



CREIGHTON MICHAEL

Intuitive Drawing

Reception: Thursday, September 9, 6-8 p.m.

September 9 - October 9, 1999

The relationship between drawing and sculpture has a long and distinguished tradition in art history, with the marks a sculptor makes on paper usually viewed as a preliminary, perhaps cursory, shorthand for the realization of the three-dimensional work. For Creighton Michael, though, drawing is primary, not preliminary. Taking an intuitive approach to both mediums, the process underlying the final sculpture or drawing is one and the same, only the materials are different.

Trained as a painter and an art historian, Michael began making sculpture through the influence of the drawing process. His goal was to bring the immediacy and spontaneity of drawing to the more obdurate materials that go into sculpture, translating line into physical elements like wire and wood. At the same time, the artist has often incorporated techniques pioneered by 20th-century modernists—automatism, chance, and gestural spontaneity. In 1985, he started "drawing with a saw," literally pulling up forms with an electric saw from flat sheets of plywood. By 1995, he was drawing in space: instructing welders and orchestrating the fabrication of metal armatures, in somewhat the same manner as a musical conductor.

Throughout his career, he has been influenced by the structures, textures, patterns, and activities in the natural world. These works are seldom literal transcriptions, but rather abstractions of cyclical events in nature, such as growth, metamorphosis, and decay. In nature, the artist rediscovered the essential tool of early modernist abstraction—the metaphor of line.

Though there's a stylistic coherence and sensuality that unites all of Michael's endeavors, he has nonetheless employed a broad variety of materials, in both traditional and unexpected ways. Paper, the conventional ground for drawing, becomes a source of translucency and a form of erasure in his sculpture's. Gesso, another kind of ground, is used to make lines or partially mask areas in his drawings, so that the layering of translucent planes echoes with the mystery of places once remembered. The further introduction of all

kinds of marks, areas of shading, and erasures ultimately leads to complex and unusual compositions.

"Intuitive Drawing" sums up fifteen years of intense give-and-take between mediums, materials, and process. Throughout the gallery, sculptures and drawings have been paired. Sometimes the interconnection and interaction is obvious: the piercing, hollowed-out wedge of *Blind Horn* finds an echo in the midsection of *Pull*, made twelve years later; or the gracefully spiraling shapes of *SbSE* loop across the surface of *Trace*. Other correlations are more subtle, asking the viewer to recognize how characteristics of one medium—inspired accident, linear tension, or even cast shadows—might translate into the other.

Michael's works urge us to rethink the ways an artist approaches the different activities of his craft and to acknowledge the elastic nature of his ideas. Once it's brought into the world, a shape, a line, or an impulse never dies—it simply finds expression in new and often surprising directions.

—Ann Landi

About the Artist

Creighton Michael received his M.A. in art history from Vanderbilt University and an M.F.A. in painting and multimedia from Washington University in St. Louis. He is a recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant and a New York Foundation for the Arts fellowship.

Michael has had solo shows at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Vanderbilt University, the Katonah Museum of Art in Katonah, NY, the Queens Museum of Art at Bulova Corporate Center, Galerie Trois Points in Montreal, the Reynolds Gallery in Richmond, VA, and David Beitzel, Littlejohn Contemporary, and Kim Foster galleries in New York. Group exhibitions include "Inspired by Nature" at the Neuberger Museum of Art in Purchase, NY; the "1994 National Drawing Invitational" at the Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock; "Art on Paper" at the Weatherspoon Art Gallery, the University of North Carolina; "Innovation in Sculpture" at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Ridgefield, CT; and "The Sculptural Membrane" at the Sculpture Center in New York City. Upcoming solo shows include "Current Painting" at the Robischon Gallery in Denver (Summer, 1999) and "Visual Matrix" (May 16-July 9, 2000) at the Elmhurst Art Gallery in Elmhurst, IL.

The artist lives and works in New York.

KIM FOSTER GALLERY

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Tuesday - Saturday 11am - 6pm

Split (599), 29"x23", graphite, shellac on paper