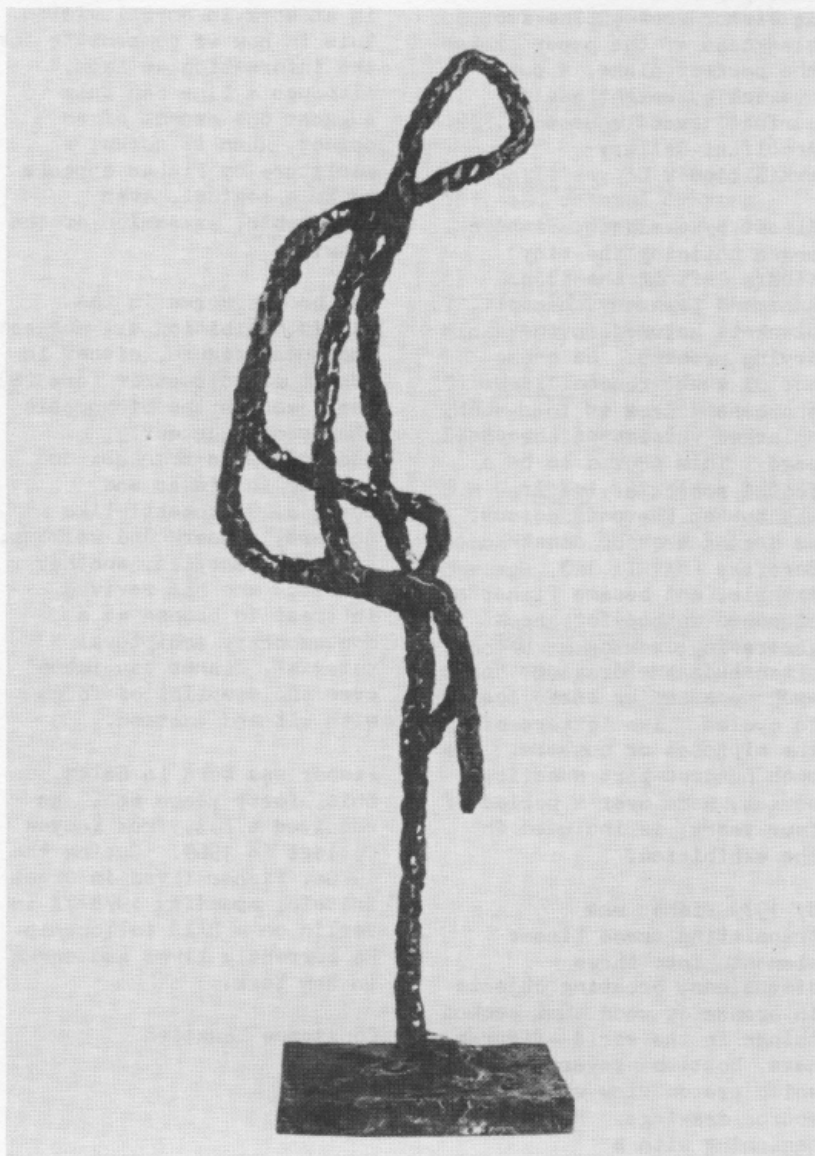


Joel Fisher  
MATRIX/BERKELEY 111

University Art Museum  
early August - mid October  
1987

Untitled, 1987



Sculptor Joel Fisher's roots are in the minimal and conceptual movements of the late sixties and early seventies which favored elemental, nonobjective forms and emphasized the primacy of the idea in the art object. To probe the fundamental properties of the two-dimensional plane as a thing in itself, rather than as a support for a drawing or painting, Fisher began to make paper as his artwork. As Fisher wrote, "The fresh blankness of the paper evokes the perfect plane, a pure, available, weightless surface" (catalogue for Arnolfini Gallery exhibition).

Almost by accident, Fisher began noticing the tiny fibers left on the blank handmade paper by the felt blankets he used in the drying process. He chose one of these random linear shapes and drew it in a much enlarged version on the same page. This proved to be a fecund source of imagery, a way to tap the unconscious, as dreams are for Jonathan Borofsky (MATRIX 10), for example, and became Fisher's standard method for generating drawings. He often made the drawings (or apographs, as he terms them) in cycles, like letters of the alphabet or numbers. One such hundred-part numerical series, made over a period of four years, is included in the exhibition.

By 1979 Fisher was translating these linear elements into three dimensions, creating objects in bronze or wood that evoked things in the world--figures, hats, bottles--several of which are on view with their source drawings. By beginning with a

nonreferential drawing and arriving at an associative object, he not only reversed the usual artistic practice, familiar to all art students, of making drawings from figures or objects, but also the typical process of abstraction.

Fisher is concerned with how vision functions. As he wrote in the catalogue for his exhibition in Lucerne, "Something like imagination is at work in normal vision. This is how we compensate for the information we lack." Although a line can only suggest one aspect of an object, when it works, a sculpture by Fisher appears to be a logical, even inevitable, extension of the drawing.

The bronze works in the MATRIX exhibition all suggest the human figure, either in sensuous, volumetric form (S) that recalls the biomorphic shapes of such early modernists as Brancusi and Arp, or in linear and energetic, Giacometti-like dancers, runners and walkers. Like Joel Shapiro, another sculptor who has revived interest in bronze as a contemporary sculptural material, Fisher can imbue even the simplest of forms with wit and emotion.

Fisher was born in Salem, Ohio, forty years ago. He received a B.A. from Kenyon College in 1969. During the 1970s, Fisher lived in Great Britain, spending 1973-74 in Berlin on a DAAD fellowship. He currently lives and works in New York.

Constance Lewallen

Works in MATRIX:

(All sculptures, except where noted, were made in 1987 and all are in bronze. Unless indicated otherwise they are lent courtesy of Farideh Cadot Gallery, NY. All drawings are pencil and found fiber on handmade paper and are 6 x 6" unframed.)

1. S, edition 3/5, 55-1/2 x 18 x 20". Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Carter Thacher, S.F., courtesy Diane Brown Gallery, N.Y.

2. Untitled, drawing for S, 1982. Lent by the artist.

3. Untitled, 30 x 21-1/2 x 16", and related drawing. Lent by Harold Venokur, N.Y.

4. Untitled, 1986, 25 x 21 x 7". Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Michael Lynne, N.Y.

5. Untitled, 35-1/2 x 26 x 24". Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Silverstein, N.Y.

6. Untitled, 42-1/4 x 9-3/4 x 14". Lent by Mr. and Mrs. John Martin Shea, Palm Springs, CA.

7. Hundred Figures, 1979-83, pencil, charcoal, conte, and found fibers on handmade paper. Lent by Locksley Shea Gallery.

Selected one-person exhibitions:

Nigel Greenwood Gallery, London, '71, '76, '78, '79, '82, '86; Galerie Ileana Sonnabend, Paris, '72, '74; Gallery Folker Skulima, W. Berlin, '74, '75; Städtisches Museum, Monchengladbach, W. Germany, '75 (catalogue); Galleria Marilena Bonomo, Bari, Italy, Instances of Change, '76 (catalogue); Salvatore Ala, Milan, '76, '78; Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, England, '77 (catalogue); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, '78 (catalogue); Galeria Foksal, Warsaw, Poland, '78 (catalogue); New 57 Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland, Center As Threshold, '80 (catalogue); Galerie Farideh Cadot, Paris, '80, '83, '86; Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, England, '81 (catalogue); Diane Brown Gallery, NY, '84, '85, '87 (catalogue); Westfälischer Kunstverein, Munster, W. Germany, '84; Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, Switzerland, '84 (catalogue); Dart Gallery, Chicago, '86; Farideh Cadot Gallery, NY, '87 (catalogue).

Selected group exhibitions:

Kassel, W. Germany, Documenta 5, '72 (catalogue); Paula Cooper Gallery, NY, Drawings and Other Works, '74; Amerika Haus, W. Berlin, Separation, '74; Wroklaw, Poland, The International Drawing Triennale, '78; Galeria MDA, Warsaw, Poland, Ogrod Poznanian, '81; Crown Point Press, Oakland, CA, Representing Reality: Fragments from the Image Field, '82 (catalogue); Arts Council of Great Britain, Paper As Image (traveled), '83; The Museum of Modern Art, NY, An International Survey of Contemporary

Painting and Sculpture, '84 (catalogue); Gallery Shimada, Yamaguchi, Japan, Abstract Drawings and Sculpture, '85; Kunsthaus Hamburg, W. Germany, Biennale des Friedans, '86; Janet Steinberg Gallery, S.F., '86; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, W. Germany, Europa-Amerika, '86 (catalogue); Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, Structure to Resemblance: Eight Sculptors, '87; Fuller Goldeen Gallery, S.F., Synthesis, '87.

Selected bibliography about the artist (see also catalogues under exhibitions):

Field, Simon.

Interview, Art and Artists (London), Jan. '72.

"Joel Fisher," interview by Robin White, View (Oakland, CA: Crown Point Press, '81).

"Talking Objects: Interviews with Ten Young Sculptors," Art in America, Nov. '85.

Heartney, Eleanor. "Joel Fisher," ARTnews, March '86.

Goodman, Neil. "Joel Fisher," New Art Examiner, May '86.

Brenson, Michael. "A Utopian Sculptor Steeped in Tradition," The New York Times, May 26, '87.

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