

WWS 3

WISCONSIN DIRECTIONS 3:
The Third Dimension

February 26 - April 12, 1981

MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM

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Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

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Design by J. Eugene Felsch

Edited by Rosalie Goldstein

Photographs by Dedra M. Walls, P. Richard Eells, Marian Vieux, Don Miller

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Foreword

Wisconsin Directions 3: The Third Dimension represents a variation of approach from its two predecessor exhibitions. *Wisconsin Directions*, part of the inaugural activities surrounding the opening of the Museum's addition in 1975, was a survey of artists who had contributed significantly to Wisconsin art from 1960 to that time. *Wisconsin Directions 2: Here and Now* of 1978 employed a system of submissions and staff jurying to explore recent developments among artists living in the state. In an attempt to vary the survey format the Museum staff decided *Wisconsin Directions 3* would be devoted to three-dimensional work using traditional media in untraditional formats. Future exhibitions might concentrate on printing, printmaking or some other aspect of the burgeoning Wisconsin art scene. In addition, it was decided to focus on each artist's work to a degree not usually possible in survey exhibitions. Hence the inclusion of either large installations or a body of up to eight smaller works by the participating artists. As in *Wisconsin Directions 2*, a system of submissions and staff selection was employed to determine the final configuration of the show. Though suggestions were made by myself and Chief Curator Russell Bowman, the major portion of the selection must be credited to Jane Brite, Manager of the Cudahy Gallery of Wisconsin Art, and it is largely through her efforts that an exhibition of both the range and cohesiveness of *Wisconsin Directions 3* has been achieved.

Because of its more limited focus *Wisconsin Directions 3* may be a controversial exhibition. Every artist who is currently making a significant contribution to three-dimensional art in Wisconsin could not be included. Some did not choose to enter.

What emerges is an exhibition which examines the innovative use of three-dimensional media by a relatively limited group of artists working in Wisconsin. Even within this smaller group it is possible not only to detect personal variations on several national and international trends: site work, installations, system and personal iconography, but also a uniquely Wisconsin involvement with nature and the organic. Whatever larger assessment of Wisconsin art can be derived from this exhibition, it is primarily about individual artists—artists who demonstrate the ongoing inventiveness, vitality and strength of the best Wisconsin art.

Gerald Nordland
Director

Acknowledgements

A project of this scale requires the assistance and cooperation of a great many staff members and interdepartment cooperation. We express our warm thanks to all those who made the exhibition possible. Each of their endeavors is greatly appreciated.

I wish to convey my gratitude to Leslie Fishman, Curatorial Intern, for her involvement with the exhibition from its conception, and for the support and enthusiasm she has constantly demonstrated in handling the innumerable details of this project. Leslie's encouragement and participation have been vital to the success of the exhibition.

I am grateful to Rosalie Rellin for assistance in typing and editing, and to Win Ryhn and the students of the Museum Satellite Class for general assistance.

Special thanks to Gerald Nordland, Director, and to Russell Bowman, Chief Curator, who gave support and encouragement from beginning to end. Thanks also to Eugene Felsch for an excellent catalogue and help in exhibition design, and to the technicians, under Larry Stadler, for a particularly difficult installation. I must also mention my gratitude for the fine photography for the catalogue by Dedra Walls and Dick Eells.

In the end, the significance of this exhibition rests on the accomplishments of the artists. They have taken the challenge and the outcome is most impressive. I am deeply indebted to them.

J.B.

Introduction

Wisconsin Directions 3: The Third Dimension is the third exhibition in an ongoing series focusing on the work of Wisconsin artists. The first *Wisconsin Directions* was an invitational show of work done in Wisconsin during the previous fifteen years, and included artists no longer residing in the state. *Wisconsin Directions 2: Here and Now* featured new directions in Wisconsin art, investigating the trends from both local and national sources going on within the boundaries of the state.

Because the survey format has become popular and has been done significantly by other state institutions, it became important to change the scope of *Wisconsin Directions 3* by trying a narrower format that is a departure from past years. We began by concentrating on exploring the three-dimensional aspects of Wisconsin art. It was also decided to exhibit a body of work by a small group of artists rather than the usual one or two pieces per artist. This cluster of solo shows by fifteen artists creates an in-depth experience for the viewer and gives the artists more exposure.

Personal expressions that represent a spectrum of individual sensibilities and involvements, and that explore the extension of traditional materials beyond usual limits into a three-dimensional existence, are the main thrust of the exhibition. The chief unifying characteristic of this group show is the spirit of Man's relationship to Nature. We will be asked to explore beyond the ordinary, to invoke the sense of curiosity between the artist and viewer that suspends most preconceptions about execution, display and content of "museum" art.

Display of the works will be in three different areas: outdoors, the East Entrance Galleries, and the Journal/Lubar Galleries. The viewer will have his sensibilities expanded by the wide range of experiences being presented. *Wisconsin Directions 3* requires the viewer to rethink his perception of everyday found or reconstructed objects of nature, his awareness being altered to interact with those new surroundings.

Beyond the adventure of the show being presented in unusual spaces, it reflects the national trend in art to encourage spontaneity and individualism. These were encouraged in our prospectus, and a strong group of individuals responded. From these artists emerged ideas that are partly regional, not so much in form as in material. These materials are reflective of our environment in a part of the country that is controlled by its weather. Trees, leaves, dirt, cloth, sand, earth, twine, tar, water, snow, clay, spring and fall earth forms, paper, and wood are all utilized. But the overall theme that emerges is a personal environmental sensibility with a strong direction toward naturalism. *Wisconsin Directions 3* works toward an interplay of various elements and materials in ways other than one would expect.

The exhibition has been loosely arranged according to different areas of artistic concept as a convenient means of creating some kind of order. Many of the artists, however, can be placed in more than one area, and should be viewed accordingly.

Sculpture as "place" is a significant statement today and is well represented in *Wisconsin Directions 3* in the form of several environmental works. Marian Vieux's outdoor-sited art plays with and alters our environment. It interrelates with people in buildings, people in passing cars, and with the urban environment around it. Vieux's wrapped trees offer a new vision, on a temporary basis, altering the site and hopefully the viewer's perception. The viewer gains a new experience from the work of art because he is required to see his environment in a new way. Photo documentation in the form of postcards plays an indispensable part in presenting the natural and manipulated environment as a newly defined sculptural and conceptual environment.

Other sculpture as place or installation works each involve a room-sized space. Don Miller's environmental installation is made of materials from nature that have been turned into fragments that suggest artifacts. The installation makes a personal statement depending on how one sees it or how one wishes it to appear, and has a private, almost spiritual effect on our perception of nature past and present.

Enter the assembled multi-media installation by Katherine King and transform your life for a moment. King has maintained a formal presentation as well as a personal statement, keeping the integrity of the spaces and materials and allowing the material to characterize the structure and affect the habitat, simultaneously voicing human needs. The installation has tape recorded statements and a daily performance that will psychologically alter the environment and allude to personal mythologies and mysteries.

The utilization of a serial format is represented in the untitled installation piece by Ruth Kao. The work consists of floating silk cubes with wing-like flaps. Both idea and technical quality are equally important to Kao and culminate in *Wisconsin Directions 3* as a small vignette or dramatic scenario, both mysterious and delicate.

Stephen Pevnick's *Rainfall*, a computerized sculpture, creates the effect of rainfall by using a computer to control the formation of falling water droplets. This work represents a new medium in the area of visual arts. Pevnick says, "I've set out to reinvent the paintbrush or the sculptor's chisel." The project is housed in a large plastic bubble in the East Entrance in order to utilize the eighteen-foot ceiling. This new mode of art focuses on indeterminacy, requiring a new relationship between viewer and the work of art.

Three *Wisconsin Directions 3* artists are working with conceptual ideas, working deductively from a known system of geometry to original shape and structure. Jill Sebastian combines iconography and illusion on straight-forward sculptural forms. This results in finished works that are a complex series of reordering of the artist's personal world. Her art is based on language, presented on sculptural structures, that can be decoded to yield a narrative statement.

Colored strings, whose interim plane is the wall, serve to systematize and document Dennis Coffey's installation conceptually as well as visually. The process will be revealed to the viewer by a weekly change in the work.

John Ganske's work suggests another aspect of conceptual concerns, a sense of the importance of the geometric construction. Each form is in a series related by form and scale. Variations in perception are left to the viewer who can create them by changing his position.

All three conceptual exhibits engage the viewer in perceptual configurations and concerns. Sebastian's and Coffey's pieces work on several different levels. One level is a sheer glorification of the sculptural quality; the other is the excitement of altering the space to make the viewer directly confront the problem of perception from different angles. John Ganske is extending conceptual associations of the images by utilizing the serial format. All three artists use fundamental mathematical concepts to reach exciting, but diverse results, which are part physical and part conceptual.

Sculptural objects in the exhibition done in a more traditional format also cover many areas of artistic concept. Work representing a return to Mother Earth and earlier times by Karon Hagemeister-Winzenz represents a spiritual pursuit that involves a search for life's essential meaning and purpose. It takes us away from the strictly object-oriented to spiritual self-realization. The artist is blending today's culture with ancient tribal cultures in an effort to find a "oneness" with nature.

Dick Evans' ceramic landscapes present dense surfaces that reveal substructures and allow us a chance to find our own vistas, to sense and select in his sculpture our own personal landscapes.

Robert Merline, whose sculptures are made of natural and found objects indigenous to his Door County habitat, explores his

fascination with the strength of fragile tension structures which represent the right and left or balance as it appears in life.

Karen Gunderman's ceramic shapes remain abstract but linked to mystical landscape in the subtle juxtaposition of color and form, line and texture. She creates personal constructions that lie along the fine line between organization and disorganization, and provide negative spaces that interact with positive shapes in a sculptural rather than pictorial manner.

Wood as a means of expression was used by Jarrett Strawn in his earlier work *Green Street*, while his later pieces such as *Dead Pig for Uncle Elmer* were constructed of metal and wood. The majority of Strawn's work is composed of two or three materials with rough textures. He often uses a variety of materials in each piece, placed in novel staccato relationships. He also likes to juxtapose brightly painted and unpainted surfaces, causing one's eye to skip and dart along the piece.

Metal is represented in *Wisconsin Directions 3* in miniature scale, enhancing the expression of personal landscape, pictorial and symbolic in nature. Seeming to show more concern for personal expression than for resolution of formal art problems, Barbara Povlich and Martha Glowacki are challenged by the concept of jewelry being a sculptural statement rather than an ornament, having the ability to be wearable as well as sculpturally significant. They aspire to alter our present artistic concepts by showing us materials used in non-traditional forms. Prints are an important innovative element in the work of the two metalsmiths. Glowacki uses it as a basic

image; Povlich uses prints in several instances which function as part of the actual sculpture.

In the process of assembling and viewing the works for this exhibit, some observations were made which may be worth recounting here. The return to Mother Earth as both a spiritual and a physical statement, the use of material directly from nature or slightly altered, the artists' vision of our natural resources as inspiration—these are major themes of the exhibition *Wisconsin Directions 3: The Third Dimension*. As a survey limited to fifteen artists, the exhibition could not present all of the important and influential art of Wisconsin, nor could it summarize the total breadth of three-dimensional activities. The usual limitations of available space dictated the number of artists and works that could be included. Thus, the exhibition focuses its attention on a small selection of the diverse achievements of Wisconsin artists. It reflects and coincides with national trends and international directions, which are visible in Wisconsin art today.

Jane Brite
Curator of *Wisconsin Directions 3:
The Third Dimension*

Catalogue

All works in this exhibition were created between 1978 and 1981. The catalogue information was in each case supplied by the artist. Measurements are given in inches, with height preceding width, and width preceding depth. Illustrated items are indicated with an asterisk (*). All artwork is owned by the artist unless otherwise indicated, and many are available for purchase.

DICK EVANS

"My general philosophy of art has changed so many times over the past fifteen years I would be more than reluctant to put it down on paper, realizing full well it would only come back to haunt me.

I have long been fascinated by the relationship of parts to a whole by repetition, and by color relationships. The basic context of this work probably alludes to landscape. Beyond that, however, I have tried to create a juxtaposition of color, texture and form to stir emotions within the viewer which might not be touched in day to day considerations."

Born: 1941—Roswell, New Mexico
Residence: Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Education: 1964—University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah—B.F.A.,
Drawing and Painting;
1966—University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah—M.F.A.,
Sculpture and Ceramics
Positions: 1975-Present—University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1972-1975—University of New Mexico, Albuquerque,
New Mexico
1971-1972—University of Tennessee, Knoxville,
Tennessee
1966-1970—Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas

Desert Drumming 1980

Porcelain
6" x 14" x 20"

***Katie 1980**

Porcelain
3" x 18" x 27"

Lilac Mist 1980

Porcelain
7" x 12" x 12"

Desert Moon 1980

Porcelain
4" x 11" x 13"

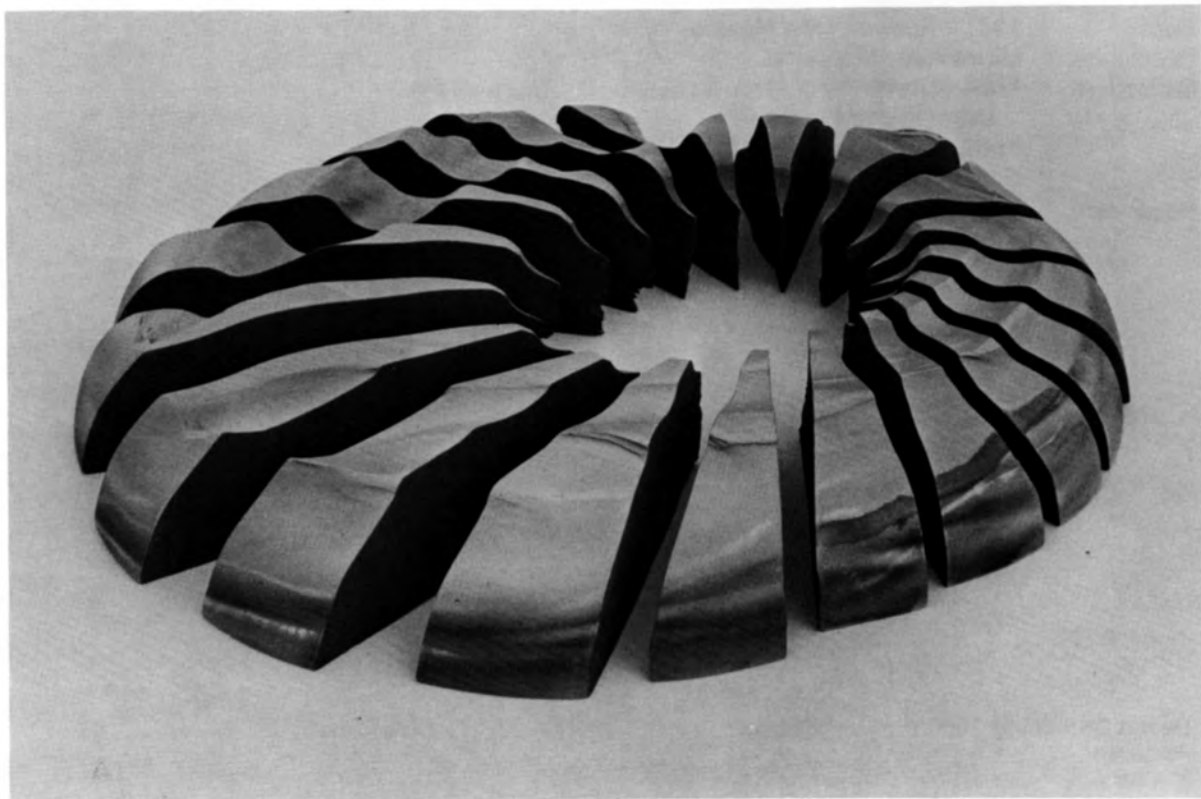
Dark Passage II 1980

Porcelain
7" x 14" x 14"

***Night Flight 1980**

Porcelain
6" x 15" x 20"

Katie



DICK EVANS

Night Flight

