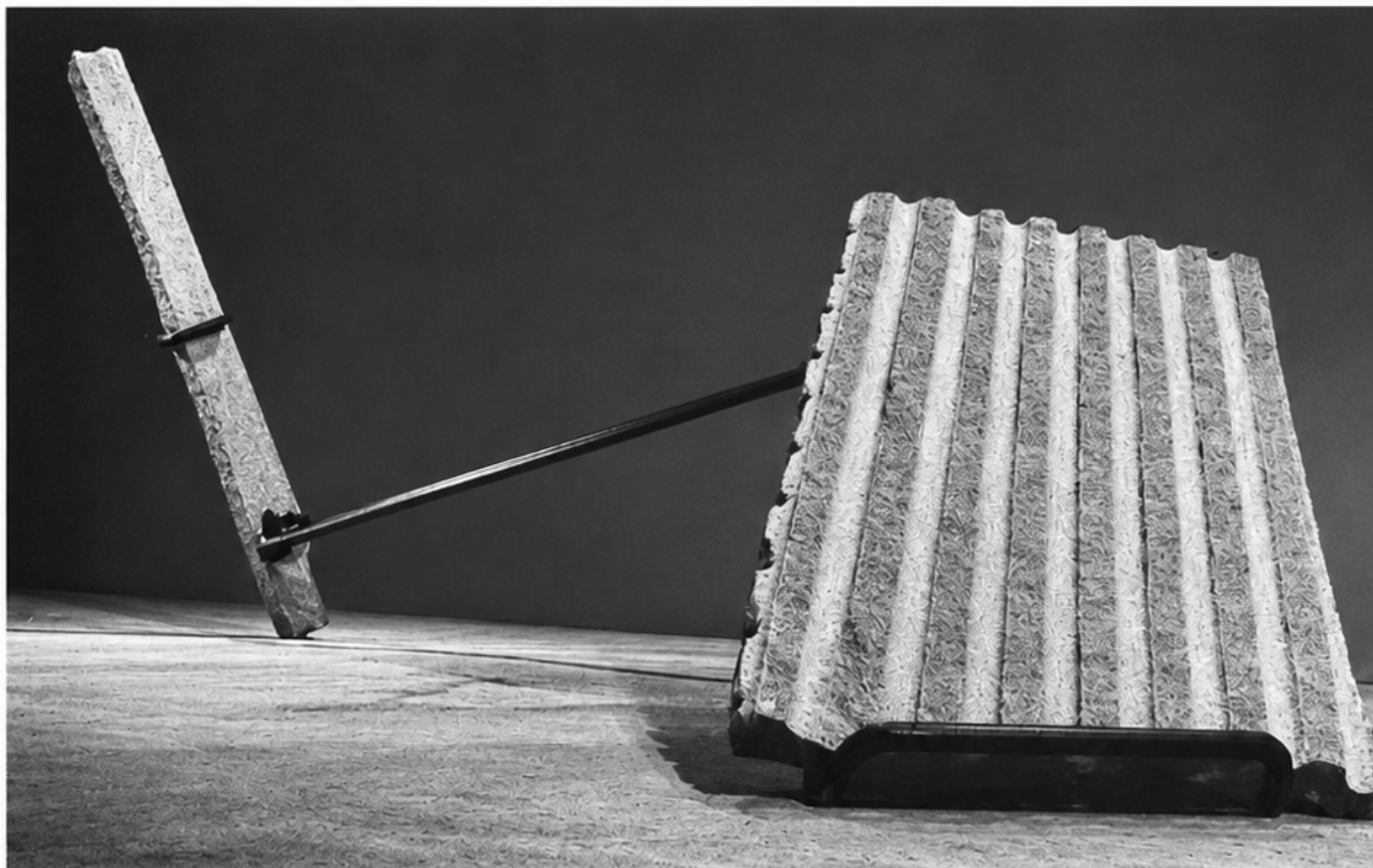


CORNELL THEN

SCULPTURE NOW

John Van Alstine



Torque I, 1977
Stone and forged steel
67" x 165" x 54"
On loan from the artist

Born in Johnstown, New York, 1952

Blossom Festival School, Cleveland, Kent, Ohio,
1973

B.F.A., Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, 1974

M.F.A., Cornell University, 1976

Studied with Richard Stankiewicz and Richard Hunt

Present Employment: Assistant professor of sculpture,
University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming

Selected Group Exhibitions

All-Ohio annual show, Canton Art Institute, Canton,
Ohio, 1974

Cooperstown national exhibition, Cooperstown, New
York, 1974

Fifty-fourth annual May show, Cleveland Museum of
Art, Cleveland, Ohio, 1975

New England artists, Worcester Museum, Worcester,
Massachusetts, 1975

Finger Lakes exhibition, Memorial Art Gallery,
Rochester, New York, 1975

Eleventh annual national drawing and sculpture show,
Museum of Fine Arts, Del Mar College, Corpus
Christi, Texas, 1977

Three: Reif, Reed, Van Alstine, Museum of Fine Art,
University of Wyoming, 1977

CORNELL THEN



December 10, 1977, to January 14, 1978
Sculpture Now, Inc.
142 Greene Street
New York, New York 10012

May 24 to July 9, 1978
Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York 14853

SCULPTURE NOW

Foreword

University museums have an advantage over other types of museums in that they can win support from loyal alumni throughout the country. The Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University is especially fortunate in having an active Friends group in New York City. Through the years the Friends have initiated a number of events that have both contributed to the acquisition fund of the museum and called attention to the active interest in art at Cornell. The present exhibition is the latest in a series of events that has included *Cornellians Collect: Westchester County* and tours of art collections and artists' studios.

This exhibition is evidence of the effectiveness of Cornell University in producing significant artists. It focuses on sculptors, but an equally distinguished painting show could as easily have been assembled.

Robert Hobbs, adjunct curator of modern art at the museum, has made the selection of works included in the exhibition. Because of space and budget limits several successful sculptors who attended Cornell have had to be omitted. We regret the impossibility of making the exhibition more inclusive.

For their enthusiastic assistance and for the generosity with which they lent their expertise, I would like to thank the following people: Max Hutchinson, Sculpture Now, Inc., who has so generously hosted this exhibition in his gallery; Barbara Burns and Caroline Goldsmith, Ruder and Finn, Inc.; John Sullivan, I. M. Pei and Associates; Isabel and William Berley and Barry S. Cohen, Esq., members of the Executive Committee, New York Friends of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, and its president, Sylvan Cole, Jr.; Genya Yarkoni and Jill Chambers-Hartz, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art; Jason Seley, who originated the idea for this exhibition and who has been indefatigable in helping to compile lists and research the history of the sculpture program at Cornell University; André Emmerich Gallery; Betty Parsons Gallery; Holly Solomon Gallery; Leo Castelli Gallery; Louis K. Meisel Gallery; Nancy Hoffmann Gallery; Ronald Feldman Fine Arts; Zabriskie Gallery; and, above all, the participating artists.

Thomas W. Leavitt, Director
Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art
Cornell University

Cornell Then, Sculpture Now

In organizing this exhibition of Cornell University alumni sculptors, I have resisted the temptation so often presented to a curator to minimize the diversity of approaches and emphasize mainstream productions, to make the exhibition an artificial unity that masks a fecund diversity. Although most of the sculpture is abstract, several pieces, particularly Victor Colby's deliberately archaistic neofolk *Trojan Horse*, Jack Squier's *Three Figures*, and Gordon Matta-Clark's cut from an abandoned building on the waterfront, *Pier In and Out*, are representative of other viable approaches. The rest of the exhibition is marked by the sculptors' concern with abstraction. The range of attitudes runs from Richard Artschwager's and Jason Seley's distinctive uses of pop materials to Charles Ginnever's collapsed geometry; from Robert Leibel's open parabolic vocabulary to Joel Perlman's splendidous barbarism and Jud Fine's conceptual fetishes.

Although the constructivist tradition serves as a background to many of the sculptors' activities, as in the works of Richard Bottwin, Michael Lowe, Stephen Porter, and Roger Williams, the interpretations are decidedly individual. Howard McCalebb, for example, considers his work paradigms or correlatives of an ideal social order in which the open network serves as a support for the central thrust image, which he terms an icon. Marja Valilla, working with large sheets of steel, creates fundamental structures dealing with elements of everyday experience, such as tables and floors; she reinforces the architectonic and fundamental nature of her works with an imagery suggestive of dwellings. Working with heavy pieces of granite and attenuated pieces of steel, John Van Alstine is concerned with literalizing balance so that it becomes a primary determinant of form. Between the traditional limits of painting and sculpture, Terence LaNoue, who is not a constructivist, creates mixed media pieces composed of latex, rubber, acrylic, and fiber. His pieces could be termed relief paintings or just as easily flat sculpture with painterly overtones. Daniel Wills, whose works are familiar to Bostonians but most likely unfamiliar to New Yorkers, works with extremely sensuous shapes, vaguely harking back to a surrealist origin, that remind me of the streamlining and seemingly contradictory qualities of delicacy and toughness that characterize yacht building.

Approximately three-quarters of the sculptors participating in this exhibition studied art at Cornell; those remaining, except for Richard Heinrich who was graduated with a major in agriculture, were students of architecture. It is of interest to note that Bernard Kirschenbaum and William H. Wainwright, students of architecture, worked for several years with Buckminster Fuller in his geodesics firm. And although Kirschenbaum turned to sculpture as a viable pursuit in the mid-sixties, Wainwright's interest in sculpture has only begun to manifest itself in the seventies.

To make any general statements about the nature of the sculpture program at Cornell and its possible influence on the later work of its alumni is extremely difficult. The distinguished leadership of Victor Colby, Jack Squier, and Jason Seley, who have been actively teaching at Cornell since 1950, 1958, and
cial factor. With very few exceptions, the sculptors in this exhibition studied with at least

one of these mentors. The indoctrinaire attitude of the sculpture faculty in the last two decades has been a most important element in encouraging students to develop freely their own attitudes and to experiment in new directions.

Several notable events in the art world took place at Cornell during the sixties, and while their impact is difficult to pinpoint in terms of stylistic influences, their effect on burgeoning sculptors at Cornell was crucial. Both Allan Kaprow's famed *Household Happening* (1964) and the first museum exhibition of *Earth Art* (1969) involved the participation of Cornell students. To implement the Earth Art exhibition, artists Jan Dibbets, Hans Haacke, Michael Heizer, Richard Long, Dennis Oppenheim, and Robert Smithson lived in Ithaca for several weeks. Even though all of the newest avant-garde activities are amply covered in monthly periodicals, there is a great difference between reading about an event at secondhand and witnessing it as a part of one's own environment. Artists are especially attuned to spatial qualities, and when an event is held in their own living space, it has a vastly different effect from something experienced only intellectually. For example, Gordon Matta-Clark, Robert Leibel, and Jud Fine, who assisted in the implementation of the Earth Art exhibition, are now as much concerned with the content as the form of their pieces.

Robert Carleton Hobbs, Adjunct Curator
Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art
Cornell University