

Bennington Artists
THE YEARS AFTER

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WORKS BY MORE THAN 35 ARTISTS WHO WERE GRADUATED
FROM BENNINGTON COLLEGE DURING THE 1960's AND 1970's

Suzanne Lemberg Usdan Gallery
Bennington College Bennington, Vermont 05201
May 1 through May 29, 1984
opening Tuesday May 1, 7 to 9 pm
gallery hours: 1 to 5 pm
Monday through Friday 802/442-5401

partially funded by the Elizabeth Reed Keller Exhibition Fund

Acknowledgements

The present exhibition is selected from work done by artists who were graduated from Bennington College during the later sixties and all of the seventies. The earlier years were excluded because the exhibition had to be kept to manageable proportions and because this chosen period corresponds to the years I have been teaching at the College and thus know first hand. It was obviously impossible to invite all of the students who were graduated from the College during those years just as it was impossible for budgetary reasons to exhibit actual work of all those invited. While most of the graduates invited live in the East, especially New York City, some live as far away as California, Montana, Chicago and England. Some sculptural projects were of a nature or dimension that made them impossible to transport and are represented by enlarged photographic poster prints. Those not represented by actual works are represented by slides that will be automatically and constantly projected. I was personally gratified that virtually all of those who were invited responded, quite a few with encouraging letters. The show was my idea. That I should select and mount the exhibition was the Art Division's. I think I'm pleased. Jane Aebersold not only thought of the title, but assisted me in the design of the invitation and catalogue and arranging for the pickup and delivery of the work. I am indebted to Tyler Resch for the actual production of the catalogue and invitation and to Marge Newton for general coordination, correspondence and gentle reminders. I am responsible for the contents — and any errors of fact — in the accompanying essay, which should not in any way be construed as representing the ideology of the Art Division as a whole and its members individually. The show, in any event, would not have been possible without funding by the Elizabeth Reed Keller Memorial Fund and a generous supplemental grant from Suzanne Lemberg Usdan.

Sidney Tillim

Bennington Artists: The Years After

by
Sidney Tillim

Studio art has been "taught" in American colleges and universities for more than 100 years. It cannot be demonstrated that this has produced better artists than those who studied "privately," or in academies or, for that matter, taught themselves. But that the teaching of art in liberal arts institutions has been influential in raising art consciousness generally and that it has been integrated into the professional support systems that includes critics, dealers, collectors, galleries and museums cannot be denied. Indeed, many institutions of higher education possess major collections of art and sponsor major exhibitions in their campus galleries and museums. One thinks of the University of California at Berkeley, the State University of New York at Purchase, Yale University, Smith College, Cornell University to name just a few.

Bennington College was founded barely more than fifty years ago, but despite its small size it quickly became associated with what was "advanced" in American art and culture generally. It was not only a college of liberal arts, but a liberal institution in the broadest sense. From the beginning educationally innovative, it was only logical that by the end of the forties and especially in the early and late fifties the College became one of the first to embrace the "new American art" that emerged after World War II and gradually established a world wide hegemony for itself. Jackson Pollock and Barnett Newman were given their first retrospectives at Bennington. In the sixties the College was linked with a number of influential artists, such as Ken Noland, Tony Caro and Jules Olitski, who were dubbed "The Green Mountain Boys" because they lived in the College vicinity or taught at the College. In the middle and late fifties, Tony Smith also taught at the College and, along with Paul Feeley, who was the real catalyst, and Gene Goossen, who arrived in 1957, was instrumental in establishing the College's commitment to the ultimately professional study and practice of art. (Nor should one overlook Clement Greenberg's extended association with the College, and David Smith's during this critical period and later.)

Two other facts need to be cited in defining Bennington's special relationship to modernist art and education. The first is that Bennington's reputation in the visual arts was matched by the reputation of other disciplines at the College as well. One tires of the by now irritating practice of trotting out the names of the cultural luminaries who once were or now are associated with the College, but the association with Bennington of such "names" as Martha Graham, Martha Hill and Doris Humphrey (in Dance), Kenneth Burke, Stanley Hyman and, currently, Bernard Malamud (in Literature), Otto Luening and Henry Brant (Music), and those already mentioned in the Visual Arts is evidence of a larger cultural convergence that is part of the College's history as well. The College, in other words, was an important contributor to, as much as it was a reflection of, the new ethos that developed in American art and cultural life after 1946.

The other important fact is that until fairly recently, the student body consisted almost entirely of women; presently more women art majors are enrolled than men. Historically perhaps, more women have studied art than have men, but far fewer persisted as practicing professionals, though that pattern has clearly changed. The study of art by women was once largely a part of an education in manners rather than a career choice, but that trend eroded in a system based on parity, excellence and autonomy that, again, reflected historical pressures which advanced culture and educational practice fostered and then exemplified. Where the professional role of women in art was once largely entrepreneurial — women either founded salons, became dealers or asserted considerable influence as patrons — they are now a clear and felt presence in the exhibition world. If

women's liberation has worked at all — and some will deny that it really has — it is partly because the momentum was already there in cultural practice for it to have capitalized upon. Perhaps the most prominent artist to have graduated from Bennington is Helen Frankenthaler. She was graduated in 1949 and 1949, history now tells us, was a very good year for modernist art in America. The star of what was to come to be known as the New American Painting had begun to rise. The graduation of the first postwar generation of artists around 1950 virtually legitimized the American vanguard by creating a line of succession; Bennington was part of that succession.

It is not clear just how much credit — or blame — a college art school deserves for the art and the reputations of the artists it “produces.” In most instances —almost all, actually — the styles of college-educated artists change dramatically once the artists begin to get on with their professional lives. This is certainly the case with artists exhibited in this show. But the styles of *most* modernist artists invariably change in their life times; the modern movement itself is one of constant change, outwardly at least. College art schools — or “divisions” — do their jobs well if they manage to relay to their *élèves* a sense of art as a process that embodies a dialogue both with faculty and the self. Education is in good measure self-education. Schools cannot teach conviction any more than they should attempt to inculcate a particular style. Rather than teaching conventions, college art departments, such as Bennington's, encourage rigor in practice and seek to instill a sense of quality that is partly what is meant by the word ambition.

Of course, the relationships between students and individual faculty members are very important. They are partly the content of a modern education. In mediating the confrontation between “tradition and the individual talent” they become the source of the friction that is crucial to the development of a sense of conviction and identity. The purpose of an art education has nothing — or just very little — to do with the formation of taste. It has everything to do with the creation of artistic will.

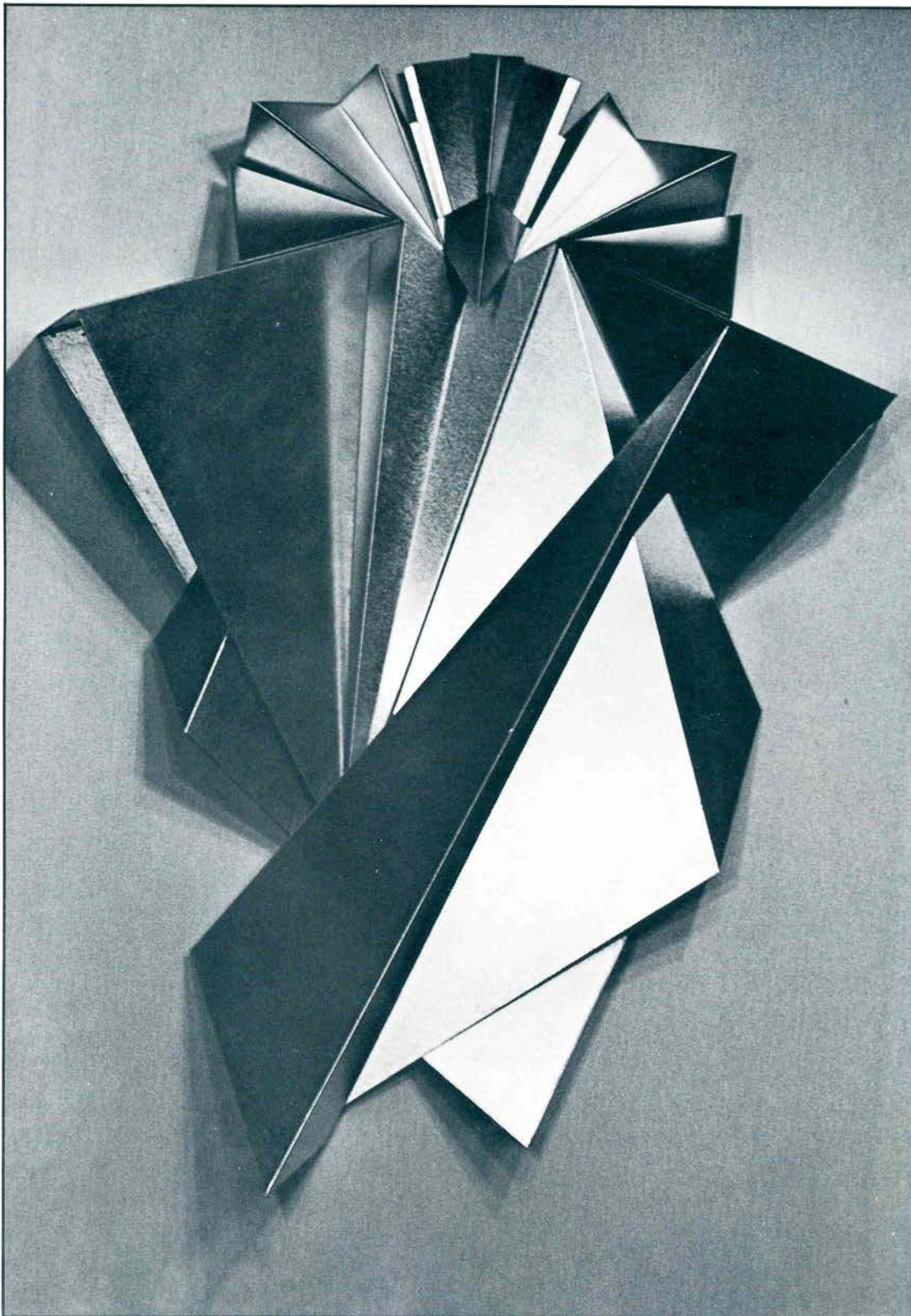
It may be that in inviting some thirty-five to forty former Bennington students to show examples of their professional output to the public at the present time, the Bennington College Art Division is showing off a bit. But there is also the possibility — nay, there is the likelihood — of renewing the mutuality between former students, now *artists*, and the College. It is an act of recognition of what students and faculty taught each other and how much there still is — and always will be — to learn.



Londa Weisman (1967)
New York IV, 1981-82
stoneware floor piece
47½" high, 24" diameter



Benje LaRico (MFA, 1976)
Why Not, 1983
Enamel, linoleum, tile on bar-
board, 55" x 41½" x 5/8"



Lisa Scheer (1978)
Untitled #2, 1984
galvanized sheet metal
58" x 42½" x 9½"



Susan Tunick (1967)
Rock, Salt & Nails #2, 1983
oil & acrylic 72" x 46½"



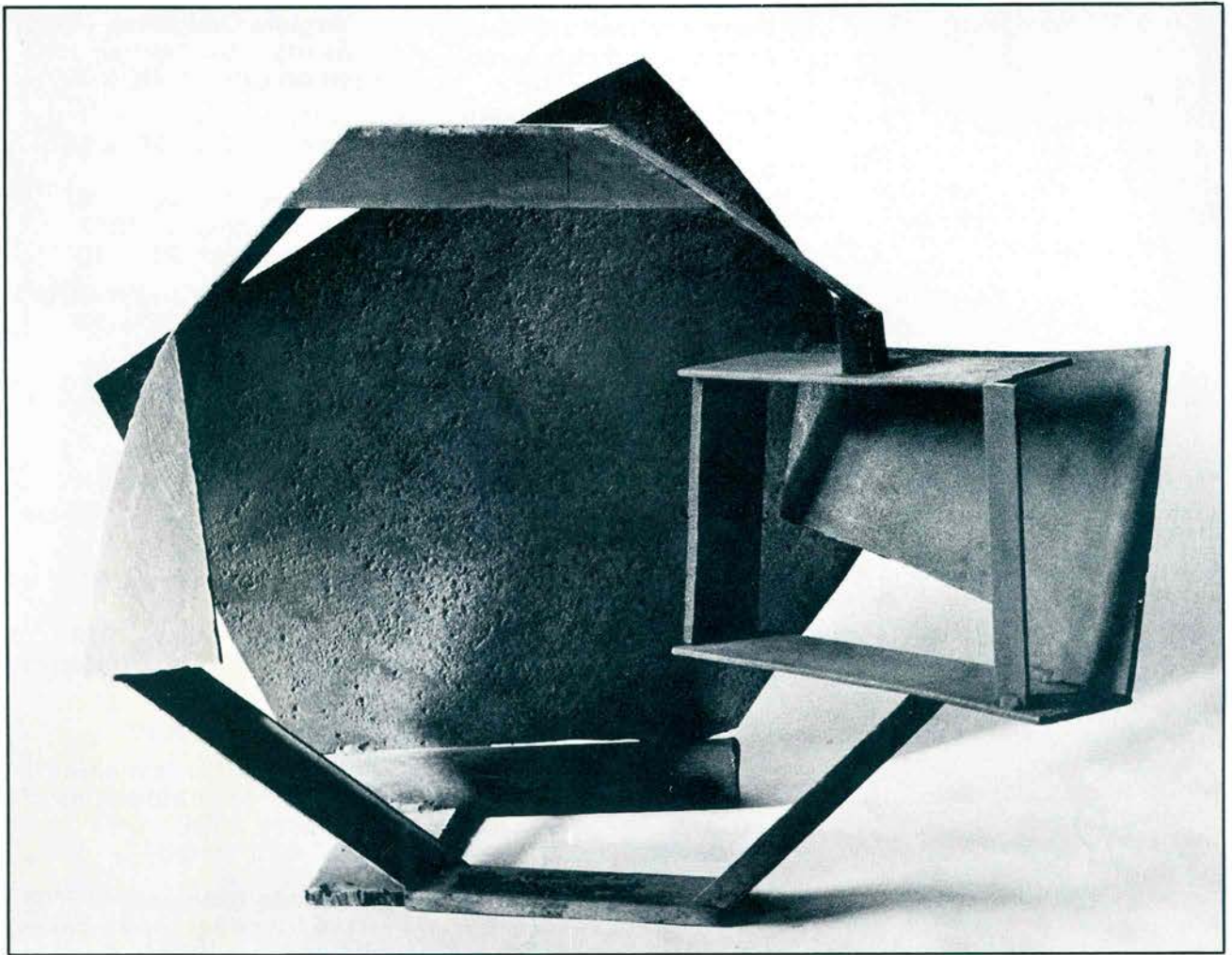
Rebecca Cross (1978)
Fruit Fantasy II, 1982
oil on paper, 26" x 40"



Stephen Frailey (1979)
Untitled, 1982
C print, 10" x 10"



Lexey Lee Russell (1979)
Black & White, 1982
acrylic on canvas 60" x 90"



Andrea Woodner (1970)
Study for Bamford, 1983
steel 22 x 29½" x 12¼"

Perry Adelman (1979)
Four untitled photographs

Pam Avril (M.F.A., 1980)
Untitled (Tree), 1983
oil on canvas, 7' x 5½'

Untitled, 1983
6½' x 5½', oil on canvas

Mary Barringer (1972)
Cambodia, 1983
Stoneware, 8½" x 9½" x 6"
Untitled, 1983
Stoneware, 8" x 8" x 5"

Carole Bolsey (1969)
Exterior I, 1983
oil on canvas, 96" x 120"
Exterior II, 1983
oil on canvas, 96" x 120"

Sigrid Burton
Crepusculo, 1973
oil in canvas, 39" x 60"
Toscana, 1983
oil on canvas, 55" x 70"

Liz Caspari (1974)
Spring Run Off, 1981
White Stoneware, 16¼" x 3¾" x 12½"
Seascape, 1980
30½" x 33" x ¾"

Ferris Cook (1970)
U.S. Map & Wastepaper Basket, 1982
oil on canvas, 18" x 14"
Reglor Lamp Base, 1983
oil on canvas, 10" x 14"

Jan Cook, (1970)
Barn Red & Mt. Anthony, 1983
Silo paper
Surf & Tideline, n.d. (dyptych)
Silo paper, 36" x 56"

Sarah Cook (1969)
Photographs

Rita Cimini (M.F.A., 1980)
Winter of the Heart, 1983
oil on canvas, 52" x 47"
New Day, 1983
oil on canvas, 52" x 48"

Virginia Creighton, (1969)
Evening Up the Hill, 1982
oil on canvas, 40" x 70"

Untitled, 1982
oil on canvas, 35" x 60"

Rebecca Cross (1978)
Fruit Fantasy II, 1982
oil on paper, 26" x 40"

Spirals and Spatterware, 1982
oil on paper, 23" x 33"

Judy De Maio (1972)
Architectural Drawings

Judith Elgart (1978)
Animal Wraps, 1984
acrylic on canvas, 34" x 40"
Untitled, 1984
acrylic on canvas, 40" x 24"

Stephen Frailey (1979)
Four Untitled Photographs, 1982
C Prints, 10" x 10"
Two untitled laminated black & white photographs (dyp-tych), 1984
28" x 28" each

Pamela Granberry (1970)
My Great Grandmother Caroline Webb, Four color xerographic images from *Unusual Snares*, a portfolio of 13 images (Edition of 10), 1980, image size 6¼" x 9½", sheet size 22" x 28"

Diane Green (1977)
Investigations at Sea, 1984
oil on canvas, 62" x 58"
Night's Candles Are Burnt Out, 1984
oil on canvas, 55½ x 40"

Leslie Griest (1978)
Iris Platter, 1983
white stoneware, 14" w.
Ash Glazed Vase, 1981
Stoneware, 8" h.

Maren Hassinger (1969)
Field, 1983
Wire rope, concrete, 4' x 15' x 15'
Remembering, 1983
Preserved Rose Leaves, cot, 8' x 12' x 10'

Susan Hoenig (1976)
Stone Crossing, 1980
stones, site: Oaxaca, Mexico
Stone Crossing, another view
Crescent in Winter, 1980
Site: Coralville Reservoir, Iowa

Jean Holabird (1969)
Untitled (Water Lilies), 1960
Watercolor, 30" x 22"
Column of Death, 1981
Hand-colored etching w/text
by Tony Towle
10" x 16" (Edition of 20)
Division - American, 1980
Hand-colored etching w/text
by Tony Towle, 100" x 16"
(Edition of 20)

Constance Kheel (1967)
Trakehner Strut, 1983
acrylic on canvas, 72" x 72"
Help Overtime, 1983
acrylic on canvas, 60" x 60"

Benje La Rico (M.F.A., 1976)
Why Not, 1983
Enamel, linoleum, tile on baraboard, 55" x 41½" x 1½"
Untitled, 1983
enamel, ceramic tile, linoleum
on baraboard, 20½ x 24" x 2¼"

Linda Lawton (1970)
Shotgun Approach, 1980
Acrylic, enamel on rag paper,
84½" x 36"
Escape Hatch, 1980
Acrylic, enamel on rag paper,
57⅛" x 55¼"

Jill Nathanson (1976)
Untitled, 1983
acrylic on canvas
Untitled, 1983
acrylic on canvas, 95" x 46"

Ruth Ann Olson (1970)
M5 in Canes Venatici, 1983
mixed media on paper, app.
24" x 36"
M35 in Perseus, 1983
mixed media on hand-made
paper, 13" x 13"

Leslie Parke (1974, M.F.A., 1976)
Striped Painting II, 1983
oil on canvas, 90" x 144"
Shaped Painting 1, 1983
oil on canvas, 89" x 137"

Carol Perroni (1976)
6 OC 3MAC, 1982
Mixed media, 78" x 96"
9 IMIX 9 TZEC
Mixed media, 76" x 94"

Jo Ann Rothschild (1971)
Bonne Belle, 1982
oil on canvas, 96" x 66"
High Hopes (For Frida Kahlo),
1983
oil on canvas, 96" x 66"

Lexey Lee Russell (1979)
Black & White, 1983
acrylic on canvas 60" x 90"
Cynosure, 1983
acrylic on canvas 38" x 38"

Margaret Saliske (1978)
Untitled, 1984
aluminum, 4' x 1' x 7"
Untitled, 1984
aluminum, 18" x 26" x 8"

Mary Jane Sarvis (1979)
Sea Grapes, 1982
Etching w/chine colle, 19" x
14½"
Couple, 1982
Lithograph, 19" x 30"

Lisa Scheer (1978)
Untitled, 1983
Galvanized sheet metal, 70" x
12" x 6"
Untitled # 2, 1984
Galvanized sheet metal, 58" x
42½" x 9½"

Pamela Skewes-Cox (1983)
Gate at Perpignan, 1983
Ceramic relief, 6" x 6"
White Columns, Le Put, 1983
Ceramic relief, 6" x 6"

Claudia Shwide (1976)

*Large Bowl with Angles & Lines
Moving Through Space*, 1983
Ceramic, Ltd. edition

*Large Bowl - Undulant Collec-
tion*,

Traffic, #1100, 1984
Ceramic, Ltd. Edition

Lisa Stoliar (1978)

Conspiracy (work in progress),
1984

Ceramic, 12" x 14"

Excavation, 1983

Ceramic, paint, wood. 12¾" x
14¾" x 7½"

Margaret Swan (M.F.A. 1978)

Elsinore, 1983

riveted aluminum, 60" x 44" x
7"

Saint George, 1983

riveted aluminum, 62" x 41" x
12"

Rising Herald, 1983

gel resist/acrylic, 56" x 42"

Susan Tunick (1967)

Rock Salt & Nails # 2, 1983
oil & acrylic, 72" x 46½"

Try, Try Darling, 1983
oil & acrylic, 74" x 34½"

Geri Vroman (1973)

Totem Pole, 1978-81

Store-bought wood puzzle, 12
inches high, about 9 inter-
locking pieces, views of the
seasons on all surfaces in
oil. Three views.

Mel Watkin (1977)

Shivered All Night Long, 1983
installation (drawing), 8' x 10'
x 13' (Three views)

Marcia Weese (1973)

Leviathan, 1983

Laminated Wood, Wire, 60' x
50' x 7'

Two views

Londa Weisman (1967)

New York IV, 1981-82

Stoneware Floor Piece, 47"h x
24" d

Floorpiece, 1984

25½" x 26½"

Andrea Woodner (1970)

That Galaxy of Light, 1983
steel, 15" x 16" x 4½"

Study for Bamford, 1983
22" x 29½" x 12¼", steel