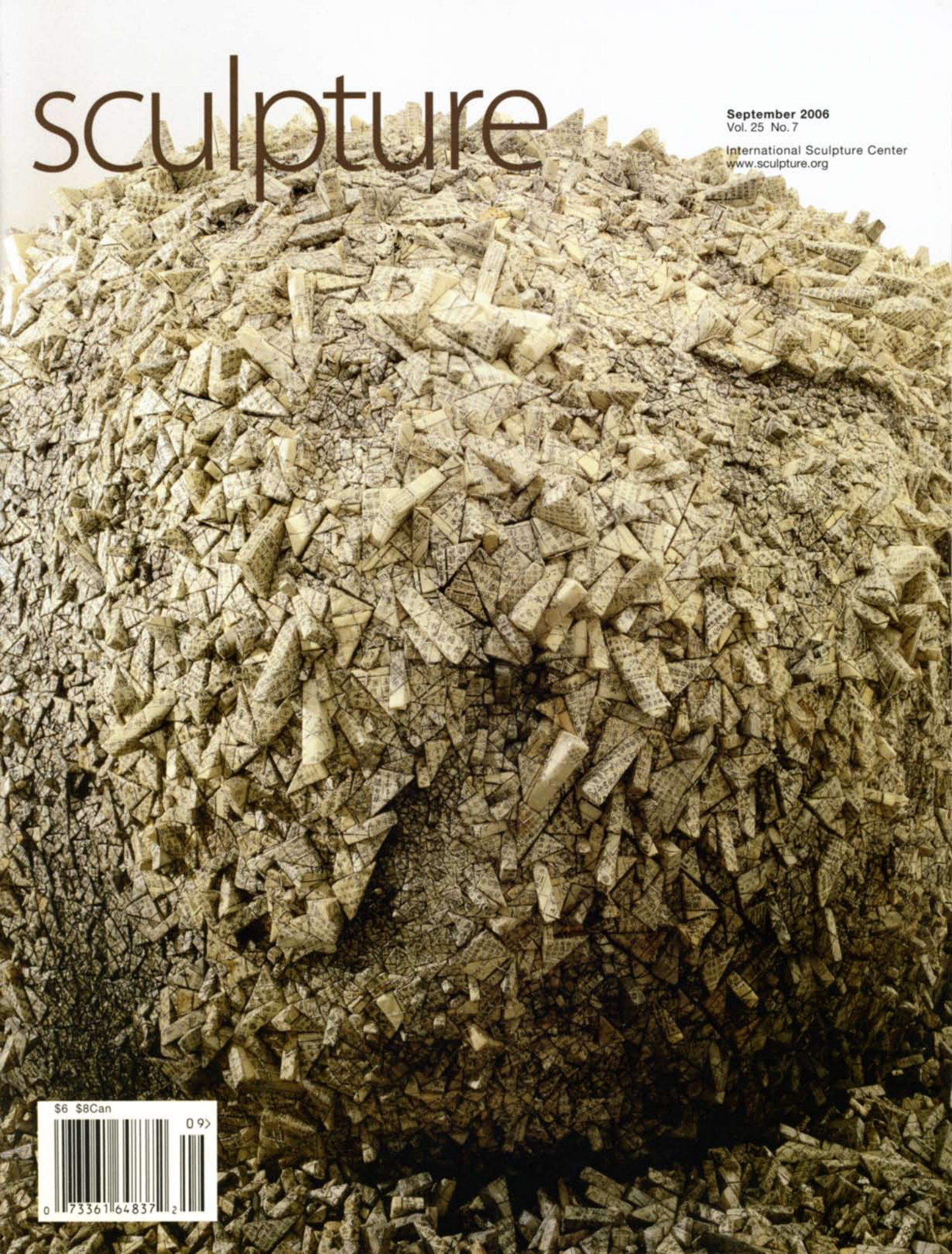


sculpture

September 2006
Vol. 25 No. 7

International Sculpture Center
www.sculpture.org



\$6 \$8Can

09>



0 73361 64837 2

radical new forms of the "Regardless" series and the preceding large cut metal sculptures. Reminiscent of Calder, the cut metal pieces featured bright colors and complex shapes, both of which Swanson has left behind in his current exploration of the boundary between two- and three-dimensional representation. His new work moves forward with no loss of animation or vitality, and with increasing distinction and intrigue.

—Janet Henderson

BROOKLYN

Gae Savannah

Dam, Stuhltrager Gallery

Gae Savannah's art is precious. It links to a trait that we all seem to have, especially in this day and age—the desire to find treasure. In looking at Savannah's work, I am reminded of an experience that recently sprang to mind when my 10-year-old daughter showed me a

rock with shiny little flecks of mica and announced with great glee, "Dad, I found gold!" I was transported to my own youth, to the moment when I had found an eerily similar rock and asked my father if I had found gold.

It took a while before I gave up on that rock—and the chance that I might stumble upon something of great value has never left me. I relay this story because it relates directly to what I see in Savannah's works, which have a reverence for the common object, funneled, in this case, through cultural reference and manipulated scale. The cultural reference is easy to see. Just look at *Nhanshe* or *Niu Kua* and you will find distinct Asian properties such as architectural lines, fabric types, and meditative forms. Savannah also tests the viewer's ability to place these works in time since many eras are loosely referenced.



Her most effective skill is to control scale by massing many examples of a familiar object, such as candy-colored beads and hair clips, into compelling forms and structures. The best example is *Laika*—an intriguing work made up of an elevated, ceremonial-looking enclosure that has extensive reach of influence by way of ritual procession and regal elevation. The hierarchy here projects a substantive re-orientation of form and function based on flexible beliefs and universal appeal.

Works such as *Shasta* and *Nyassa* are the most confounding and difficult to read. They subtly suggest the aforementioned visual traits, but they seem more secretive and guarded in their meaning. In fact, *Shasta*, which is mostly veiled and lit from within, looks more like a stained glass obelisk than any functional structure. *Nyassa* tends more toward abstraction, even Modernism, by balancing texture, line, form, and color equally. The four seg-

Left: Gae Savannah, *Laika*, 2006. Beads, hair accessories, fabric, and wood, 21 x 16 x 9 in. Above: Gae Savannah, *Nhanshe*, 2006. Mixed media, 74 x 32 x 21 in.

ments in *Nyassa*, for me, create a tension that is hard to make peace with because it has no central focus. Perhaps Savannah is adding a bit of defiance, to keep us on our toes.

Kisu, *Paroxysm*, and *Satresine* lean more toward the decorative, having a less ritualistic feel. However, they still maintain an appeal because they challenge preconceived notions relative to form and function. I suspect that curator David Gibson had this in mind when you factor in the oddly framed layout of the cigar-store-type gallery space.

Whatever reasons Savannah has for making these works, they achieve two important feats. Her sculptures will forever change the way we look at the connections between ornamentation and function, just as they remind us of how the most common objects have the potential to become treasures.

—D. Dominick Lombardi

BROOKVILLE, NEW YORK

"Archival to Contemporary: Six Decades of the Sculptors Guild"

Hillwood Art Museum

It seems unlikely that an organization founded at the end of the WPA years as an alternative to academic figurative art and for the advocacy of American sculptors (a then unsung group) would have a place in our post-industrial age. What this exhibition makes clear, however, is that the Sculptors Guild was poised to support American sculptors when the center of the art world shifted from a war-pillaged Paris to New York City. The group's regard for pluralism and experimentation while maintaining a flexible sensibility for aesthetic accomplishment was established in its early years with artists as diverse as Paulanship and David Smith. This spirit of quality and artistic inquiry remains, ensuring that the prestige afforded by membership in the Guild comes not





Above: Installation view of "Archival to Contemporary," with works by Sculptors Guild members David Smith, Clement Meadmore, Robert Michael Smith, Julian LaVerdiere, Barbara Lekberg, and Chaim Gross. Below: David Hammons, *Basketball Installation*, 1995. Tree trunk, basketball and hoop, and African vessel, dimensions variable.

only from its history, but also from its present values.

"Archival to Contemporary," curated by Guild member Jerelyn Hanrahan, is perhaps the first exhibition to address the Guild from a historical perspective. Hanrahan juxtaposed works by contemporary artists and founders to neatly bookend the exhibition, though there were few examples from the organization's middle decades. The show contained an astonishing variety of sculptures: humble, everyday materials hung next to cast bronze; digital realism sat side-by-side with formalist abstraction; animated light environments were situated near self-contained figures; and sincere works were balanced by the gently humorous and scathingly ironic.

The curator made the most of the Hillwood Museum's modest space and extended the exhibition by installing some works on the grounds of the C.W. Post campus. The show was cohesive despite its logistical limitations. We can hope it will see other versions in larger venues that allow for more inclusivity, especially

as Guild members and honorary members as prominent as Jacques Lipchitz, Louise Nevelson, and Mark di Suvero were missing. Quality works from relatively unknown artists of decades past might further illustrate the evolution of the Guild's concerns.

Though the installation was quite dense, several pieces stood out for their conceptual and formal quality. The presence of Louise Bourgeois's ambiguous sexual totem, *Pregnant Woman I* (1947-49), cannot be overstated; Bryan Crockett's *Pinkie*

(2001) stole our attention in the exacting form of a lab-rat-cum-Christian-martyr. Julian LaVerdiere's *Lantern Shuttlecock: Black Mihrab* (2003) hovered above the main space as a reminder of the symbols of empire, power, and fascism that resonate in our time. Adam Brown's light and sound installation *Bion* (2005) was skillfully integrated into a separate architectural environment so that it could be seen glowing from afar, delighting the senses in an immersive encounter with its 1,000 artificially intelligent elements.

From Vera Manzi-Schacht's ceramic baroque figures to the rapid-prototyped forms of Michael Rees, "Archival to Contemporary" revealed the diversity of concerns that characterize the artistic endeavors of both the Guild and the art market. The emphasis on artists such as Rune Olsen and Kim Kimball, who have emerged in recent years, points to the continuity and future of this organization. But as the exhibition demonstrated, through connection to its roots, the Guild has renewed its relevance in a social climate far different than that of its beginnings. Member artists collectively educate the public about and exhibit their work through an organization that is currently a refreshing mark of quality in contrast to so much art world hype.

—William V. Ganis

NEW YORK

David Hammons Zwirner & Wirth

Playing on and with consumer waste matter, David Hammons is a master of the double entendre. His recent show featured all sorts of quips, including *Flies in a Jar* (1994), which consists of zippers and twigs in a jar. The same goes for his *U.N.I.A. Flag* (1990, edition of 10), which brings some brighter color to the American flag and somewhat resembles Hundertwasser's self-conceived flags from an earlier epoch. *Untitled* (2004) consists of a stone whose shape recalls a human head, on which human hair (culled from a Harlem barbershop) has been carefully arranged. *Rubber Dread* (1989) is another hair piece woven out of bicycle inner tubes and set onto an ever-so-ordinary red rubber ball. A makeshift basketball hoop sports dreads made from bottle caps and becomes a cultural object equation, akin to folk art.

Hammons uses all the Duchampian tricks of the installation and assemblage trade with a sharper than usual sense of what he wants to communicate. He enacts it all with apparent ease and a mastery of materials. The materials are essential to the messages he wants to convey: they are accessible and relate to street culture and to black pop culture, but without any tinge of bitterness. No better sampler of Ham-

