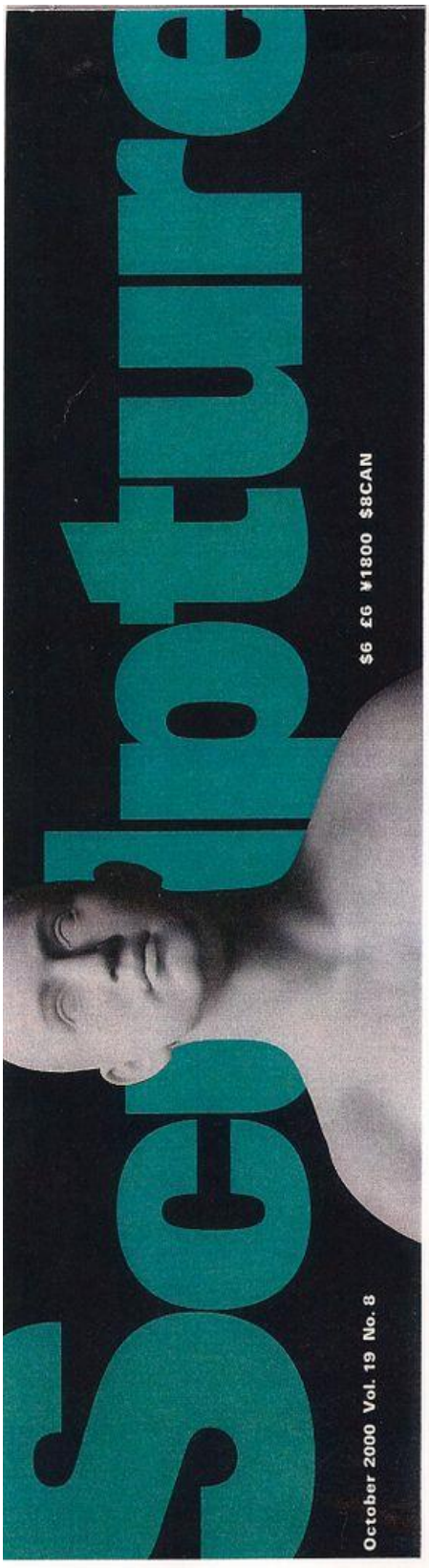

Dina Wind
Nexus Gallery

Dina Wind's wall-hung assemblages of crumpled fenders, bicycle wheels, hammers, and pipe wrenches possess the narrative complexity of a particular kind of frozen action. Like movie stills, they try to condense a feeling of cinematic drama into one frame. Wind's profoundly subtle manipulations and choices of volumes, colors, and objects, all of which reference the everyday world, set up the various relationships that achieve this condensed drama. Working against this in some of her pieces are two factors. The first is the unresolved tension between the haphazard and the planned, and the second is the history of assemblage in sculpture, which at this point seems somewhat depleted.

The last 50 to 75 years have seen the rise and then the decline of assembled and welded metal sculpture. Initially, it freed sculpture both to become abstract and to possess space on the scale of modern buildings, and for some artists it permitted sculpture to address social and historical conditions through references by its segments to the body and to manmade objects. However, over the last 25 years, sculpture has branched off into a series of directions, loosely centered around statements related to philosophical, societal, and perceptual concerns, not only through reference, but through materials and installations that no longer focus on the fixed object. That sculptors like Wind, Melvin Edwards, and others seek to reinvigorate a sculptural format and vocabulary related to Julio González, David Smith, and Mark di Suvero is ambitious and brave. Nevertheless, in the expanded field of sculpture in 2000, they necessarily have to move outside of concerns with formal relationships and simple or general mythologies, toward particular statements of emotional and material force and complexity. To do otherwise is to work with

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a vocabulary already depleted of its freshness and cultural relevance. However, in the final analysis, this last statement is a sword that cuts the hand that holds it. It is often the failure of the viewer and of the art writer that we cannot revisit and see continuity in sculpture and painting between one period and the next. The responsibility to avoid depletion in certain formats belongs both to the artist and the viewer.

In *Urban Transformation: Bike*, the parts are so deftly coordinated by Wind that they seem totally frozen into a whole assemblage. It's as if a strong magnet attracted them in the flash of an eye, and their individual inertias were far too weak to resist. But somehow both the hand of the sculptor and the history of sculpture are too strongly at play here.

Above: Dina Wind, *Urban Transformation: Bike*, 2000. Steel, wood, rubber, paint, and varnish, 53 x 53 x 14 in. Left: *Urban Transformation: 50 Fenders, 30 Tires*, 2000. Steel, rubber, and paint, floor installation, 66 x 166 x 120 in.

Rather than helping to support a dramatic effect, staginess and artifice seep in to undermine it, leaving a drama that is only 90 percent, instead of 100 percent, convincing. Additionally, its rectilinear frame—with its double references to painting and to bed frames—dampens the complex relationships in the work. In a sense, Wind's virtuosity at visually coordinating disparate elements, in this case, causes her to play the notes so fast that they loose some of their emotional and rhythmic intensity.

In *Urban Transformation: 50 Fenders, 30 Tires...*, the opposite problem emerges. The haphazard appearance of the array of parts blends together in a manner that is at once too homogenous and too unresolved. The antennae shooting off the fenders almost energize the inert mass, but can't quite unstick the parts—give them a directional force that counters the gravity of the floor. In the wall pieces, a similar problem arises with the relationship of the trapezoidal frames' clear planar boundaries to the energetic linear thrust and volumetric motion of the varied other parts. Again the effects of randomness and of organization seem separated rather than related.

In Wind's other works, *Still Life with Pitcher # 3*, *Virtual Workbench: North*, and *Still Life with Pitcher # 1* (the only base-mounted piece presented here), these problems are reversed and overcome. In the first, the formal and narrative aspects of the elements thread through each other: the color and luster of the pitcher speak about its material presence; its dented volume refers to its nature as functional object become trash; and the angle of its tilt—"pouring out" a metal arc—alludes to the hand that would hold it. Weaving through these other references are all the ways that they contrast with the history of the genre of the still life: sculpture versus painting, object versus symbol, inertness versus implied motion. In this piece, as in the other two, Wind carefully and intelligently transforms objects into an evocative emotional alphabet of forms.

She succeeds in these works by allowing her objects and forms to articulate their own pasts, as well as to allude to the potential human dramas from which they are drawn. Their elements and relationships appear neither haphazard nor rigidly orchestrated. Their interactions with art history take place on more than one level. And finally, the emotional, formal, and conceptual aspects intertwine. In the less successful pieces, Wind reminds us of how difficult it can be to work in a language so thoroughly explored in the last 75 years. However, in her best pieces, she adds her own inflection to this vocabulary, giving it new breath.

—*Tom Csaszar*

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