel into what he considers perhaps his only overtly political work, *Pillars of Cypress*. That piece is composed of a series of plinths intended to memorialize the volunteer efforts of his neighbors who had risked their lives in

direct contravention of police aspersions on that dreadful day; Beasley's *Pillars* incidentally anticipated a similar reclamation of twisted rebar by the Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei following the Sichuan earthquake of 2008.

"And yet," Beasley recalls, "at the same time, it has to be acknowledged that the now collapsed freeway had been hated. Put up in the early fifties, it was this big, dark network of concrete, completely dividing the neighborhood and utterly blocking the sky; and with trash continually building up underneath, it was more than an eyesore, it was a was a thumb in the eye of the entire neighborhood. So, when it came down and suddenly the sky opened up and the light came pouring in—I don't mean that we didn't share profound feelings for the people who had died, but it was wonderful not to have it there any longer."

The freeway's collapse proved the occasion for yet another community battle. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) was initially eager to resurrect a new freeway on the ruins of the old one, but the agency had not factored in the fierce resolve of South Prescott. Beasley and his Prescott neighbors mobilized in opposition to that plan, nixing the double-decker causeway and even forcing a rerouting of its ground-level replacement. They fought for and prevailed with their vision of turning the old right of way into a one-and-a-half-mile-long meandering green parkway planted with 600 trees. "With the added bonus," Beasley now told me, "that in the process our neighborhood cemented its well-deserved reputation: 'Don't mess with South Prescott.'"

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In the end, it seemed, only South Prescott and its own progress could mess with South Prescott. The neighbors had so vastly improved the neighborhood that, what with its proximity to the BART station and Silicon Valley, prices began soaring in the inevitable dance of gentrification. "Gentrification," Beasley now said with a sigh. "It's such a painful issue for me, a shadow over my heart: this dilemma of the way that making the neighborhood more beautiful with and for the residents at the same time makes it more desirable for everybody else, too. When I grew up, people were leaving the inner cities and moving out to the suburbs to raise their families, and I was one of the first who came back the other way. But for the kids who grew up in the inner city, there was no magic about the inner city. So, when their parents died and they inherited those houses, they were eager to move out. Several right here on this block. I'd go over and urge them not

to sell. 'Come on,' I'd say, 'stay, you've got friends here, we're a real neighborhood.' But they'd answer, 'Oh Bruce, come on, with the money I can get selling this property in this market, out in Vallejo I can buy a bigger house on a better lot.' And who was I to tell them they shouldn't?"

He paused, reflecting. "But I sure miss the solidarity. The younger people who are moving in, they're okay, but they lack a spirit of community engagement. They come out of their houses and apartments each morning, headed for BART, their eyes fixated on their little screens. Back in the day, neighbors made eye contact, said hi across the street, inquired how things were going. There's hardly any of that anymore."

"So, there you have it," Beasley now moved to sum up his position. "I imagine that a 60-year record of civic engagement qualifies me to be considered an activist artist. And as such I still feel that there ought to be room for an artist like me within the currently roiling discourse to qualify as a political artist, albeit one whose artistic production simply does not itself reflect any strong political sensibilities."

But what, I asked, about those stacked cube pieces he'd been showing me back in the studio, those crystalline cuboid accumulations, each individual cube seemingly growing out of the others, reminiscent of some of those proto-Cubist townscapes of Cézanne and later Braque and Picasso? Mightn't they suggest a sort of abstract parallel with the civic activism, the veritable town-building he'd been so vividly engaged in at the very moment of their creation on that other, supposedly walled off, track of his life? Or the massive transparent acrylic sculpture *Apolymon* now gracing the state capitol grounds in Sacramento, for example, or some of the vertically twisting and soaring tendrils situated in public sites across the globe—mightn't one interpret those, at least partially, as celebrations of such political virtues as transparency, in the one case (and that at the very end of the Nixonian Watergate era), or of the reach toward liberty, freedom, or sheer aspiration in the other?

Beasley almost bridled at the suggestion. "No," he insisted, "really not, not from my perspective as their creator, none of that is going on in any of them. And I'd rather you not pursue such facile correlations. I think, instead, that it would be great to open an art world conversation about the difference—philosophic, aesthetic, ideological—between merely representing politics in art and actually enacting social change."

And yet, looking at things from the other side, what of the value in the work, say, of such blatantly political artists as Edward Kienholz, with his Vietnam or abortion or mental hospital pieces? "As it happens," Beasley replied, "I knew Ed

quite well and for a long time, going all the way back to our shared participation in the *Art of Assemblage* show at MoMA in the early sixties, and I admired him enormously, even went to visit him on occasion up at his compound in Hope, Idaho—that *Non-War Memorial* piece of his I think is one of the great political statements of the last century. And I want to be clear on this: I am not criticizing other ways of being a political artist. It's just that I myself am singularly devoted to abstraction for its own sake, to the pure expressive potential of shape and form. That has fueled my creative endeavors and marked my life as artist. But I am also a singularly dedicated citizen. And both facts should be able to co-exist."

I pressed back a bit more. What of someone like Robert Irwin, the great Light and Space master and seemingly one of the least conventionally political artists ever, so emphatic is he in focusing on perception itself as the pure subject of his art, that and perhaps coaxing the viewers of that art to perceive themselves perceiving—what of his claim that expanding people's perceptual capacities necessarily expands their ability to perceive the reality of the world around them, and as such has decidedly political implications?

"Well," Beasley responded, "I guess I just don't see how I address my civic responsibility by making beautiful things, in the hope perhaps of bringing out a more refined political sensibility in the viewer. I feel that if you see an injustice, you need to respond to it directly."

The room began to darken, a harbinger of the coming evening.

"I suppose it all goes back to my being a hands-on sculptor," Beasley surmised, "and the mere fact that sculptors have to be, no matter what else, distinctly practical—philosophical ruminations just won't get a spatial object built or keep it standing. Most sculptors tend by nature to be grounded. We have to be. We can't make real three-dimensional objects that stand, exist, and persist in our haptic world if we're not grounded in well-considered processes and outcomes. We are inherently involved in the physicality of what is real."

"There's a great passage in one of Leonardo's notebooks, about painting being more refined than sculpture—he was apparently casting shade on Michelangelo. And he wrote something along the lines that the painter sits very neatly in front of his easel wearing velvet and silk while listening to boys playing lutes, but the sculptor hammers away on his stone covered in sweat and dust. Now, Leonardo meant that as a criticism of the directness of sculpture. But you can't insult us sculptors for the physicality of our work—it is the core of what we do. It's messy, it's lived, and it has to exist within the

physical reality of our world. Civic work is similarly messy, hard, and necessarily practical. It also exists in the reality of our world. And I don't quite understand claims of the relevance of social activism—artistic or any other—that do not do the same."

Beasley went into a long description of some recent work of his, planting a tall new sculpture on site onto its precision-engineered base, all the prior calculations that had gone into the process, the wrenching and lifting and then slotting of the thing's perfectly predrilled holes onto the base's precisely measured pins so that everything could be screwed into place, vertical, soaring, and secure.

I told him that all of that in turn sounded exactly like the way he and his neighbors had approached his meetings with city bureaucrats, the Caltrans bunch, or his own ultimate confrontation with the guy from Southern Pacific, how he had to have it all set up in advance. He knew the guy was going to say this, and he had to be ready with an answer that was going to do that, and so forth, and that that was how one got "If Looks Could Kill" moments to happen.

Beasley broke into a broad smile: "That's exactly the point." Beaming: "Thank you, Sir. You've got it." Two beats. "And to me, that's the art connection. As with one's art, one's activism has to center on things that can be achieved, that take shape in the world. Not solely intellectually, nor philosophically, nor ideologically based, *but for real.*"

The room had gone quite dark and, getting up, we decided to go out into the garden to watch the night come on.

# Postscript: Tools, Techniques, and Mediums and Their Validity in Creativity

Bruce Beasley

All creative processes need tools and techniques and a medium that carries them to fruition, and each tool, technique, and medium adds its voice and mark in the work of art. Every tool, technique, and medium has its practitioners, followers, advocates, scholars, and critics.

Historically, new creative tools, techniques, and mediums are viewed either as interesting or threatening, authentic or less so, by different segments of practitioners, followers, advocates, scholars, and critics.

Human nature plays its role in this. Often, although not always, those who have invested the most time, training, and scholarship in the older tools and techniques and mediums are the most dubious and critical of the new ones.

The truth is that this is not a zero-sum game. New mediums may find new creators who have an affinity only for the new processes. New tools and techniques may speak to new audiences and not diminish older ones.

And, oh so quickly, what were once the new and cutting-edge creative tools, techniques, and mediums then join the established ones, and so the cycle continues and creativity continues to bloom.

This is true in every creative field—music, visual arts, dance, theater, film, literature, poetry.

There can be dishonest uses of creativity, but here are no dishonest tools, techniques, or mediums. There are many creative expressions that fail to speak to the human spirit, but that failure lies with the creators, not the tools, techniques, and mediums.

There are many creative expressions that do speak to the human spirit, and they enrich us all by doing so. But we must remember, it is the creators' ingenuity with the tools, techniques, and mediums that warrants our appreciation and gratitude, not the tools, techniques, and mediums themselves.

Bruce Beasley

Sixty Year Retrospective

*Horae*, 1960



*Tree House, 1960*





44

Untitled, 1960



45

Lemures, 1961



46

*Icarus*, 1963



*Damon*, 1964

47

*Chiron*, 1966





*Danastus*, 1966



*Tercel II*, 1966

*Stamper's Lighthouse, 1967*





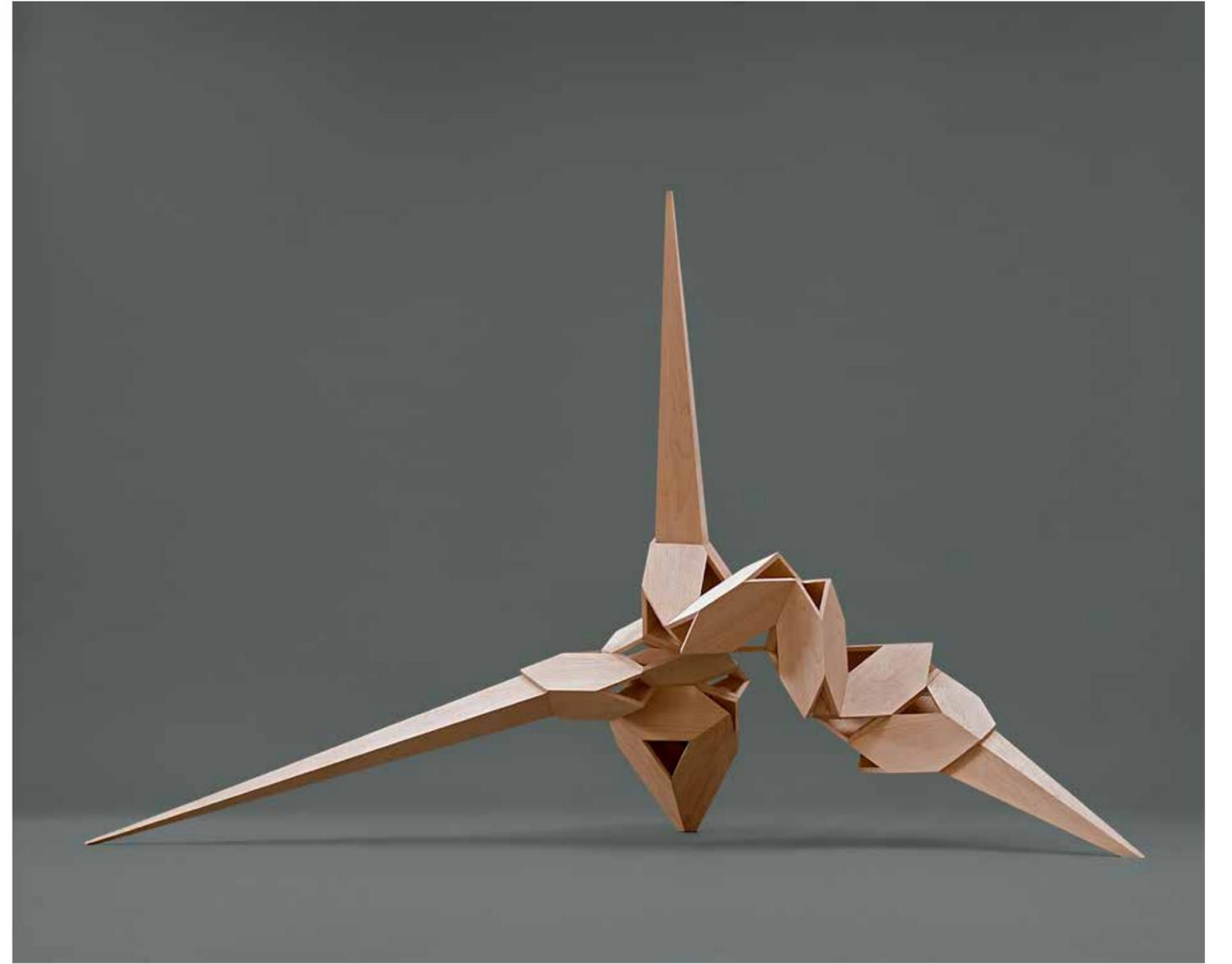
*Suzanne's Window, 1969*

*Trigonal, 1970*





*Scalar Gyration, 1972*



*Small Dorion, 1980*



*Artimpsa*, 1985

*Circis*, 1986

overleaf: *Dorion*, 1986





*Intersections*, 1987

*Storm*, 1989





64



*Sentinel*, 1990

*Breakout*, 1991

65



*Intersections II*, 1991

*Quest III*, 2004



*Uplift*, 1992



*Solid Sequence*, 1993

*Spokesman II*, 1994







overleaf: *Encounter*, 1995

*Advocate*, 1996



*Foray III*, 1997



*Outreach, 1998*

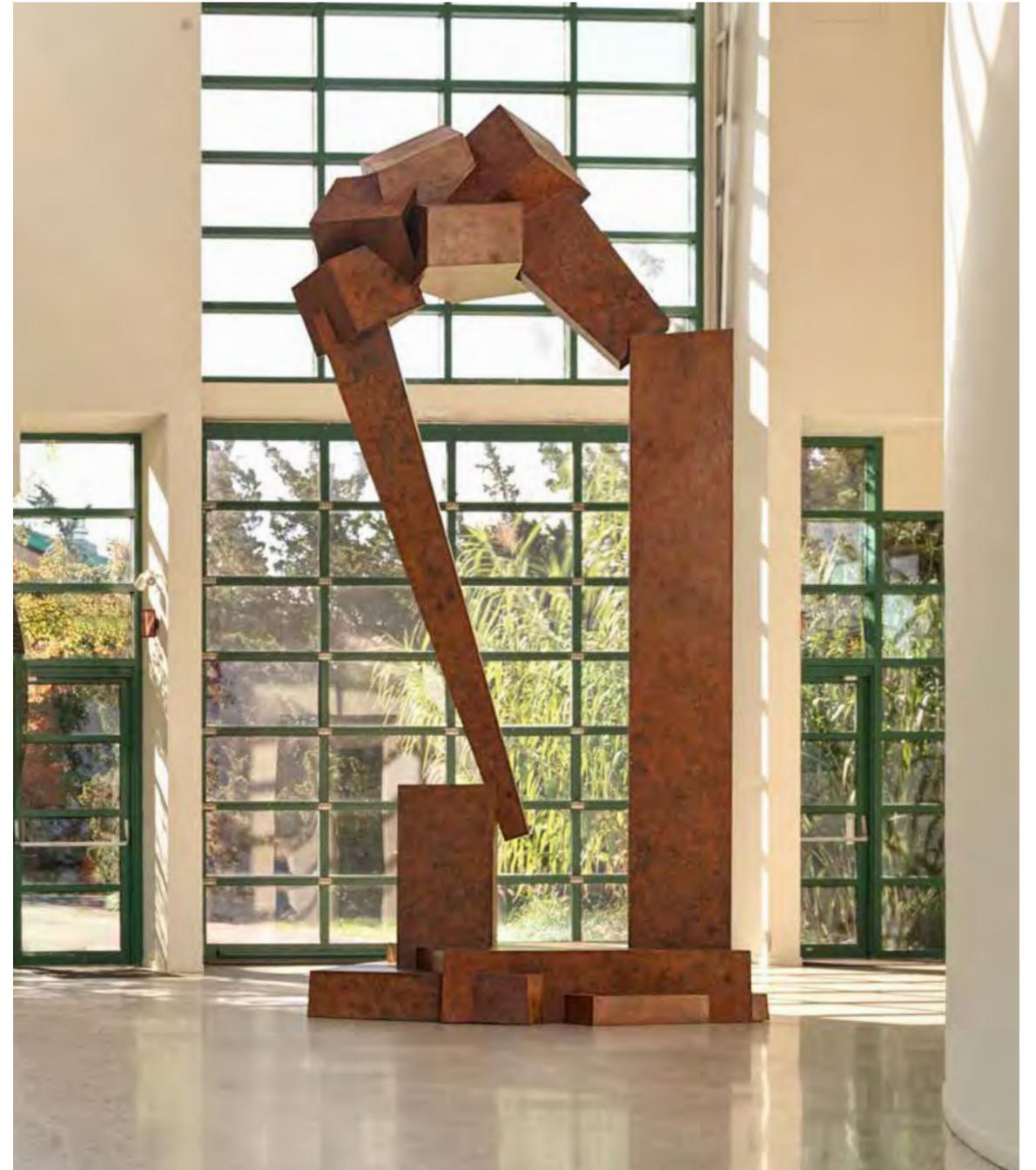
*Stone Horizon, 2000*





80

*Harbinger, 2001*



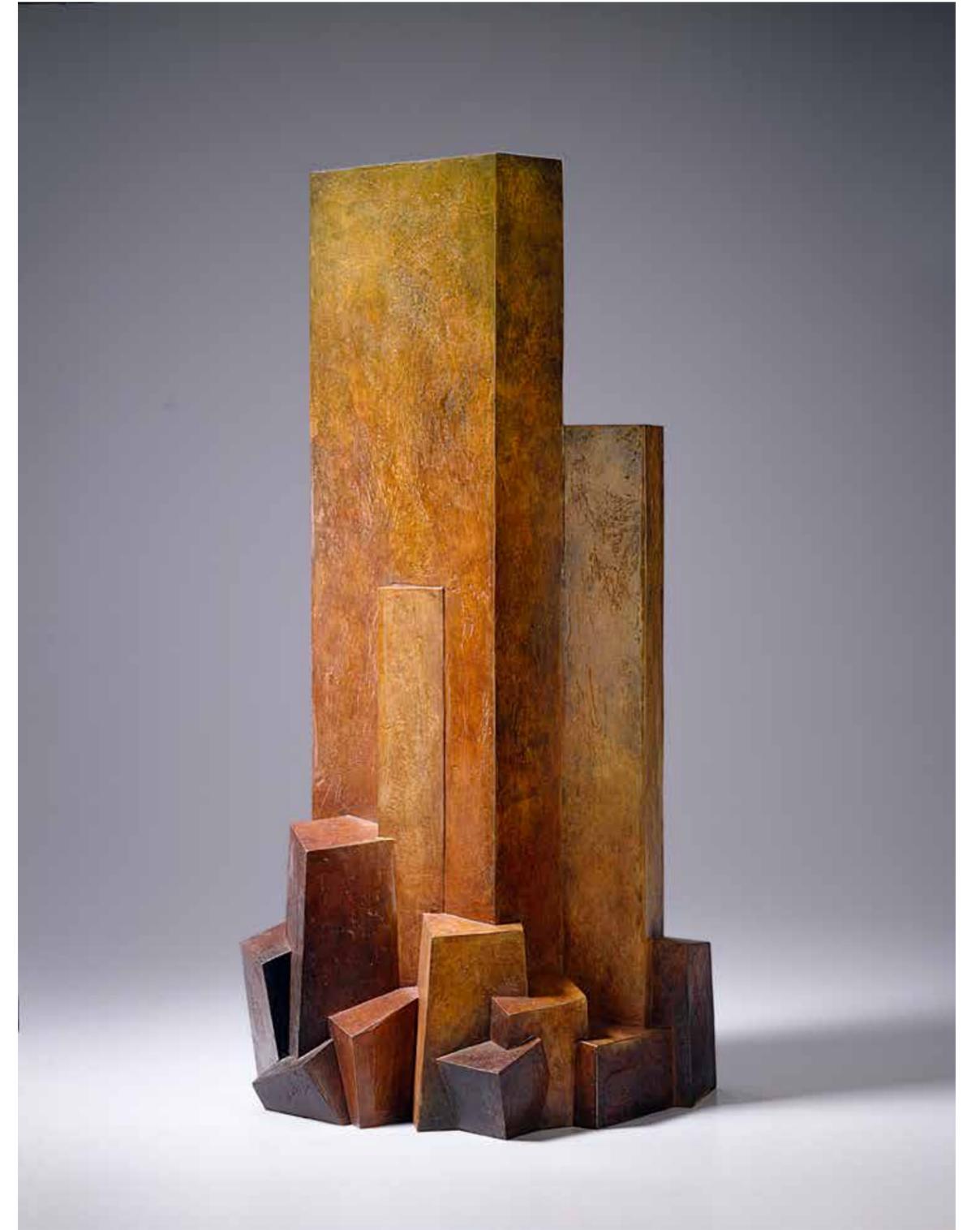
*Quest III, 2004*

81



*Thanis I, 2004*

*Thanis II, 2004*





84

*Arpeggio III*, 2005



*Audacity III*, 2005

85



*Duende I, II, III, and IV, 2005*



*Horizon II, 2006*



*Thanis III, 2006*



*Disk Cantata VI, 2009*

*Disk Cantata VII, 2009*

*Disk Cantata VIII, 2010*



*Torqueri I, 2014*



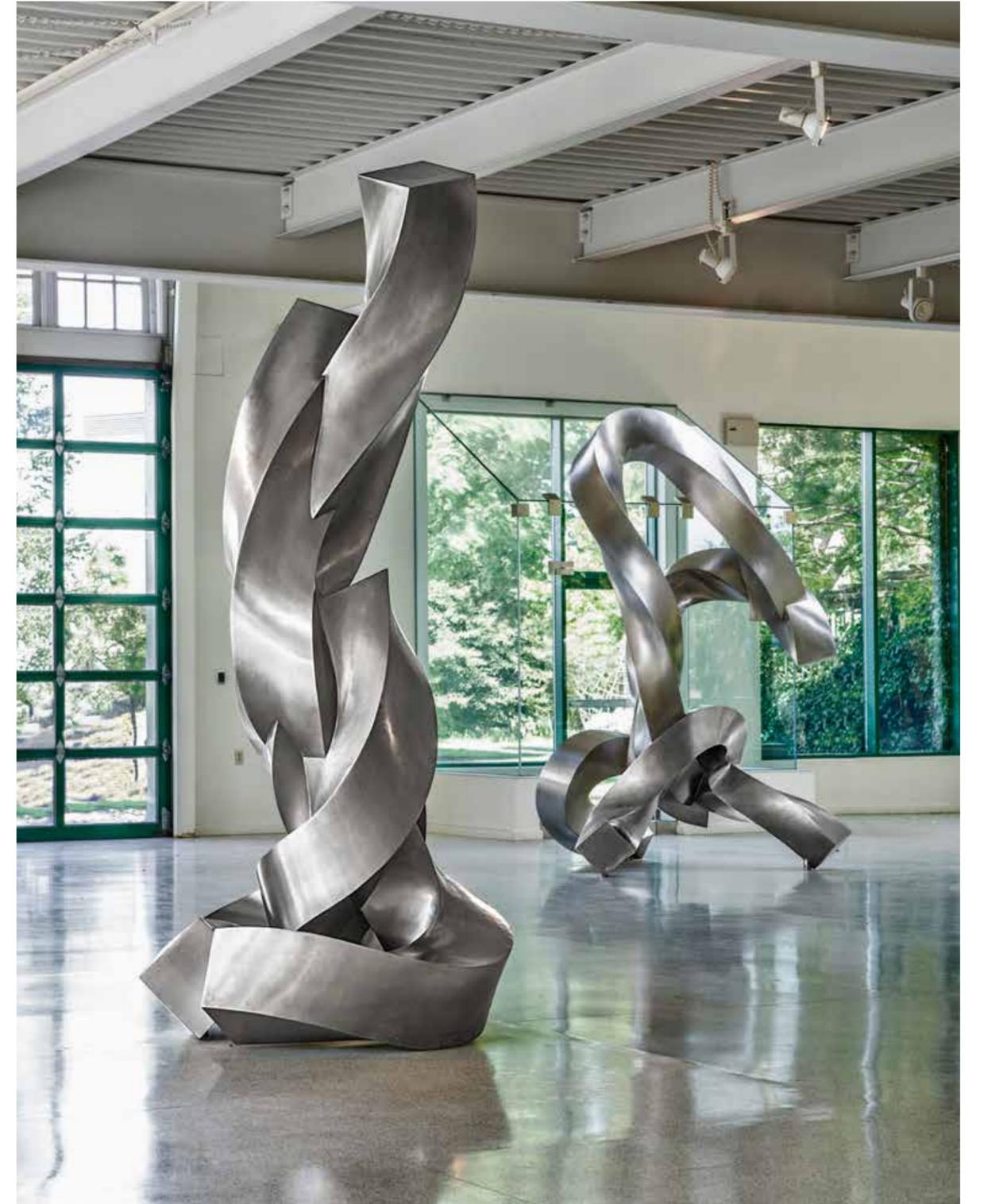
*Torqueri III, 2015*



*Torqueri IV, 2015*

*Torqueri VII, 2016*

*Torqueri X, 2017*



*Rondo VI, 2017*





*Torqueri IX, 2017*



*Torqueri XI, 2017*

*Torqueri XII, 2017*



*Aeolis 3, 2018*





overleaf: *Aurai 6L, 7L, 8L, and 10L*, 2018

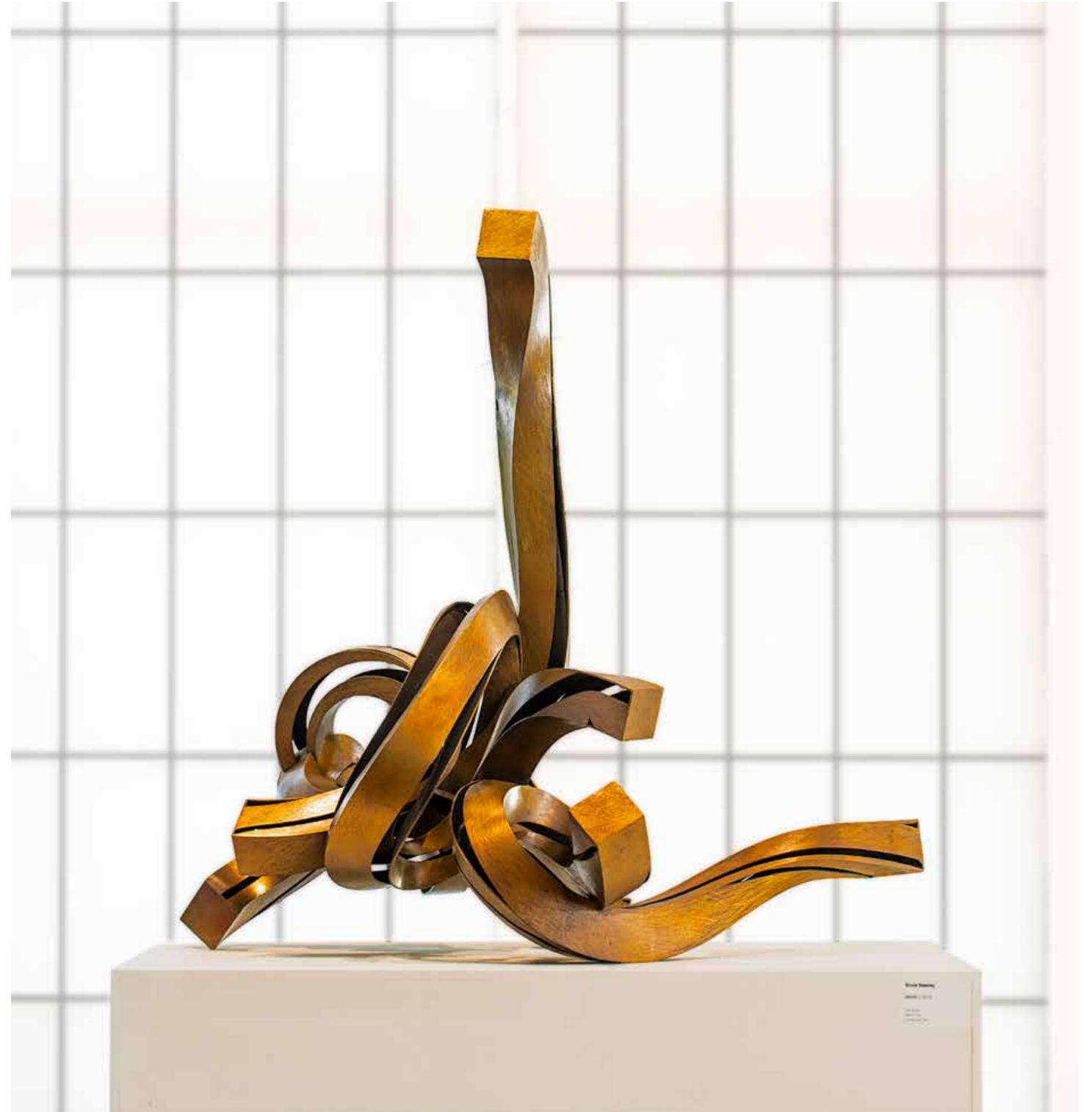
*Torqueri XIII*, 2018

106



107

*Aeolis 1, 2019*



# Chronology

## 1939

Born in Los Angeles, California, to Robert Seth Beasley and Bernice (Palmer) Beasley. A brother, Palmer, is three years older. Attends public schools.

## 1948

Sustains serious injuries in fall from tree and misses a half year of school. Extensive therapy is required to regain his ability to walk.

## 1952

Takes required metal shop class in eighth grade. Discovers a talent for metalwork and spends as much time as possible during and after school, working in the metal shop.

## 1954

Wins prize in national contest in metalworking.

## 1955

Travels to Japan with a group of Boy Scouts sponsored by the Japanese government.

## 1955-57

Seriously involved in building racing cars while attending high school. Helps build a Bonneville "flat-head Ford" racer that breaks the 150 mph barrier.



## 1957-59

Attends Dartmouth College. Takes first art courses. Requests permission to submit sculptures instead of drawings for final course assignment. Studies with sculptor Winslow Eaves, does first bronze casting. Attends summer school at Otis Art Institute.

## 1959

Transfers to the University of California, Berkeley, as a sculpture major. Studies with Sidney Gordin and Richard O'Hanlon. While at Berkeley Beasley is exposed to sculptors Jacques Schnier, Julius Schmidt, Wilfred Zogbaum, William King, Eduardo Paolozzi, and critic Harold Rosenberg.



## 1960

Wins prize in The Oakland Museum Sculpture Annual with the cast iron sculpture *Trillion*. Begins studies with Peter Voulkos and Harold Paris, who have just joined the faculty at Berkeley. Helps build the Garbanzo Works foundry in Berkeley, one of the country's first artist-run foundries.

## 1961

In January, leaves school to hitchhike through Mexico and Central America. Works as a deckhand on inter-island schooners in the West Indies. Returns to Berkeley in September and resumes his studies. Begins showing at the Everett Ellin Gallery in Los Angeles. Wins prize in San Francisco Art Annual with sculpture *Lemures*. Museum of Modern Art curator Dorothy Miller introduces Beasley's work to fellow MoMA curator William Seitz, who selects *Tree House* to be in *The Art of Assemblage\** show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Works for Peter Voulkos, casting and welding the work for Voulkos's first show of bronze sculpture. Meets Willem de Kooning, who comes to University of California, Berkeley, for a workshop.



## 1962

Graduates from University of California, Berkeley with a bachelor's of arts degree. *Chorus* acquired for the permanent collection of New York's Museum of Modern Art. Rents a dilapidated warehouse in West Oakland and builds his own foundry.

## 1963

First major solo show held at the Everett Ellin Gallery in Los Angeles. Receives important reviews from the Los Angeles art critics. *Prometheus II* acquired by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, and *Daedalus* acquired by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Selected to be one of eleven sculptors to represent the

United States at the Biennale de Paris. His sculpture *Icarus* wins the Purchase Prize and is acquired by André Malraux, minister of cultural affairs, for the French National Collection.

Makes first trip to Europe. Travels to France, Italy, Spain, and Greece. Visits the important art museums as well as the prehistoric cave Altamira in Spain for the first of many visits.



## 1964

First New York solo show at the Kornblee Gallery. Meets David Smith. Buys a run-down, abandoned factory complex on Lewis Street in West Oakland and builds a one-man foundry and living quarters in the new studio. Photographer Joanne Leonard joins him to live at the studio.



## 1965

First San Francisco solo show at the Hansen Gallery. Meets young Canadian Kwakiutl native carver Tony Hunt, who is having an exhibition at the Kroeber Museum at University of California, Berkeley. Buys three of Hunt's carvings, beginning a lasting friendship with the artist, and initiates a collection of Indigenous art.



**1966**

Second Los Angeles solo show at David Stuart Gallery. University of California, Los Angeles, acquires *Dione* for the Franklin Murphy Sculpture Garden.

**1967**

Begins dreaming about transparent sculpture and undertakes research on transparent materials. Settles on acrylic, even though industry experts are discouraging about the possibility of doing large castings in this material.



**1968**

After months of experimentation, achieves acrylic castings up to 4-inches thick.

Selected for an invitational competition for the first monumental sculpture to be commissioned by the State of California. Shows the jury his first attempts at transparent sculpture and is selected as a finalist for the commission. Makes his largest casting to date and wins the competition (*Apolymon* model).

Visits DuPont Corporation headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware, seeking technical and financial assistance for the monumental casting acrylic sculpture. DuPont agrees to supply a generous amount of material but declines to provide any technical help.

Attends the International Sculpture Conference for the first

time, lecturing on his developments in acrylic castings. Visits Willem de Kooning at his new studio in Springs, New York.



**1969**

Through exhaustive research, makes a major breakthrough in casting technology. Develops a process that can cast acrylic sculpture in monumental scale.

Builds the mold for the State of California commission and pours 13,000 pounds of liquid acrylic into it. The casting cures for six weeks before the mold is opened.

**1970**

The large sculpture for California is finished and polished. *Apolymon* is unveiled at the California state capitol and draws abundant national press attention.

Participates in a number of important nationwide group shows at museums, including Milwaukee Art Center\*, Stanford University Art Museum\*, Sheldon Art Museum\*, Crocker Art Museum\*, and University of California, Berkeley Art Museum, and at the Osaka World's Fair.



**1971**

The Wichita Art Museum acquires *Tragamitus* for its permanent collection.

Included in *Time* magazine article "Transparent Sculpture." Meets sculptor Kenneth Snelson and begins long friendship. Meets Laurence Leaute, a young French woman visiting

California. Three weeks later, travels with her back to Paris, where he convinces her to move to Oakland to live with him. Solo show at Andre Emmerich Gallery in New York, which becomes his New York dealer.



**1972-73**

Exhibits in two shows in Paris, *Salon de Mai* and *Salon de la Jeune Sculptures*.

Marries Laurence in France.

Makes *Tragamon*, a 7-foot-high cast acrylic sculpture, for the Oakland Museum of California.

Santa Barbara Museum of Art acquires *Tacognier* for its permanent collection.

Travels with Laurence to Truk in Micronesia to go scuba diving, and then on to New Guinea, where they visit remote villages along the Sepik River.

**1974**

Creates *Big Red*, a monumental 40-foot-long sculpture.

Awarded commission by the federal government for a cast acrylic sculpture for the courthouse in San Diego.

National Museum of American Art in Washington, DC, acquires *Scalar Gyration*.



**1975**

Builds a large new building at his studio complex with inside and outside cranes for large-scale metal fabrication.

Young sculptor Dan Dykes becomes his chief studio assistant, beginning a long personal and professional relationship.

Completes *Six Tonner*, a large commission in painted steel for Lakeside Center in Illinois.

Birth of Bruce and Laurence's first child, a son, Julien.



**1976-77**

Approached by leading oceanographers to cast an all-transparent bathysphere. A scuba diver since his teens, Beasley is intrigued by this use of his invention and agrees to take on the project. Problems turn out to be more difficult than anticipated, but the castings finally succeed, and he builds two submersibles with all-transparent crew compartments. The Exploratorium of San Francisco exhibits the bathysphere before it goes into subsea service.

Daughter Celia is born.



**1978**

Completes three large commissions in metal: *Atea*, for the Miami International Airport; *The Gallup Flyer*, for the state office building in San Bernardino, California; and *The Hesperides*, for the San Francisco International Airport.

Meets George Rickey at the International Sculpture Conference in Toronto and begins long friendship.

**1980**

Works informally with professor of crystallography at University of California, Berkeley, pursuing his interest in crystal structure.

Lectures at the International Sculpture Conference in Washington, DC, where he meets Isamu Noguchi.

**1981**

Revisits the prehistoric caves in France, including the cave of Lascaux.

**1982**

Visits Edward Kienholz and Nancy Reddin in Hope, Idaho. Exhibits in *100 Years of California Sculpture\** at the Oakland Museum of California.

**1983**

Stanford University purchases the 28-foot stainless steel sculpture *Vanguard*.  
He makes *Arristus*, a large stainless steel sculpture, for the Djerassi Foundation in Woodside, California.  
Revisits the prehistoric caves in France and Spain, including Lascaux and Altamira.  
The American Association for the Advancement of Science publishes a major article on Beasley's contributions: his invention of the process for massive acrylic casting that is now used worldwide to make all transparent bathyspheres, windows for submersible vehicles, large aquarium windows, and other scientific uses.

**1984**

Makes *Artemon*, a 32-foot stainless steel sculpture, for the Los Angeles Olympic Games. *Artemon* is included in *The California Sculpture Show\**, an exhibition of twelve monumental sculptures that travels to Bordeaux, France; Mannheim, Germany; and Yorkshire, England.  
Visits Eduardo Chillida, whom Beasley greatly admires, in San Sebastian, Spain. Chillida takes Beasley to see *Wind Combs*, his series of great iron sculptures set into the rocks of the Bay of Biscay.



**1985**

Installs *Arctos*, a 33-foot stainless steel sculpture, for the city of Anchorage, Alaska.



**1986**

Struggles with models for a new style of work involving complex, intersecting geometric forms.  
Publishes an article on prehistoric sculpture in *Bulletin de la Société Préhistorique*, a French journal of prehistory.  
Receives a commendation from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), because the transparent submersible he built located and recovered the crew compartment after the tragic explosion of the space shuttle Challenger.

**1987**

Participates in the International Steel Sculpture Symposium in Krefeld, Germany, at the Kleinewefers factory.  
Creates a large COR-TEN steel piece (*Titiopoli's Arch*) in the style of intersecting geometric forms.  
Begins friendship with German sculptor Ingo Ronkholz.



**1988**

Vigorously pursues the new metalwork, beginning an investigation of computers to visualize complex geometric relationships prior to making them. Assisted by Donald Glaser at University of California, Berkeley.

**1989**

Learns and modifies a three-dimensional computer solid-modeling system to allow spontaneous changes to and visualization of complex geometric models prior to physical construction.  
Lectures on contemporary American sculpture in Hong Kong and Japan.  
Receives Individual Artist Award from the City of Oakland.  
Visits Eduardo Chillida in San Sebastian, Spain.  
San Francisco Bay Area is struck by the Loma Prieta earthquake. Beasley's studio is only blocks from the Cypress Freeway structure that collapses, killing 41 people. His studio is damaged but not destroyed. He and his son work in the rescue efforts.



**1990**

Makes *Pillars of Cypress*, a sculpture cast from steel beams that failed in the freeway collapse, as a tribute to his neighbor's efforts to rescue those trapped in the fallen freeway.  
Studio requires extensive repair due to earthquake damage.  
Begins long collaboration doing patinas with artist Lex Lucius.

**1991**

The Smithsonian Institution produces a nationally-aired TV program on Beasley's invention of the process for acrylic casting.  
Visits marble quarries on Pietrasanta and Carrara, Italy, to investigate stone-carving facilities.  
Commissions his first stone piece, which is 9 feet high.

**1992**

Installs *Guardian*, an 18-foot-high bronze sculpture, at the Federal Home Loan Bank in San Francisco.

**1993**

Exhibits at the Frankfurt and Chicago Art Fairs and installs

*Artemon* at Andre Emmerich's Top Gallant Farm in New York.

The Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, acquires *Bateleur*.

He is named to the Board of Directors of the International Sculpture Center, where he meets Giò Pomodoro and begins a friendship and correspondence.

**1994**

Solo exhibition, *Bruce Beasley- Sculpture\** at the Kunsthalle Mannheim in Mannheim, Germany.  
The museum purchases *Spokesman II*, *Knight's Gambit II*, and *Messenger II*. Visits Giò Pomodoro in Pietrasanta, Italy.

**1995**

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art acquires *Breakout*.

**1996**

Solo exhibitions in Dortmund and Bad Homburg, Germany.  
Group exhibitions in Europe and the United States.  
Young sculptor Albert Dicruttalo apprentices with Beasley for the summer.

**1997**

Begins construction of a long-dreamed-of sculpture garden adjacent to the studio.  
Artist Jennifer Craigie begins as Beasley's model maker.

**1998**

Work is included in the United States' representation at the Cairo Biennale, and he and Laurence visit Egypt. The Egyptian government purchases *Ally II* for its national collection.  
Lectures at International Sculpture Conference in Chicago, where he presents the ISC Lifetime Achievement Award to Eduardo Chillida.  
Albert Dicruttalo becomes Beasley's chief assistant.

**1999**

Travels to southern India to investigate possibilities for carving granite sculptures there.  
Grounds For Sculpture purchases the 30-foot stainless steel sculpture *Dorion*.

**2000**

Is one of two Americans on the team investigating the newly discovered prehistoric cave of Chauvet in France, then

travels to Portugal to carve granite.  
 Casts an 8,000-pound cast iron sculpture at Siempelkamp GmbH, Germany's largest iron foundry.  
 Completes commission for a large outdoor sculpture at the University of Texas, Houston.  
 Giò and Etta Pomodoro visit Bruce and Laurence at their home in Oakland.

**2001**  
 Wins competition for a monumental sculpture at Frank Ogawa Plaza in front of Oakland City Hall.  
 Travels to Portugal to work on sculptures at Singranova granite quarry.  
 Participates in International Sculpture Symposium in Isla Mujeres, Mexico.  
 The city of Bad Homburg, Germany, purchases *Spokesman II*.  
 Lex Lucius trains Laurence to do Bruce's patinas.

**2002**  
 Wins competition for a large outdoor sculpture for the University of Miami, Oxford, Ohio.  
 Installs 20-foot-high sculpture *Vitality* in front of Oakland City Hall.  
 Returns to Portugal to work on sculptures at Singranova granite quarry.  
 Travels to Thailand, where his brother, Palmer Beasley, is awarded the King Midol Prize in International Medicine.  
 Visits the newly opened Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum on Kagawa-ken Island, Japan.  
 Presents the International Sculpture Conference Lifetime Achievement Award to Giò Pomodoro.



**2003**  
 Dartmouth College makes a permanent installation of six sculptures by Peter Voulkos and six by Bruce Beasley in the college's new Baker Library in Hanover, New Hampshire.

Installs *Ascender IV* for the City of Brea, California.

**2004**  
 Travels to Chongwu, China, to work on granite sculptures.  
 Presents the ISC Lifetime Achievement Award to Christo.



**2005**  
 Beasley has his first major retrospective exhibition at the Oakland Museum of California.  
 Installs *Breakout II*, at College Preparatory School in Oakland.  
 Installs the 16-foot-high *Quest III* at La Jolla, California.  
 Continues to have granite sculptures carved in China.



**2006**  
 Starts using 3D printing and is included in several group shows featuring 3D printing.  
 Builds new studio/museum space with 30-ton-capacity bridge crane.  
 Travels to China for solo exhibition at the Shanghai Art Fair.  
 Goes to quarry in remote area to look for a certain quality of granite. Visits remote Dong, Yao, and Miao villages in Yunnan, Guizhou, and Hunan provinces.  
 Travels to Madagascar to visit daughter and son-in-law, Celia and Adam.



**2007**  
 Selected to do a sculpture for the Beijing Olympics; travels to China for commission discussions.  
 Presents idea for the Digital Stone Exhibition to Autodesk.  
 Selected to create a 75-foot-high sculpture for Monterrey, Mexico.  
 Visits the Cave of the Crystals in Mexico, where there are crystals the size of tree trunks.



**2008**  
 Participates in six group shows, including the Anderson Collection at de Saisset Museum, Santa Clara University.  
 Solo Exhibition at Shanghai Sculpture Space.  
 Solo exhibition at Peninsula Museum of Art, Belmont, California.  
 Digital Stone Exhibition, titled *The Intersection of Art and Technology*, travels to three museums in China.  
*Gathering of the Moons* installed at Olympic Park in Beijing for the Olympic Games.



**2009**  
 Solo Exhibition at Kouros Gallery in New York.  
*Destiny*, a 75-foot-high sculpture, is installed along the Ruta de las Esculturas in Monterrey, Mexico.



**2010**  
 Selected by the City of Shanghai to make a sculpture for the Shanghai World Expo.  
 Installs *Arpeggio IV* in front of the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento.  
 Group Show in Anderson Gallery, Taipei.

**2011**  
 City of Wuhu, China commissions a large granite sculpture, *Twister*.  
 Exhibits at the International Sculpture Biennale, Datong Art Museum, China.



**2012**  
 Solo Exhibition\* at Pangolin Gallery in London.  
 Lecture and group exhibition at Shaanxi University, China.

Travels to Iceland to see meeting of Eurasian and North American tectonic plates.  
 Travels to Anatolia to see ancient sites.  
 Begins *Rondo* Series.



**2013**  
 Exhibition on University of California, Berkeley campus of five *Rondo* Sculptures. University extends the exhibition for three years. University purchases *Rondo II* for permanent installation.

Develops *Coriolis* series of 3D printed sculptures.  
 Solo exhibition\* of *Coriolis* series at Autodesk Gallery, San Francisco.  
 Installs large granite sculpture *Arpeggio V* in City of Palo Alto, California.  
 Commissioned for 60-foot-high *Rondo* Sculpture for Santa Clara Valley Medical Center in San Jose, California.  
 Commissioned for 20-foot-high *Rondo* sculpture for the City of Fremont, California.



**2014**  
 Consults on and has large 3D printer custom made for the studio.  
 Develops process for using 3D printing in bronze casting.  
 Solo show of *Refuge of the Moons* series at Waterfront Park, Tiburon, California.  
 Begins the *Torqueri* series.

Works at Pangolin Foundry in England to fabricate large sculpture, *Advocate III*, for the City of Newcastle on Tyne; present at installation.  
 Installs *Stone Horizon* at the Palm Springs Art Museum.  
 Travels to Botswana.



**2015**  
 Participates in *Sculpture in the City*, a group show in London's Square Mile.  
*Torqueri VIII*, a 22-foot-sculpture, installed for City of Albany, California.  
 Solo exhibition at Beijing Museum of Contemporary Art of *Coriolis* and *Torqueri* sculptures.  
 Lectures in various sites throughout Beijing.  
 Installs *Unity*, a 20-x-38-foot sculpture for City of Fremont, California.  
 Wins national competition for large sculpture for City of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.  
 Featured speaker at the Brown Symposium, Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas.  
 Presents "A Sculptor's View of Chillida's Work" at the conference *Material, Space: Eduardo Chillida and His Contemporaries*, at the Goethe Institute, Frankfurt, Germany.



**2016**  
 Solo show of *Coriolis* and *Torqueri* at de Saisset Museum, Santa Clara University.  
 Collaborates with University of California, Berkeley Dance Department on *Rondo Variations*.  
 Attends opening of Haining Sculpture Park, China, which has commissioned *Ally*.  
 Installs *Rondo VI* at Bill and Melinda Gates residence in Washington state.  
 Installs large sculpture, *Rollic*, in City of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



**2017**  
 The Yorkshire Sculpture Park in England, site of previous solo exhibition in 1995, acquires *Advocate IV*; present at installation.  
 Group exhibition at Chester Cathedral, England.  
 Installs *Rondo VI* at Mission College, Santa Clara, California.  
 Large stainless *Torqueri IX* fabricated during China trip.  
 Installs *Rondo III* at West Valley College, Saratoga, California.  
 Installs *Stone Horizon* at Santa Clara University.  
 Rungwe Kingdon invites Beasley to Pangolin Foundry to explore possibilities of his using virtual reality for sculpture. This is the beginning of the *Aeolis* series.  
 Creates the Bruce Beasley Foundation.

**2018**  
 Solo exhibition at Pangolin Gallery, London.  
 Shows in *Masterpiece* exhibition in London.  
 Large Bronze *Torqueri IV* is installed for sculpture park in Edinburgh, Scotland.  
 Continues making large pieces of the stainless steel *Torqueri* series.  
 Starts making the *Aurai* collage series.  
 Construction begins on the 60-foot-high *Rondo* series sculpture *Sanctuary*, at the Santa Clara Valley Medical Center.  
 Tom Moran, chief curator at Grounds For Sculpture, offers Beasley a 60-year retrospective.



**2019**  
 Continues work on upcoming Spring 2020 Grounds For Sculpture retrospective.  
 Exhibition of *Aurai* series of collages at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art.  
*Sanctuary* is moved from the construction area to the final location at the Santa Clara Valley Medical Center.  
 China Sculpture Institute commissions 40-foot *Ally* sculpture for new headquarters in northern Beijing.  
 Produces 13-foot-high version of granite sculpture *Meeting* for Sculpture Park in Wenzhou, China.

**2020**  
 Ships six truck loads of sculpture to Grounds For Sculpture for 60-year retrospective; exhibition is delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.  
 Two museums book the *Aurai* collage exhibition for future exhibit.  
 Installs new *Aeolis* sculpture at private residence in San Francisco.  
 Begins *In Defiance of the Virus* series.



**2021**  
*Sanctuary*, after years of construction/landscape planning is installed.  
*Bruce Beasley: Sixty Year Retrospective, 1960-2020* opens to the public in May at Grounds For Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey.

# Selected Collections, Exhibitions, Commissions, Awards, and Lectures

## Museum Collections



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## Solo Exhibitions

- 2021 Grounds For Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey
- 2019 Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, Iowa
- 2018 Pangolin London, England
- 2016 Zellerbach Playhouse, University of California, Berkeley  
de Saisset Museum, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California
- 2015 Beijing Museum of Contemporary Art, China
- 2013–15 University of California, Berkeley Campus
- 2014 Waterfront Park, Tiburon, California
- 2013 Autodesk Gallery, San Francisco, California
- 2012 Pangolin Gallery, London, England
- 2009 Kouros Gallery, New York  
Shanghai Sculpture Space, China  
Peninsula Museum of Art, Belmont, California
- 2007 Sarofim School of Fine Arts, Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas
- 2006 Shanghai Art Fair, China
- 2005 Oakland Museum of California
- 2004 Atrium Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri
- 2002 Solomon/Dubnick Gallery, Sacramento, California
- 2001 Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, Idaho  
Silicon Valley Art Museum, Belmont, California
- 2000 Mathematical Sciences Research Institute, Berkeley, California
- 1999 Kouros Gallery, New York
- 1998 Gwenda Jay Gallery, Chicago, Illinois  
Hooks-Epstein Gallery, Houston, Texas
- 1997 Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana  
Solomon/Dubnick Gallery, Sacramento, California  
Atrium Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri
- 1996 City Center, Dortmund, Germany  
Scheffel Gallery, Bad Homburg, Germany
- 1995 Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton, England  
Galerie Marie-Louise Wirth, Zürich, Switzerland

- Mannheim City Hall, Germany  
Atrium Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri  
Hooks-Epstein Gallery, Houston, Texas
- 1994 Stadtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, Germany  
Harcourts Modern and Contemporary Art, San Francisco, California  
Rudolfinum Museum, Prague, Czech Republic
- 1993 Scheffel Gallery, Bad Homburg, Germany  
Shidoni Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico  
Utermann Gallery, Dortmund, Germany  
Hooks-Epstein Gallery, Houston, Texas
- 1992 Oakland Museum of California  
Fresno Art Museum, California  
California State University, Turlock  
John Natsoulas Gallery, Davis, California  
Jaffe Baker Gallery, Boca Raton, Florida
- 1991 California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo  
Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, California  
Southern Oregon State University, Ashland
- 1990 Pepperdine University Art Gallery, Malibu, California  
Loma Linda University Art Gallery, Riverside, California  
Hooks-Epstein Gallery, Houston, Texas
- 1981 Fuller-Goldeen Gallery, San Francisco, California
- 1973 San Diego Museum of Art, California  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California
- 1972 M.H. deYoung Memorial Museum, San Francisco, California
- 1971 Andre Emmerich Gallery, New York
- 1966 David Stuart Gallery, Los Angeles, California
- 1965 Hansen Gallery, San Francisco, California
- 1964 Kornblee Gallery, New York
- 1963 Everett Ellin Gallery, Los Angeles, California
- 1961 Richmond Art Center, California

## Group Exhibitions

- 2021 *A Delicate Balance*, Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, California
- 2019 *Wenzhou International Sculpture Exhibition*, China
- 2018 *Decade: Ten Year Anniversary Exhibition*, Pangolin London, England  
*Masterpiece*, The Royal Hospital, London, England
- 2017 *ARK Sculpture Exhibition*, Chester Cathedral, England
- 2016 *Opening Exhibition of the Haining Sculpture Park*, China
- 2015 *Dimensional*, Atrium Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri  
*Sculpture in the City*, London, England  
*What Things May Come: The Third International 3D Print Sculpture Exhibition*, Sarofim School of Fine Arts, Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas  
*3D Printing Technologies: The Radical Shift*, Peninsula Museum of Art, Burlingame, California

2014 *Crucible: 100 Contemporary Sculptures in Gloucester Cathedral*, England  
*Critical Connections: Exhibition of International Contemporary Art*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Beijing, China

2013 *A Change of Heart: University of Leicester Annual Sculpture Show*, Harold Martin Botanic Garden, Leicester, England  
*Stones Inquiry: China Contemporary International Stone Carving Invitational Exhibition*, Dingli Art Gallery, Chongwu Huian, China.

2012 *The Geometric Unconscious: A Century of Abstraction*, Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska, Lincoln  
*The 1st China Contemporary Abstract Sculpture Exhibition*, Shaanxi University, Xian, China  
*Art Front—Contemporary Art Exhibition*, China Art Expo 2012, Songzhuang Art Museum, Beijing, China

2011 *International Sculpture Biennial*, Datong Art Museum, China  
*International Sculpture Exhibition*, Wuhu, China  
*Accrochage: A Multi-Media Exhibition of Works*, Kouros Gallery, New York

2010 *Sculpture: Intimate to Monumental*, Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, Idaho  
*Encounters: Sculptors Guild on Governors Island*, New York  
*Modern Masters*, Anderson Gallery, Taipei, Taiwan  
*On Site/In Sight: Selections from the Permanent Collection*, de Saisset Museum, Santa Clara University, California  
*Eye on the Sixties: Vision, Body, and Soul; Selections from the Collection of Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson*, de Saisset Museum, Santa Clara University, California  
*Mind Over Metal*, Sculpturesite Gallery, San Francisco, California  
*Digital Stone Exhibition: The Intersection of Art and Technology*, Today Art Museum, Beijing, China  
*The Art of a City: The History of the San Francisco Arts Festival 1946–1986*, San Francisco International Airport, California  
*Ten Year Celebration*, The Art Foundry Gallery, Sacramento, California  
*Sterling Stuff II: Seventy Sculptures in Silver*, Pangolin London, England

2006 *Recent Permanent Collection Acquisitions*, de Saisset Museum, Santa Clara University, California  
*Fusion of Art and Technology*, California State University, Fresno  
*Art and Landscape at Buckeye*, Buckeye Nursery, Petaluma, California  
*Vernissage*, Sculpturesite Gallery, San Francisco, California

2004 *The Blair Collection*, Galerie Dionisi, West Hollywood, California

2003 *Sterling Stuff*; Sigurjon Olafsson Museum, Reykjavik, Iceland (traveled to Royal Academy of Arts, London, England)  
*The 8th International Shoebox Sculpture Exhibition*, University of Hawaii Art Gallery, Honolulu (traveled internationally until 2005)  
*International Rapid Prototyping Sculpture Exhibition*, Sarofim School of Fine Arts, Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas  
*8th Annual Sculpture Show*, The Art and Cultural Center, Fallbrook, California  
*5th Anniversary Show*, The Art Foundry Gallery, Sacramento, California

2002 *Second Saturday Reception*, Solomon Dubnick Gallery, Sacramento, California

2001 *Works from the International Sculpture Center Board*, Grounds For Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey  
*Tenth Anniversary Celebration*, Solomon Dubnick Gallery, Sacramento, California

2000 *First International Sculpture Meeting*, Isla Mujeres, Mexico  
*Celebrating Modern Art/The Anderson Collection*, Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California  
*Opening Show*, Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, Idaho  
*Spatial Expressions*, Hooks-Epstein Galleries, Houston, Texas  
*San Francisco International Art Exposition*, San Francisco, California  
*Autour du Cubisme*, Galerie Michel Cachoux, Paris, France

1999 *7th International Cairo Biennale*, Cairo, Egypt  
*Blickachsen 2*, Bad Homburg, Germany  
*Pier Walk '99*, Navy Pier, Chicago, Illinois  
*Opening Show*, Imago Galleries, Palm Desert, California  
*Group Show*, Art Foundry Gallery, Sacramento, California  
*Form and Function*, Atrium Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri  
*Art at the Summer Solstice*, Ruth Bancroft Garden, Walnut Creek, California

1998 *Darmstadt Sculpture Biennale*, Darmstadt, Germany  
*20/20, The 20th Anniversary Exhibition*, Sonoma State University, Rhonert Park, California  
*Pier Walk '98*, Navy Pier, Chicago, Illinois  
*Group Show*, I. Wolk Gallery, St. Helena, California  
*Group Show*, Del Mar Sculpture Gallery, California

1997 *Sculpture '97*, Bad Homburg, Germany  
*Pier Walk '97*, Navy Pier, Chicago, Illinois  
*Nine Bay Area Avant-Garde Artists of the Sixties: Then & Now*, J. J. Brookings Gallery, San Francisco, California  
*55 & Up, Art for a Lifetime*, Bedford Gallery, Walnut Creek, California  
*Skulpture Heute '97*, Galerie Wirth, Zürich, Switzerland  
*Sculpture Inaugural*, T. Curtsnoc Gallery, Miami, Florida  
*An Artist's Legacy*, Kennedy Art Center Gallery, Holy Names College, Oakland, California

1996 *Generations: The Lineage of Influence in Bay Area Art*, Richmond Art Center, California  
*California Color*, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln  
*Contemporary Sculpture*, Galerie Gabriele von Loeper, Hamburg, Germany  
*Sculpture Invitational*, Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey  
*Sculpture Invitational*, Cerrillos Cultural Center, Cerrillos, New Mexico

1995 *A Bay Area Connection: Works from the Anderson Collection*, Triton Museum of Art, Santa Clara, California  
*Art Cologne*, Germany  
*The 2nd Fujisankei International Biennale: Excellent Maquettes*, Hakone Open-Air Museum, Japan  
*Skulpture Heute*, Galerie Marie-Louise Wirth, Zürich, Switzerland  
*Art Chicago 1995*, Navy Pier, Chicago, Illinois  
*An Opening Exhibition*, The Sculpture Gallery, San Francisco, California

1994 *Recent Acquisitions of 20th Century American Art*, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, California  
*Sculpture Invitational*, Landesgartenschau, Fulda, Germany  
*Skulpture Heute*, Galerie Marie-Louise Wirth, Zürich, Switzerland  
*Contemporary Cast Iron Art*, Visual Arts Gallery, University of Alabama at Birmingham  
*Beasley, Dykes, Yates*, Solomon Dubnick Gallery, Sacramento, California  
*A Syntex Retrospective*, Syntex Corp. Gallery, Palo Alto, California

1993 *Artists Shedding Light on Science*, San Francisco State University, California  
*Directions in Contemporary Cast Iron*, Ramapo College Art Galleries, Mahwah, New Jersey  
*International Biennial of Graphic Arts*, János Xántus Museum, Győr, Hungary  
*Chicago International Art Exposition*, Donnelley International Hall, Chicago, Illinois  
*Fujisankei International Biennale: Excellent Maquettes*, Hakone Open-Air Museum, Japan  
*International Fair for Contemporary Art*, Frankfurt, Germany.  
*Five Bay Area Sculptors*, Harcourts Gallery, San Francisco, California  
*Computer Art: An Ohio Perspective*, Dayton Visual Arts Center, Ohio

1992 *Bay Area Greats*, Syntex Corp. Gallery, Palo Alto, California  
*New Works: Beasley, Albuquerque, Davis*, Valerie Miller Fine Art, Palm Desert, California  
*The 7th International Los Angeles Art Fair*, Los Angeles, California

1991 *Vernissage*, Galerie Utermann, Dortmund, Germany  
*New California Sculpture*, Oakland Museum of California  
*Sculptural Perspectives for the Nineties*, Muckenthaler Cultural Center, Fullerton, California  
*Sculpture 1991*, Fermilab National Accelerator Facility, Batavia, Illinois

1990 *Sculpture*, Novus Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia  
*Oakland's Artists '90*, Oakland Museum of California  
*Beyond Fragments: After the Earthquake*, Pro Arts Gallery, Oakland, California

1989 *Bay Area Bronze*, Civic Arts Gallery, Walnut Creek, California

1988 *State of California: Art in Public Buildings 1978-88*, Fresno State University, California  
(traveled statewide)

1987 *Monumenta, 19th Sculpture Biennale*, Middleheim Sculpture Park, Antwerp, Belgium  
*Steel Sculpture*, International Steel Sculpture Symposium at Park der Berg, Krefeld,  
West Germany; Wantipark, Dordrecht, Netherlands; Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West  
Bretton, England; Kunsthalle, Bremen, West Germany  
*Budapest Triennial International Sculpture Exhibition*, Palace of Exhibitions, Budapest,  
Hungary  
*Outdoor Sculpture Show*, Shidoni Gallery, Tesuque, New Mexico  
*Sculpture—Modern and Contemporary*, Anchorage Museum of History and Art, Alaska

1986 *A Gift of Sculpture*, San Francisco Civic Center Plaza, Sponsored by The San Francisco  
Arts Commission, California  
 *Casting Across America*, North Dakota Museum of Art, Grand Forks  
*Sculpture Invitational*, Kaiser Center Roof Garden, Oakland, California  
*Selections from the Security Pacific Collection*, San Francisco Arts Community Gallery,  
California

1985 *The Art of the San Francisco Bay Area: 1945 to 1980*, Oakland Museum of California  
*Going Public: A Retrospective Exhibition*, Walnut Creek Civic Arts Gallery and Civic Park,  
California  
*Art Collectors In and Around Silicon Valley*, Euphrat Gallery, DeAnza College, Cupertino,  
California

1984-85 *California Sculpture Show*, XXII Olympic Arts Festival and the Fisher Galleries, University  
of Southern California; Musee d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, France; Kunsthalle,  
Mannheim, West Germany; Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton, England; Sonja  
Henies Og Niels, Onstads, Norway

1983 *Outdoor Sculpture Show*, Shidoni Gallery, Tesuque, New Mexico

1982 *100 Years of California Sculpture*, Oakland Museum of California  
*Northern California Art of the Sixties*, deSaisset Museum, Santa Clara University, California

*Forgotten Dimension*, two-year tour organized by the Fresno Art Museum, California  
*The Shoebox Sculpture Show*, University of Hawaii, Honolulu traveled unternationally until  
1984)  
*Sculpture '82*, Shidoni Gallery, Tesuque, New Mexico

1980 *Forty American Sculptors*, XII International Sculpture Conference, Washington, DC  
*Across the Nation*, National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC  
*Sculpture in Public Spaces*, San Mateo Arts Council, California

1979 *Acquisitions 1974-1978*, Dartmouth College Museum and Galleries, Hanover, New  
Hampshire  
*Spaces*, Walnut Creek Civic Arts Gallery, California

1976 *Fine Art in New Federal Buildings*, New Orleans Museum of Art, Louisiana

1975 *Public Sculpture—Urban Environment*, Oakland Museum of California  
*Contemporary American Painting and Sculpture*, Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois  
at Urbana-Champaign

1974 *Oregon International Sculpture Symposium*, Eugene

1973 *Salon d'Mai*, The Luxembourg Gardens, Paris, France  
*Salon de la Jeune Sculpture*, Musee d'Art Moderne, Paris, France  
*Refracted Images*, DeCordova Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts  
*The Small Format*, St. Mary's College Art Gallery, Moraga, California

1972 *Sculpture '72*, Stanford University Museum of Art, California

1971 *Translucent and Transparent Art*, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida  
*Centennial Exhibition*, San Francisco Art Institute, de Young Museum, San Francisco  
*A Decade in the West*, Stanford University Museum of Art and Santa Barbara Museum of  
Art, California

1970 *1970 Biennial Invitational*, Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California  
*American Sculpture in Perspective*, Sheldon Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln  
*Pierres de Fantaisie*, The Oakland Museum of California  
*Excellence*, University of California Art Museum, Berkeley  
*Pollution Show*, The Oakland Museum of California  
*Looking West*, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska  
*Sculpture Here and Now*, Stanford University Art Museum, California  
*Expo '70*, San Francisco Pavilion, Osaka, Japan  
*A Plastic Presence*, The Jewish Museum, New York; Milwaukee Art Center, Wisconsin; San  
Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California, 1969-70

1969 *Plastics and New Art*, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania,  
Philadelphia  
*Contemporary American Painting and Sculpture*, Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois  
at Urbana-Champaign

1968 *Art from California*, Janie C. Lee Gallery, Dallas, Texas

1967 *California Artists in National Collections*, Lytton Center of Visual Arts, Los Angeles, California  
*Thirtieth Anniversary Exhibition*, Richmond Art Center, California  
*Plastics West Coast*, Hansen-Fuller Gallery, San Francisco, California

1966 *Selected Acquisitions*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York  
*Twenty-Two Sculptors*, California State University at Northridge  
*Annual Exhibition*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California  
*Contemporary Art from the Lytton Collection*, Lytton Center of the Visual Arts, Los Angeles,  
California

1965 *Sculptors Who Operate Their Own Foundries*, Hansen Gallery, San Francisco, California  
*Zellerbach Memorial Competition*, Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, California  
*Some Aspects of California Painting and Sculpture*, La Jolla Art Museum, California  
*Annual Exhibition*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California  
*Group show*, The Berkeley Gallery, California

1964 *Contemporary Sculpture*, Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York  
*Eleven American Sculptors*, University of California Art Museum, Berkeley

1963 *Biennale de Paris*, Musee d'Art Moderne, Paris, France  
*Contemporary California Sculpture*, The Oakland Museum, California  
*Annual Exhibition*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California  
*International Contemporary Sculpture*, Everett Ellin Gallery, Los Angeles, California

1962 *Painting and Sculpture Acquisitions*, Museum of Modern Art, New York  
*Art of Assemblage*, Dallas Museum of Contemporary Art, Texas, and San Francisco  
Museum of Modern Art, California  
*Three Artists*, Gallery 8, Santa Barbara, California

1961 *Art of Assemblage*, Museum of Modern Art, New York  
*Contemporary Painting and Sculpture*, Everett Ellin Gallery, Los Angeles, California

1960 *Northern California Sculptors Annual*, The Oakland Museum, California  
*Painting and Sculpture Annual*, Richmond Art Center, California  
*Annual Exhibition*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California

#### Awards and Prizes

2016 Campanile Excellence in Achievement Award, University of California, Berkeley  
Arts Leadership Award, Alameda County Arts Commission, Oakland, California

2014 Spirit of Philanthropy Award, Oakland Museum of California

1989 Individual Artist Award, Oakland Chamber of Commerce, California

1967 Purchase Prize, San Francisco Arts Festival, California

1965 Frank Lloyd Wright Memorial Purchase Award, Marin Museum Association, San Rafael,  
California

1963 André Malraux Purchase Prize, Biennale de Paris, France

1961 Honorable Mention, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Annual, California

1960 Adele Morrison Memorial Medal, The Oakland Museum Sculpture Annual, California

#### Public Commissions

Arco Corporation, Los Angeles, California  
Belmont Village Senior Living, Albany, California  
Berkeley Repertory Theatre, California  
Bishop Ranch, San Ramon, California  
Capitol Group, Los Angeles, California  
City of Anchorage, Alaska  
City of Bad Homberg, Germany  
City of Beijing, China (Commissioned for the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics)  
City of Cedar Rapids, Iowa

City of Dortmund, Germany  
City of Eugene, Oregon  
City of Fremont, California  
City of Haining, China  
City of Monterrey, Mexico  
City of Oakland, California  
City of Palo Alto, California  
City of Salinas, California  
City of Shanghai, China  
City of South San Francisco, California  
City of Wuhu, China  
Djerassi Foundation, Woodside, California  
Federal Home Loan Bank, San Francisco, California  
Federal Office Building, San Diego, California  
Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden, Univeristy of California at Los Angeles  
Gallaudet College, Washington, DC  
Gateway Center, Walnut Creek, California  
IBM Corporation, New York, New York  
The Johnson Foundation, Racine, Wisconsin  
Kleinewefers GmbH, Krefeld, Germany  
La Jolla Crossroads, San Diego, California  
Lakeside Mall, Sterling Heights, Michigan  
Landeszentral Bank, Hessen, Germany  
Mall at Short Hills, New Jersey  
Miami International Airport, Florida  
Miami University, Oxford, Ohio  
Mission College, Santa Clara, California  
Oakland Museum of California  
Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden, Claremont, California  
San Francisco Arts Commission, California (3 pieces)  
San Francisco International Airport, California  
Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, San Jose, California  
Santa Clara University, California  
Sculptural Park Punta Sur, Isla Mujeres, Mexico  
Security Pacific Corporation, Los Angeles, California  
Stanford University, California (2 pieces)  
State of Alaska, Anchorage  
State of California, Capitol Office Building, Sacramento  
State of California, State Office Building, San Bernardino  
Times Mirror Corporation, Los Angeles, California  
Tupperware, Inc., Orlando, Florida  
University of California at Berkeley  
University of Oregon, Eugene  
Village of Flossmoor, Illinois  
Voit Brea Business Park, Brea, California  
West Valley College, Santa Clara, California  
World Savings, Oakland, California

## Lectures

Academy of Art College, San Francisco, California  
Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China  
American River College, Sacramento, California  
Arizona State University, Tempe  
Art and Mathematics Conference, University of California at Berkeley  
Art and Mathematics Conference, San Sebastian, Spain  
Art Guild, Oakland Museum of California  
Arts Research Center, University of California at Berkeley  
Atlanta College of Art, Georgia  
Beijing Museum of Contemporary Art, China  
Berkeley Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley  
Brown Symposium XXXVII, Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas  
Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island  
California Polytechnic State University  
California State University, Turlock  
Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, China  
College of Marin, Fairfax, California  
Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec  
Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California  
Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire  
De Anza College, Cupertino, California  
18th China Sculpture Forum, Xian  
Emily Carr College of Art, Vancouver, British Columbia  
Fresno Art Museum, California  
Fundacion Marcelino Botin, Santander, Spain  
Goethe University, Frankfurt, Germany  
Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong  
Humboldt State College, Arcata, California  
International Sculpture Conference, Toronto, Canada  
Johnson Atelier, Princeton, New Jersey  
Miami University, Florida  
National Computer Graphics Association Conference, Anaheim, California  
New York Institute of Technology  
National Endowment for the Arts, Small Business Administration Lecture Series  
Oakland Museum of California, California  
Osaka American Center, Japan  
Palo Alto Public Art Commission, California  
Peking University, Beijing, China  
Pennsylvania State University, University Park  
Rancho Santiago College, Santa Ana, California  
Rotary Club of Oakland, California  
San Antonio Art Institute, Texas  
San Francisco Academy of Art, California  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California  
Santa Barbara Art Museum, California

Santa Clara University, California  
Santa Cruz Art Association, California  
Santa Rosa Junior College, California  
Sapporo American Center, Japan  
School of Arts, Peking University, Beijing, China  
Shanghai University, China  
Siggraph, 18th International Conference, Vancouver, Canada  
Sonoma State University, Rhonert Park, California  
Stanford University, California  
The Exploratorium, San Francisco, California  
Town & Gown Club, Berkeley, California  
Tsinghua University, Beijing, China  
University of California at Berkeley  
University of Hawaii, Honolulu  
University of North Dakota, Grand Forks  
University of Oregon, Eugene  
University of Sydney, Australia  
Visual Arts Center, Anchorage, Alaska  
Xian University of Science and Technology, China  
Walnut Creek Civic Art Association, California  
York University, Toronto, Ontario

## Juror

Anacortes Exhibition, Anacortes, Washington  
Bolas Museum of Art, California  
California Arts Council, Sacramento  
California State College, Sacramento  
California State Fair, Sacramento  
College of Marin, Fairfax, California  
Concord Civic Arts Commission, Concord, California  
Hawaii Sculpture Competition, Honolulu  
Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong  
International Sculpture Competition 1980, Washington, DC  
Marin-InterArts Sculpture Competition, San Rafael, California  
Sacramento Arts Commission, California  
San Francisco Art Commission, California  
San Francisco Art Fair, California  
San Mateo Art Council, California

# Selected Bibliography

For a complete list, including articles, periodicals, and media, please visit the artist's website

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# Checklist

All works on loan from the artist unless otherwise noted.

*Horae*, 1960  
welded cast iron  
14½ × 13½ × 10 in.

*Tree House*, 1960  
welded cast iron  
23½ × 13½ × 12½ in.

*Untitled*, 1960  
welded cast iron  
22 × 19 × 14 in.

*Lemures*, 1961  
welded cast iron  
19½ × 15 × 13½ in.

*Icarus*, 1963  
cast aluminum, 2 of 9  
36 × 36 × 14 in.

*Damon*, 1964  
cast aluminum, 1 of 9  
37 × 33 × 16½ in.

*Chiron*, 1966  
cast aluminum  
24 × 28 × 11 in.

*Danastus*, 1966  
cast aluminum, 2 of 9  
40 × 18 × 13 in.

*Tercel II*, 1966  
cast aluminum, 1 of 9  
55 × 24 × 12 in.

*Stamper's Lighthouse*, 1967  
cast acrylic  
29 × 23 × 16 in.

*Suzanne's Window*, 1969  
cast acrylic, 2 of 6  
23½ × 23½ × 10 in.

*Trigonal*, 1970  
cast acrylic, 6 of 6  
24¾ × 15 × 15 in.

*Scalar Gyration*, 1972  
cast acrylic, 3 of 4  
18 × 23 × 17 in.

*Small Dorion*, 1980  
maple  
39 × 59 × 20 in.

*Artimpsa*, 1985  
cast acrylic  
21 × 22 × 15 in.

*Circis*, 1986  
cast acrylic  
21 × 39 × 15 in.

*Dorion*, 1986  
stainless steel, 1 of 2  
240 × 360 × 120 in.

Grounds For Sculpture, Gift of  
The Seward Johnson Atelier, Inc.

*Intersections*, 1987  
cast bronze, A/P 1  
24 × 33 × 12 in.

*Storm*, 1989  
cast bronze, 1 of 9  
28 × 41 × 22 in.

*Sentinel*, 1990  
cast bronze, 4 of 9  
28 × 11 × 10 in.

*Breakout*, 1991  
cast bronze, 7 of 9  
28 × 44 × 12 in.

*Intersections II*, 1991  
cast bronze  
102 × 140 × 50 in.

*Uplift*, 1992  
cast bronze, 2 of 9  
7 × 18 × 13 in.

*Solid Sequence*, 1993  
cast bronze, 1 of 9  
34 × 21 × 21 in.

*Spokesman II*, 1994  
bronze, 4 of 9  
144 × 29 × 24 in.

*Encounter*, 1995  
cast bronze, 2 of 9  
15 × 36 × 13 in.

*Advocate*, 1996  
cast bronze, 2 of 9  
36 × 14 × 13 in.

*Foray III*, 1997  
bronze, 3 of 9  
120 × 120 × 32 in.

*Outreach*, 1998  
cast bronze, 4 of 9  
41 × 28 × 10 in.

*Stone Horizon*, 2000  
gold granite, 8 of 9  
26 × 127 × 40 in.

*Custos II*, 2001  
cast bronze, 3 of 9  
50½ × 37 × 10 in.

*Harbinger*, 2001  
cast bronze, 8 of 9  
53 × 28 × 19 in.

*Quest III*, 2004  
bronze, 2 of 9  
192 × 103 × 70 in.

*Thanis I*, 2004  
cast bronze, 1 of 9  
40 × 18½ × 12½ in.

*Thanis II*, 2004  
cast bronze, 1 of 9  
33 × 16 × 11 in.

*Arpeggio III*, 2005  
bronze, 1 of 9  
148 × 136 × 63 in.

*Audacity III*, 2005  
granite, 3 of 9  
93 × 66 × 34 in.

*Duende I*, 2005  
black granite, 3 of 9  
52 × 16 × 16 in.

*Duende II*, 2005  
black granite, 2 of 9  
57 × 16 × 16 in.

*Duende III*, 2005  
black granite, 2 of 9  
52 × 16 × 16 in.

*Duende IV*, 2005  
black granite, 2 of 9  
52 × 16 × 16 in.

*Horizon II*, 2006  
bronze, 7 of 9  
26 × 126 × 40 in.

Grounds For Sculpture, Purchase with  
Funds Provided by the Birney Family  
Foundation in Memory of Leeshan Birney  
and Mayling Birney

*Thanis III*, 2006  
bronze, 1 of 9  
120 × 54 × 37½ in.

*Disk Cantata VI*, 2009  
stainless steel, 1 of 9  
110 × 48 × 48 in.

*Disk Cantata VII*, 2009  
stainless steel, 1 of 9  
40 × 116 × 44 in.

*Disk Cantata VIII*, 2010  
stainless steel, 1 of 9  
47 × 116 × 41 in.

*Torqueri I*, 2014  
cast bronze, 1 of 9  
25 × 59 × 27 in.

*Torqueri III*, 2015  
cast bronze, 1 of 9  
33 × 75 × 36 in.

*Torqueri IV*, 2015  
cast bronze, 1 of 9  
50 × 48 × 36 in.

*Torqueri VII*, 2016  
stainless steel, 3 of 9  
120 × 50 × 53 in.

*Rondo VI*, 2017  
stainless steel, 2 of 9  
154 × 208 × 137 in.

*Torqueri IX*, 2017  
stainless steel, 1 of 9  
217 × 136 × 130 in.

*Torqueri X*, 2017  
stainless steel, 1 of 9  
120 × 78 × 75 in.

*Torqueri XI*, 2017  
stainless steel, 1 of 9  
144 × 108 × 86 in.

*Torqueri XII*, 2017  
stainless steel, 1 of 9  
144 × 130 × 140 in.

*Aeolis 3*, 2018  
stainless steel, 1 of 9  
80 × 36 × 26 in.

*Aurai 6 L*, 2018  
collage on canvas  
100 × 90 × 96 in.

*Aurai 7 L*, 2018  
collage on canvas  
100 × 90 × 96 in.

*Aurai 8 L*, 2018  
collage on canvas  
100 × 90 × 96 in.

*Aurai 10L*, 2018  
collage on canvas  
100 × 90 × 96 in.

*Torqueri XIII*, 2018  
stainless steel, 1 of 9  
270 × 137 × 141 in.

*Aeolis 1*, 2019  
cast bronze, 1 of 9  
63½ × 65½ × 43¼ in.

# About Grounds For Sculpture

Grounds For Sculpture is a 42-acre sculpture garden and museum, located midway between New York and Philadelphia in Hamilton, New Jersey. Once home to the long-running New Jersey State Fair, the property was a gathering place for hundreds of thousands of adults and children alike to view exhibits, be entertained, and step outside of their daily routine. Since opening in 1992, more than a quarter of a million people are welcomed annually to Grounds For Sculpture to view world-class art in a spectacular landscape, to enjoy entertainment and fine dining, and to nourish their creative lives through interaction with living artists and artmaking.

Grounds For Sculpture combines art and beckoning spaces to welcome, surprise, and engage all visitors in the artist's act of invention. Founder and artist Seward Johnson envisioned Grounds For Sculpture as a "space where the broadest cross section of the public is invited to relate to sculptural arts and nature in an emotional way and encouraged to overcome any natural, habitual, or learned resistance or fear of art, for an experience that elevates the soul and heals the spirit."

More than 300 sculptures from the collection are exhibited year-round across the grounds, with additional works placed throughout

the community. The collection includes works by Magdalena Abakanowicz, Anthony Caro, Willie Cole, Joyce J. Scott, Toshiko Takaezu, Beverly Pepper, Kiki Smith, George Segal, and Isaac Witkin, among others. Works displayed outdoors are situated among a living collection of botanical specimens, including thousands of native and exotic trees and flowers, a 7-acre wildflower meadow, and an outstanding assortment of deciduous and evergreen conifers.

At Grounds For Sculpture, we invite a diverse public to create, learn, and discover personal meaning in their interactions with art, artists, nature, and one another. More than 700 artists have had opportunities to share their work through exhibitions at Grounds For Sculpture, participating in rotating exhibitions both indoors and throughout the gardens. The exhibition of *Bruce Beasley: Sixty Year Retrospective, 1960-2020* continues this commitment to present the works of contemporary sculptors, and we believe that through sharing the work of contemporary artists, we can reflect the greater world, challenge perceptions, and inspire.