

Summary of Sabbatical Activities

I would like to thank the Board of Trustees, the District and the College for providing me the opportunity to take a semester sabbatical leave. I would also like to thank Dean Michael Sundquist for his support and suggestion in making the leave possible. I found the time beneficial for not only recharging my batteries as a working artist but also a refreshing boost to my enthusiasm as an instructor.

My sabbatical combined two components that were geared toward expanding my awareness of public art (sculpture in particular) and my knowledge of studio art. The first component was a travel component based on research in locating and photographing modern outdoor sculpture that exists in our own San Joaquin Valley. The majority of our students call this region their home but are unaware of the sculpture that surrounds them. I would take a week of each month and head north or south in search of public sculpture. I traveled to cities large and small, from Redding to Bakersfield, locating and photographing various sculptural works. My focus was on large, non-representational pieces; however, I also photographed traditional naturalistic and stylized works. Large cities such as Fresno and Sacramento had an abundance of sculpture in and around state and municipal buildings and also in their financial districts. The larger cities are also home to colleges and universities offering many courses in the visual arts and have permanent works on campus. I took multiple pictures of each piece I encountered making note to capture free-standing sculpture in the round. I have numerous photos which I have edited as to regional location, artist, medium, size, etc. and have incorporated these into my PowerPoint lectures. I also have noticed a response or two from my students indicating they have visited that location and have seen that particular piece. Research is a big part of my curriculum, and with the students knowing that such works exist in places more familiar to them, may take them from the two-dimensional version they see in a book or on a screen to the actual site and experience the sculpture's physical presence.

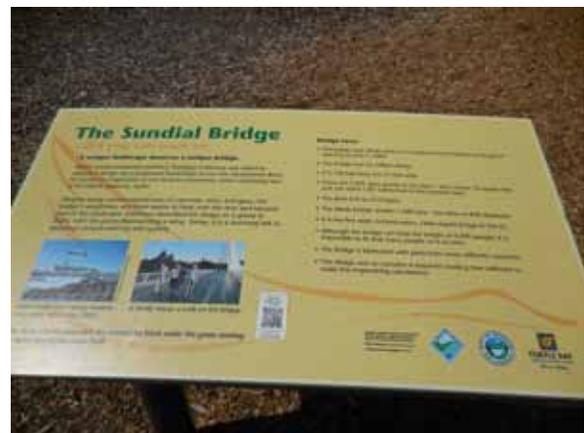
The second component of my sabbatical and what I considered the main component was the production of a new body of work. I have constructed and finished two major welded steel sculptures and have two others in progress. These new sculptures parallel previous work but incorporate added form and dimension. These pieces along with previous work of a similar nature will be on display in the Modesto Jr. College Art Gallery Spring semester. The pieces show the expression of line and its involvement in creating planes leading to form and the illusion of form. The new sculptures are forms that follow the basis of many of my lectures of how the sculptor works with an idea, and develops that idea into a finished work. The exhibiting of these pieces will help foster discussion with my students as to what it means to be a working artist. Most importantly, this experience has renewed my commitment to making art, and I have noticed positive reactions in the students to my enthusiasm.

I. Travel

Travel in the San Joaquin Valley: My travel component was based on exposure to sculpture in the round focusing on outdoor sculpture in the San Joaquin Valley. Its purpose was to make students aware of the sculpture that surrounds them, to give them a look at the dynamics of outdoor sculpture, and to better relate the intent of the artist through multiple views of a given piece. Students are a bit reluctant to do research beyond the internet and books; however, to better understand three-dimensional work the piece has to be viewed in its physical sense. Lately I have become more aware of how many of our students travel by way of the internet and fewer and fewer visit the big metropolitan areas where art is abundant. They are from the San Joaquin Valley, they are comfortable here, so let's find sculpture that is relatively close to what they call home. Hopefully they may encounter a few of these pieces and ignite a spark and say Professor Duchscher showed us that piece.

My approach was as follows: I would break up the travel into one week segments, one week each month for a total of four months. An exhaustive account of my travel would be too involved for the readers of my sabbatical report so I have limited myself to the highlights of each adventure or regional destination.

My first trip went north to the upper San Joaquin Valley. I refer to the San Joaquin Valley as to how John Muir labeled the great central valley of California. I focused on Redding, Chico and some hit and miss stops in between. My research before I started gave me somewhat of a plan as to what sights to visit. Redding and Chico have good public art information via the internet and had mapped a number of locations. Off I went and I felt as though the majority of one day was spent in the car. In Redding I found a number of pieces and focused my interest on what I consider one of the most spectacular sculptures, the Sundial Bridge pictured below:



The bridge is the work of internationally known Spanish Architect, Santiago Calatrava. It spans the Sacramento River, is a working sundial/bridge and the cast shadow time is captured on the deck of the bridge. This is one of the finest examples of the merging of sculpture and architecture into a truly aesthetic functional form. It will definitely find a use in the classroom. After exploring other sculptures and taking a number of pictures it was time to head southeast to Chico.

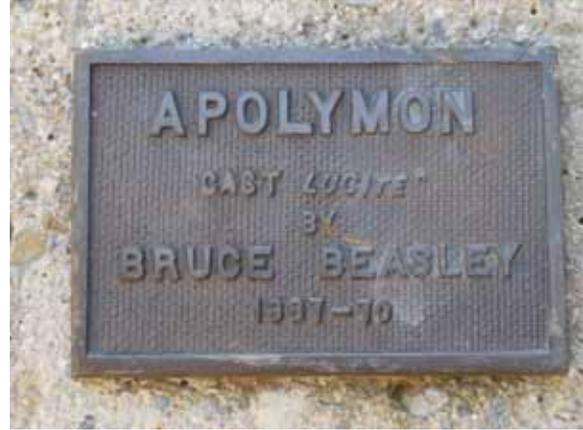
Chico like Redding had excellent documentation of its public art but was a little spread out. It took a while to find some of the work but most were within walking distance of downtown. Being the home of California State University, Chico, I could see the evergrowing influence of the college in the public art. Subject and medium varied from multiculturalism to the pure study of non-representational abstract form. I now had plenty of photos, visual proof, and support for why I tell students it is a place to go and a school to attend to further their studies in the studio arts. My time was up and I headed home making note of my next strategy of travel, Sacramento.

I spent the next three and a half weeks in my studio excited about my own work and motivated by the recently photographed pieces. Two sculptures were now in progress; however, travel was once again on the horizon. It was the end of February and I was off to Sacramento and surrounding areas. Sacramento was always exciting for it was on the I-80 corridor and the public art has a lot of Bay Area influence. Not to mention two very strong art schools, UC Davis and Sacramento State. This area was loaded with public sculpture and would take more than a week.

I started in Davis and took in the downtown and a few outlying areas. I spent a day on the UC campus photographing more than a dozen sculptures and visited the Art Department. I talked with some undergraduate sculpture students and met the Undergraduate Program Coordinator who later emailed me additional information about their art program. After two days of photographing sculptures, dodging bicycles and one parking ticket, I headed to Sacramento.

My first stop was the Crocker Art Museum. This fantastic museum is surrounded by a number of non-representational sculptures, most of which are made of bronze and other nonferrous metals. A day here and a day downtown near the Capitol wasn't nearly enough time but I needed to head home. Once home I deleted what I considered were bad photos, loaded the others into the computer, researched some of the artists a bit more thoroughly and headed back to Sacramento.

On my second trip to Sacramento I couldn't help but tell myself there are a lot more sculptures out there and you have just hit the tip of the iceberg. I am passing through Stockton and Elk Grove and I still have 2/3 of Sacramento left. What was I thinking on this travel component proposal anyway? Well, when you're driving you have too much time to think and I headed to downtown Sacramento. I was looking in particular for a Bruce Beasley piece. It is one of the largest single-cast resin pieces; making national headlines when I was in graduate school 45 years ago. It is located in front of the State of California building. See the following pictures:



I spent another couple of days walking around the downtown area of Sacramento, the Capitol Mall and Sacramento State University. At Sac. State I visited with a sculpture professor who gave me a tour of the art department and sculpture facility. I then headed south, took some photos in Elk Grove and then home to Modesto.

The venture to the Sacramento area, encompassed the most time, approximately 10 days (three trips). However, I felt it to have been the most productive, for I not only had hundreds of photos of sculptures but I had connected with two art programs at two well known institutions which are strong candidates for receiving some of our transfer students.

On my way home from Sacramento I skimmed through Lodi and Stockton and took a few pictures with the intent to re-visit. This was accomplished with two one day trips in May. I want to note here that my studio was broken into a little more than halfway through the sabbatical. A number of tools were taken and my car was vandalized. It was at this time I decided to cut week-long travel into two or three day ventures. I now became somewhat of a commuter, but I still had my enthusiasm and the travel continued.

My final adventure led me south to Fresno and a little beyond. I had been to Fresno many times and had previously taken pictures of public sculpture; however, never in detail. I knew where a lot of sculptures were but still it would take a couple of two to three day trips to capture it all. I concentrated on the Mariposa Mall and Fulton Mall areas of Fresno. This is basically the downtown area and is home to the majority of city and state buildings. The Fulton Mall was the main street of Fresno's business district converted into a parkway in the early 1960s. It was home to many of the large chain stores throughout the central valley and was lined with trees, benches and public art. One can count 12 major sculptures, mostly fountains, in a span of six blocks.

An example of George Tsutakawa's Aquarius Ovoid follows:



I ventured a little further south toward Visalia but still had voids such as Merced, Stockton, and Modesto. I captured these all on one day trips in May and figured after 30 days and 500 pictures the travel component had been met.

I would like to conclude my travel report with a picture of what I consider to be the top sculpture in the valley. It has become the landmark of what I consider is an ever growing great Institution: University of California, Merced. This piece, in my professional opinion, is so strong the school merits a School of Art.



Benefit to School:

The greatest benefit to the school comes in my increased knowledge in my field. As a Studio Art and Art Appreciation professor it is paramount that I continue my education of these vast subjects. My exposure to more art and related background is vital to the expansion of young and old minds alike. The majority of this newly acquired knowledge will become portions of lectures, visual aids or documents, or stories of greater cognizance in answering students' questions. My growth and exposure is their growth and exposure.

I have built and continue to build a number of PowerPoint lectures directly related to the over four hundred plus photographs taken. I am able to expand on the facts about these sculptural works and relate my personal observations and stories. Just knowing these pieces are available in their own back yard will provide the students a greater opportunity to see the work in its physical presence and bring conversation to the classrooms. These photographs are a plus in the further development of a strong three-dimensional curriculum beneficial to the department, school, and community.

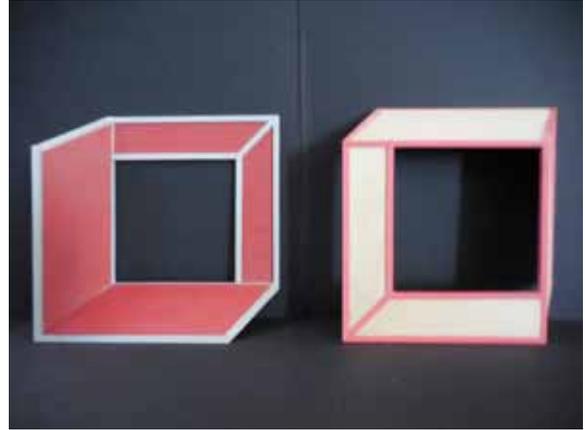
II. Independent Study Leave

Studio Art Project Leading to a One-Person Exhibition: This portion of my sabbatical proposed the construction of four sculptures leading to a solo exhibition in the Modesto Junior College Art Gallery. The show originally slated for the Fall 2015 semester has been rescheduled for February 2016 and will include additional works along with the four proposed. The show will deal with the exploration of geometric forms using the element of line to define these forms and its ability to create both actual and illusionary phenomenon. My approach to the production of this proposed body of work was to focus on an idea (concept), choose a medium and craft it aesthetically to present a visual experience subject to change with both the environment and observer.

I started with a few drawings but quickly moved to three-dimensional working models or maquettes. I found the drawings deceiving for I was trying to perceive three-dimensional forms appearing two dimensional. With drawing being two-dimensional, all depth was illusionary and I needed the physicality of form. So it was scrap the drawings and start building the models (maquettes). I chose 1/4 inch square balsa wood as my construction material. The 1/4 inch profile of the wood and its linear quality was ideal for achieving unity with line and shape. It gave me many illusionary choices as to how I could possibly make something three-dimensional look flat. I worked on these for a couple of weeks. Choosing parts of some models and combining them with others, I made two or three maquettes and tore them down or combined them to get desired results. I used super glue that helped speed the process but had to be careful to achieve the parallels and perpendiculars I was after. I also experimented a little with color for added depth; however, at this writing I am still working on that.

Following are examples of model making materials and two of the models chosen to be put into production. The color models are now in the fabrication stage; however, as to the exact colors, that is still undecided.





At the end of January 2015 I took a week to explore various cities in the San Joaquin Valley to fulfill part of the travel component of my sabbatical. When I returned I got the studio together and purchased material (steel) to begin the fabrication process in bringing the sculptures to life. I converted an old carriage house on my property into a welding shop and studio and would spend the next several months welding and fabricating in an one-hundred-year old building with a dirt floor. It was a little hot at times but somehow it seemed to lend itself well as a creative atmosphere.



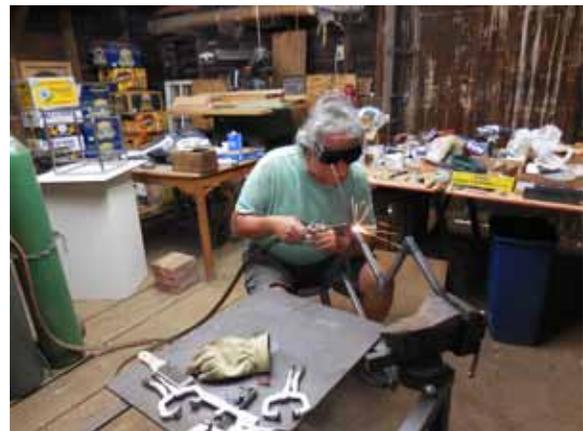
My choice of medium was 1/2" and 3/4" steel square tubing. Steel has always been my medium of choice for it is cold and bold. The square tubing works well for geometries; especially squares, cubes and related forms. It lent itself well for what I was trying to achieve for it mirrored the linear profiles of the maquettes. I doubled the size of the models and decided 1 foot and 1 1/2 foot squares and cubes would be the ideal dimensions for the finished works. I would leave the final surface a semi-matte sanded steel and retain the cold bold powerful look of the medium itself.

Sculpting processes consist of basically four technical methods: manipulation, addition, subtraction, and substitution. I will not go into all of these in detail. Take sculpture (Art 140) and you will get to experience all of them. Fabrication, which is the main process in building these pieces, is referred to as addition. You size and cut the parts and you assemble, or add, to achieve your desired form.

So this is where I started. I measured, cut, and mitred all sections necessary for the first two pieces. I cut the pieces on a horizontal bandsaw at the desired angles. I then refined the angles using a disk sander to assure me of a proper fit. One length relies on the other to keep the lines parallel and lengths have to be exact to complete the form and maintain parallelism throughout. I spent about two days cutting, sanding, fitting and making sure surfaces were clean to guarantee good penetration when welding. The next step was the set-up for welding. Positioning clamps and making jigs (support systems to maintain mechanically the correct position between parts of work). This takes time, for accuracy can not be over-stated.



Welding is the process of uniting metals by heating and allowing the metals to flow together. I do this by means of an oxyacetylene torch; heat the metal to the molten state, penetrate the surface and add metal accordingly. It is of the utmost importance that I get good penetration for I will be filing down the welds to merit them invisible and the two joined pieces will appear as one. This takes time, a very steady hand, and the constant checking to see that each piece is clamped and positioned correctly. The pieces average about twenty intersections; each of which consist of four to six welds and require repositioning for each weld.





I was now fully involved in my sabbatical leave. I had completed about half of my travel and my first two pieces were in progress. I gave myself about two months, at the most, to finish the pieces and then disaster hit.

I got up one morning as usual, took my dogs on their 3 mile daily walk, came home, fed them and then went on my daily 12 mile bicycle ride. The rest of the day was set aside as studio time to work on the sculptures. This had been a ritual for the past two months and this day seemed no different than the rest. I was wrong. Things were very different. When I entered my studio my sculptures were there, my welding bottles were there, but all my tools (files, clamps, levels, angles, etc.) were gone. The sliding barn door was slightly ajar and I was out about \$1,500 of tools, most of which were necessary to the sculptures in progress. As I further investigated outside the door, I noticed both of my automobiles had been vandalized. The windows had been broken, interiors destroyed and all contents, mostly paperwork, had been confiscated. I thought someone may have been watching my daily routine and hit the place when I was gone. After further investigation I found that they also had broken into a storage shed and had taken one of my bicycles. This put a damper on everything. I had never been burglarized before so this was major. I spent the next week and half filling police reports and insurance claims. Knowing this would take time I replaced the necessary tools and continued working on the sculptures. The studio got a little crowded for there was either a contractor or an electrician, or both, working alongside me. Locks were changed, doors were rebuilt, motion detectors added and security was heightened. The automobiles were either at the body shop or the mechanics. I would say this was where the travel became shortened to one or two day trips of a one hundred mile radius. Life is full of surprises and after the previously mentioned interruption I was surprised as to how I still had my enthusiasm. New tools, and I was ready to continue. The fabrication pace was slow but proceeding quite well.

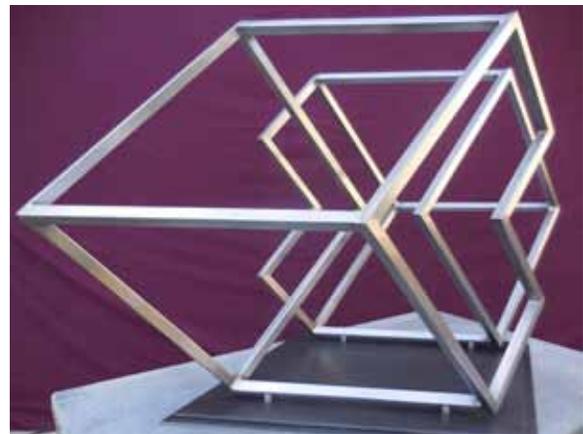
Once I was done with the welding process, the filing began. This is the real sculpting part. You file to subtract, rendering the weld invisible. It is tedious, tiresome, time-consuming work; however, it is what I really feel is the main contribution to the aesthetics of the finished work. Craftsmanship can never be overstated.



At this point one would think, what's next? Basically a repeat of everything I had done so far except, cutting the pieces. Each intersection now had to be brazed. The inside of each angle is filled with a metal that melts lower in temperature than the steel and flows into the crevice. All joints have to be cleaned and free of any fire-scale for this to be effective. There are as many brazed joints as there are weld joints and these are likewise filed flush to render a continuous surface. When all of this is completed the entire piece is sanded to about a 220 grit satin finish. This is mounted on a plate steel base cut to mirror a cast shadow of the form itself and a light oil is rubbed on the surface to slow oxidization.

Multiply what I just wrote by three and a half (except for the burglary), add 600 hours, and you basically have the Independent Study Leave component of my sabbatical. Currently there is still a piece in progress and I am very thankful for the granting of the Spring semester for the sabbatical continued throughout the Summer. I found myself getting lost in the process of artmaking, experiencing successes and difficulties, yet persevering and reminding me what it means to be a working artist. Examples of two of the finished pieces follow.





Benefit to the School: Although the completed works are slated to be shown in February, I can already see the benefit to the school directly in my classroom. My renewed commitment to making art has boosted my enthusiasm and this has been passed on to the students. They have the opportunity to reflect on my recent experience as a working artist and a first hand look as to how idea and concept, along with craftsmanship, play an important role in developing an aesthetically sound piece of work. I have during lecture discussed my approach to solving problems and shown them the development of current work from the working model to the final piece. With me they can see my excitement, passion and commitment to making art and it presents them with a better understanding as to how I feel they should approach solutions to sculpture related assignments. When you are excited they are excited and vice versa. The batteries are recharged and the results are positive.

The students come first; however, the school and community will benefit from the one person show in February. It will be accompanied by a talk concerning the new work and work covering 40 years as an artist and instructor. You have my personal invitation and you won't be disappointed.

Evidence of Completion, Travel Component:

Some of the 400 plus photographs taken of Public Sculpture located throughout the Central Valley of California:



Travel Evidence (continued)

Reflection of me taking a picture of George Rickey's sculpture, Double L Eccentric Gyration II, Sacramento, CA



Receipts, tickets and brochures related to my travels



Evidence of completion, Independent Study Component:
Completed work to be exhibited in the Modesto Junior College Art Gallery Spring 2016

