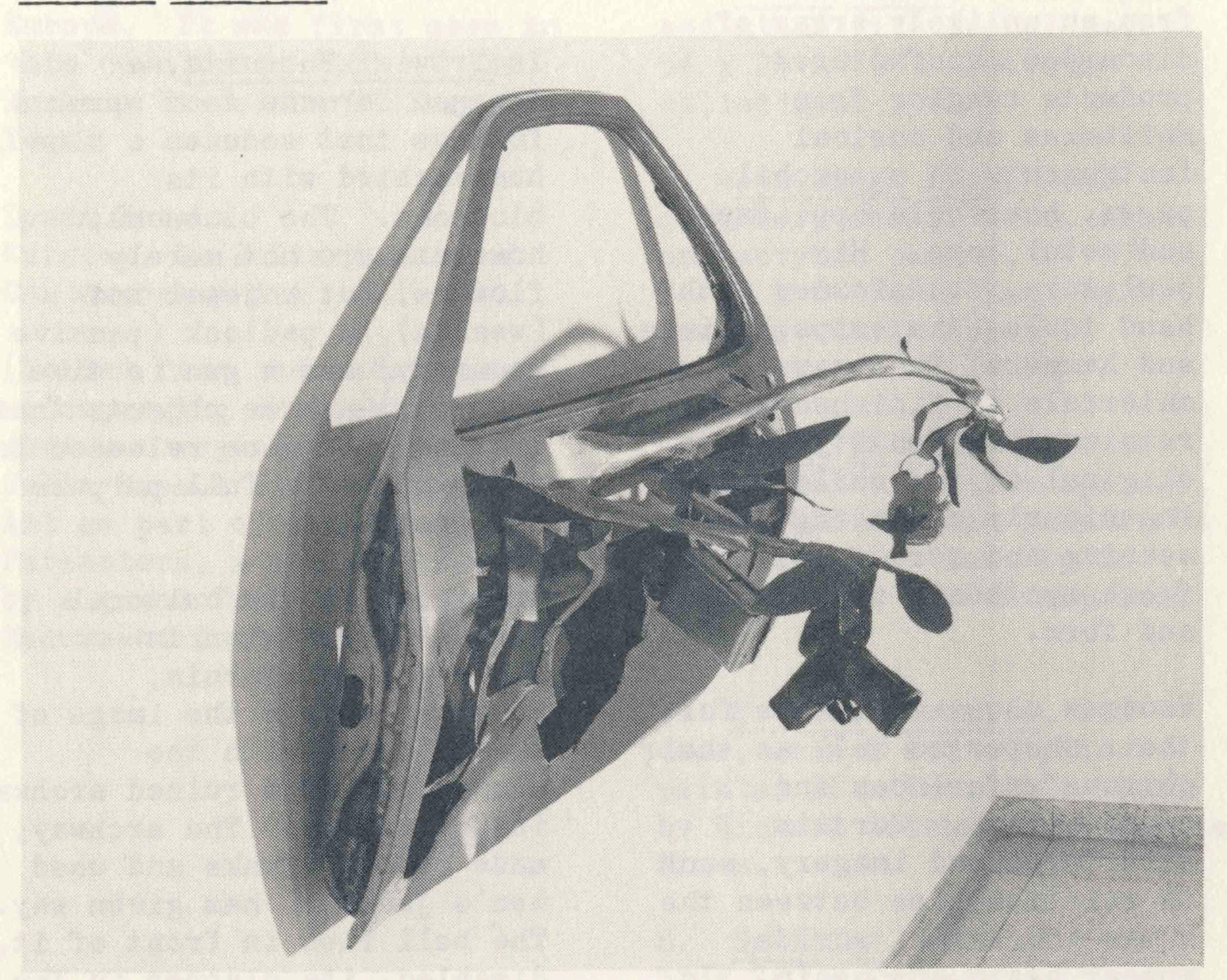
Bill Woodrow
MATRIX/BERKELEY 91

University Art Museum early December - late January 1986

Trivial Pursuits, 1985



British sculptor Bill Woodrow begins his work by gathering raw materials from the region surrounding the exhibition site, in this case the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art where the exhibition originated. These materials consist of common artifacts from our culture, sloughedoff remnants of obsolete industrialism and spent consumerism. Thus the artist's work takes its form from an unlikely array of discarded manufactured products ranging from mailboxes and musical instruments to automobile parts, household appliances and metal toys. His sculpture, transformed with hand tools (tin snips, pliers and hammers) from raw materials to finished work, retains the identity of the original object while ingeniously extending its meaning and structure via a fresh synthesis of intention and form.

Woodrow chooses objects for their shapes as well as their obvious references and connotations. Certain structures and imagery, such as relationships between the human and animal worlds, appear again and again. In Green Snake, a snake menacingly encircles a watch emerging from a cymbal, alluding to the irony of man/machine vs. nature and the predatory character of urban violence.

The catalyst for Still Waters was an actual elk head that Woodrow saw in a local second-hand shop. In response to the mounted trophy, he began creating his own elk head out of car hoods. The rest of Still Waters began to emerge around this initial image. As the elk (head) swims upstream its

antlers comb the immediate environment, snagging a gold bar, a key and a microphone-images that symbolize power and control--and which have been used by Woodrow before. The elk pulls (rescues) or is restrained by larger debris consisting of domestic objects (a chair, a step ladder, and a sinking boat). The final section of water (box spring) is covered with fallen leaves.

In Trivial Pursuits, a damaged Porsche door sprouts foliage that seduces a blue hummingbird with its blossoms. The blossoms, however, are not merely flowers, but a jewel box (wealth), a padlock (passive security) and a gun (active security)—three objects that must be opened or released to offer up their full purpose and meaning.

Intrigued by the cultural facade of religion in Southern California. Woodrow employs the image of a bell along with the suggestion of a ruined archway in Collection. The archway, made of old trunks and used men's jackets, has given way. The bell lies in front of it, disabled, its clapper in the shape of a cross, muted, and its pull chord lined with fishhooks (Jesus, the fisherman; hooked on Jesus; or the wounds of Jesus?) meandering on the floor. Has the arch collapsed because the toller of the bell snagged his hands on the hooks, pulling the bell down? Was the foundation badly made or too old?

The status of Woodrow's materials as real refuse is thus set against the various symbols and references evoked. Rich in imagery and provocative in meaning, the

pieces produced in San Diego are at heart involved with social, moral and political concerns.

Woodrow was born in England in 1948 and studied at the Winchester School of Art, Winchester, and in London at the Chelsea School of Art and St. Martin's School of Art. For the past several years, his work has been represented in major exhibitions in Europe. It was first seen in this country in 1983 at the Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York.

Lynda Forsha Curator, La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art

(Edited from the catalogue accompanying the exhibition that was organized by the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art as part of Exhibition Parameters, a series funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.)

Works in MATRIX (all works are dated 1985):

- 1. Collection, four car hoods, eight luggage trunks, fifteen jackets, coins, enamel and acrylic paints, 106 x 158 x 137". Lent by Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York, and Lisson Gallery, London.
- 2. Eclipse, U.S. mailbox, tin globe, aluminum saxophone

mute and enamel paint, 34-1/2 x 37-1/2 x 15-3/4". Lent by Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York, and Lisson Gallery, London.

- 3. Electric Water, metal file box, two cake tins and enamel paint, 34-1/4 x 13 x 13". Lent by Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York, and Lisson Gallery, London.
- 4. Green Snake, brass cymbal and stand with enamel paint, 54 x 21 x 19". Private collection.
- 5. San Diego Rose, 40mm artillery shell, wood, enamel and acrylic paints, 17-3/4 x 7-1/2 x 6-1/4". Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Christopher D. Sickels.
- 6. Still Waters, three car hoods, three bed box springs, enamel and acrylic paints, 54 x 122 x 245". Lent by La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art.
- 7. Trivial Pursuits, car door, enamel and acrylic paints, 36 x 56 x 29". Lent by Michael Krichman and Leslie Simon.
- 8. Untitled, ink on paper, 32 x 24". Private collection.

Selected one-person exhibitions:

Whitechapel Art Gallery,
London, '72; Kunstlerhaus,
Hamburg, '79; The Gallery,
Acre Lane, London, '80; New
57 Gallery, Edinburgh, '81;
Galerie Wittenbrink,
Regensburg, W. Germany, '81
(catalogue); Galerie 't
Venster Rotterdam, '81
(catalogue); Lisson Gallery
London, '81, '83; Museum of

Modern Art, Oxford, '83
(catalogue); Musée de Toulon,
France, '84 (catalogue);
Barbara Gladstone Gallery,
NY, '83, '84, '85; Kunsthalle
Basel, Switzerland, '85
(catalogue); La Jolla Museum
of Contemporary Art, CA, '85
(catalogue).

Selected group exhibitions:

Museum of Modern Art, Buenos Aires, Argentina, Art Systems, '71; Institute of Contemporary Art, London, Objects and Sculpture, '81 (catalogue); Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, The Biennale of Sydney, '82; Venice, Italy, The Biennale of Venice, '82 (catalogue); Kunsthalle, Bern, Switzerland, Legons des Choses, '82 (catalogue; traveled to Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Chambery, and Maison de la Culture, Chalon sur Saône, France); Tate Gallery, London, New Art, '83 (catalogue); XVII Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil, Transformations, New Sculpture from Britain, '83 (catalogue); The Museum of Modern Art, NY, An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture, '84 (catalogue); Antwerp, Belgium, Biennal van de Kritiek 184, '84; Musee de Toulon, France, Soupe du Jour, '84; Paris, Nouvelle Biennale de Paris, '85 (catalogue); Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Currents, '85 (brochure); Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Canada, Space Invaders, '85; Carnegie Institute, Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA, 1985 Carnegie '85 International, (catalogue).

Selected bibliography (see also catalogues under exhibitions):

Lawson, Thomas.

"Reviews: Edinburgh, Bill
Woodrow, New 57 Gallery,"
Artforum, Dec. '81.

Roberts, John. "Car Doors and Indians." ZG (England), April '82.

Cooke, Lynne. "Reviews:
Bill Woodrow at Barbara
Gladstone." Art in America,
Nov. '83.

Livingstone, Marco.

"Reviews: Bill Woodrow at the Lisson Gallery."

Artscribe (England), June

183.

Francis, Mark. "Bill Woodrow: Material Truths." Artforum, Jan '84.

MATRIX is supported in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency, Mrs. Paul L. Wattis, the T. B. Walker Foundation, and the Alameda County Art Commission's County Supervisors' Art Support Program.