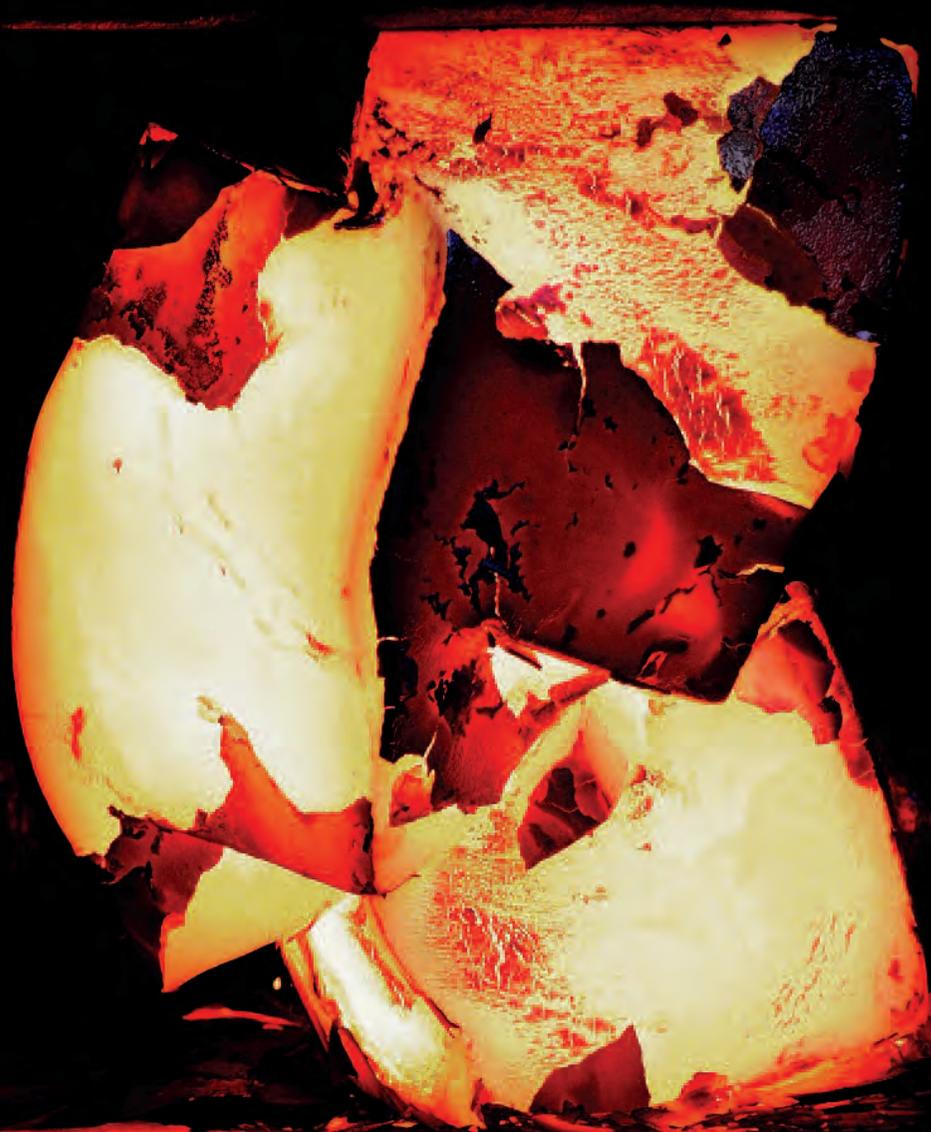


TOM JOYCE



SCULPTURE



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Essay by MaLin Wilson-Powell



Artists are making things again. In the mid nineteen eighties, a few scattered revisionists began receiving attention for crafting instead of shopping, inventing rather than appropriating, and generally rethinking the concept of conceptual art.

— Libby Lumpkin, “The Redemption of Practice,” 1999

Tom Joyce’s art embodies its meaning, as all art must do. In the case of the artist’s recent series of sculptures and wall pieces, titled *Sotto Voce*, his ideas arise from hard-won, hands-on intelligence. Joyce has refined his concepts over decades of forging iron. His mastery in crafting a leaf, a hinge, a tool, a door handle underpins his nimble skill in working with tons of hot metal. In a society that by and large has little respect for physical work, unless it is athletic performance, Tom Joyce distinguishes himself as a maker of authoritative, sophisticated, and physically engaging art.

In addition to proposing an invigorating reorientation to physicality, Joyce’s recent body of work, like all generous art, invites a complexity of responses. These works open up lines of inquiry. The *Sotto Voce* sculptures are utterly new shapes in the world that feel simultaneously as old as dirt, as basic as seawater, as varied as mushrooms. They are brainy and they are dumb. They are obviously human constructions on a massive scale that carry biodynamic features of cellular development and geologic time. They are exactly of this era and yet they are ancient, prehistoric, pre-human. They manage to transmit the knowledge that every ounce of their tonnage has been cyclically reused, like all the drops of rain that ever fall to earth. These animated objects somehow feel self-born and alive, rather than manufactured with the artifice of machines and teams of workers our practical mind knows are essential to their production.

All these observations, and many more, come from directly engaging with such sculptures as *Berg* and *Bloom*, each more than 4,000 pounds of forged

iron created at the industrial Scot Forge facility in 2005. *Berg*'s complex shape can be seen only by moving around it, and back and forth from it. It surprises. We really can't imagine what's on the other side until we get there. To see it fold and unfold, we too must fold and unfold. *Berg* creates a delicately nuanced physical conversation; i.e., an opportunity to turn around, physically and metaphysically. The sculpture adroitly conveys the consequences of folding, bending, twisting, and cutting deeply into one thing to make a new thing. Somehow *Berg* maintains a friendly kinesphere for human encounters to occur, even though there are big "HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE? Please turn on the light bulb above my brain!" questions about this and other sculptures in the series. Despite the evidence before us, it is beyond comprehension that an immense ingot of hot metal could slump and peak and cool so gracefully, feel so buoyant, and seem to bobble like an iceberg.

Bloom is a completely different beast, a force of nature. From a formal art-historical point of view it presents numerous puzzles. It stands and delivers in a clean white-cube gallery as efficaciously as it makes itself at home in a forest. How does it do this? Most sculptures work either inside or outside. Few sculptures can survive the onslaught of outdoors and compete with ever-changing skies, seasons, weather, breezes, and children. *Bloom* works this magic in part by its strong dually geometric and natural characteristics. The sculpture amazes in its perfect scale and lively skin and compositional clustering. Consider how it thrusts forcefully upward, like a sprout breaking through concrete with tender, fleshy, yeasty energy. *Bloom* maintains perpetual velocity in the bundle of streaming elements elongating in the same direction. From above, the skin of the domed sprouts appears tremulous and fluid; from the sides, the rusty, velvety skin appears aged and decayed.

Tom Joyce's *Sotto Voce* series speaks in a polyglot of tongues and textures. There are songs, unfamiliar languages, and guttural vocalizations. The paired

BLOOM III | 2005, forged iron, 28 x 30 x 30 inches, in process



sculpture seats titled *Two to One* are playful and giddily expansive in their doubleness; each seat is two cubes of forged iron squeezed together, each bulging uniquely. Together, they create a song in canon form, multiplying pleasure and delight, effortlessly including one or more sitters in physical and mental circulatory activities. Perching on them sets the stage for doubling our contemplation of the sculptures, us, and others.

The burnt interiors of *Bifid* and *Ootid* carry the roar of fire being sucked into a hollow cavity. The charred *Penumbra* drawings amplify like gongs of sound and create an irrepressible urge to sniff the air for smoke. *Cairn*, a mound of forged-iron boulders, rumbles and murmurs with buried ammunition and truncated lives. This ongoing memorial is a work in progress, each boulder a repository of soil collected from battlefields worldwide.

Tom Joyce, like other notable artists of our era, considers the whole planet. He deftly forges connections between the roadside blacksmith who repairs a shovel and the industrial craftsmen at the core of mining, weapons, and energy production. Joyce metaphorically burns away the deep rift in our Western intellectual mind-set that separates making and thinking; i.e., materiality and philosophy. His work redresses a hierarchy inherited from Greek culture, where only citizens could commission, appreciate, philosophize about, and discuss art, and the serfs and the slaves made it. Joyce operates as if he and we, his fellow citizens, are open-minded and curious explorers in the making of our global society. Of course, no artist ever knows if the future will find useful what they have wrought, or how it will be interpreted. For now, Tom Joyce's art offers embodied intelligence, a real alternative to disassociation and dematerialization.

MaLin Wilson-Powell

BERG VII | 2006, forged iron, 40 × 55 × 38 inches, in process

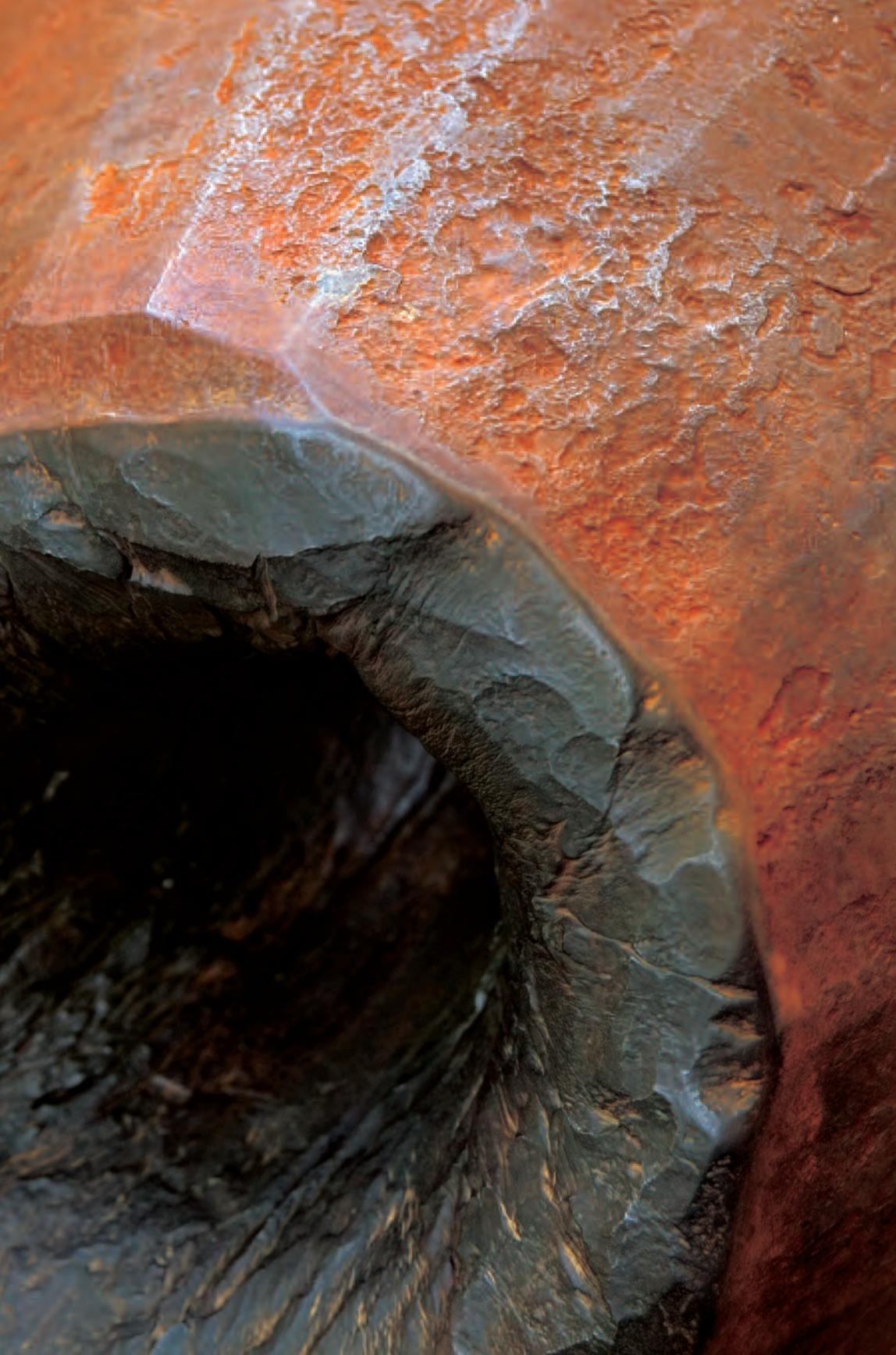




BERG IV | 2005, forged iron, 32 × 36 × 24 inches, private collection

BERG V | 2005, forged iron, 36 × 41 × 36 inches, Robyn & John Horn collection



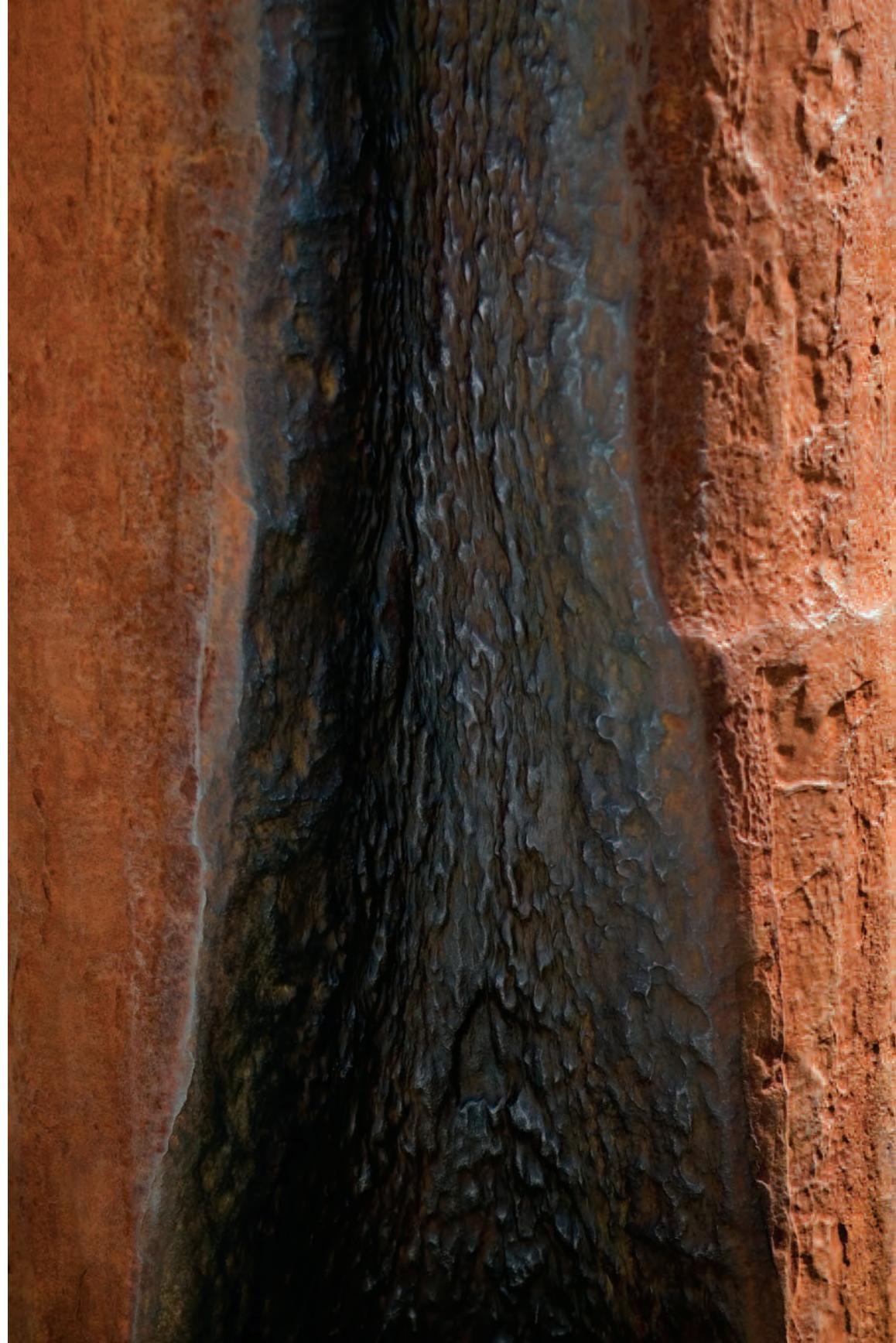


OOTID | 2005, forged iron, 21.5 x 20.5 x 21 inches





BIFID | 2005, forged iron
65 × 15 × 16.5 inches
David Frank &
Sugiyama Kazukuni
collection

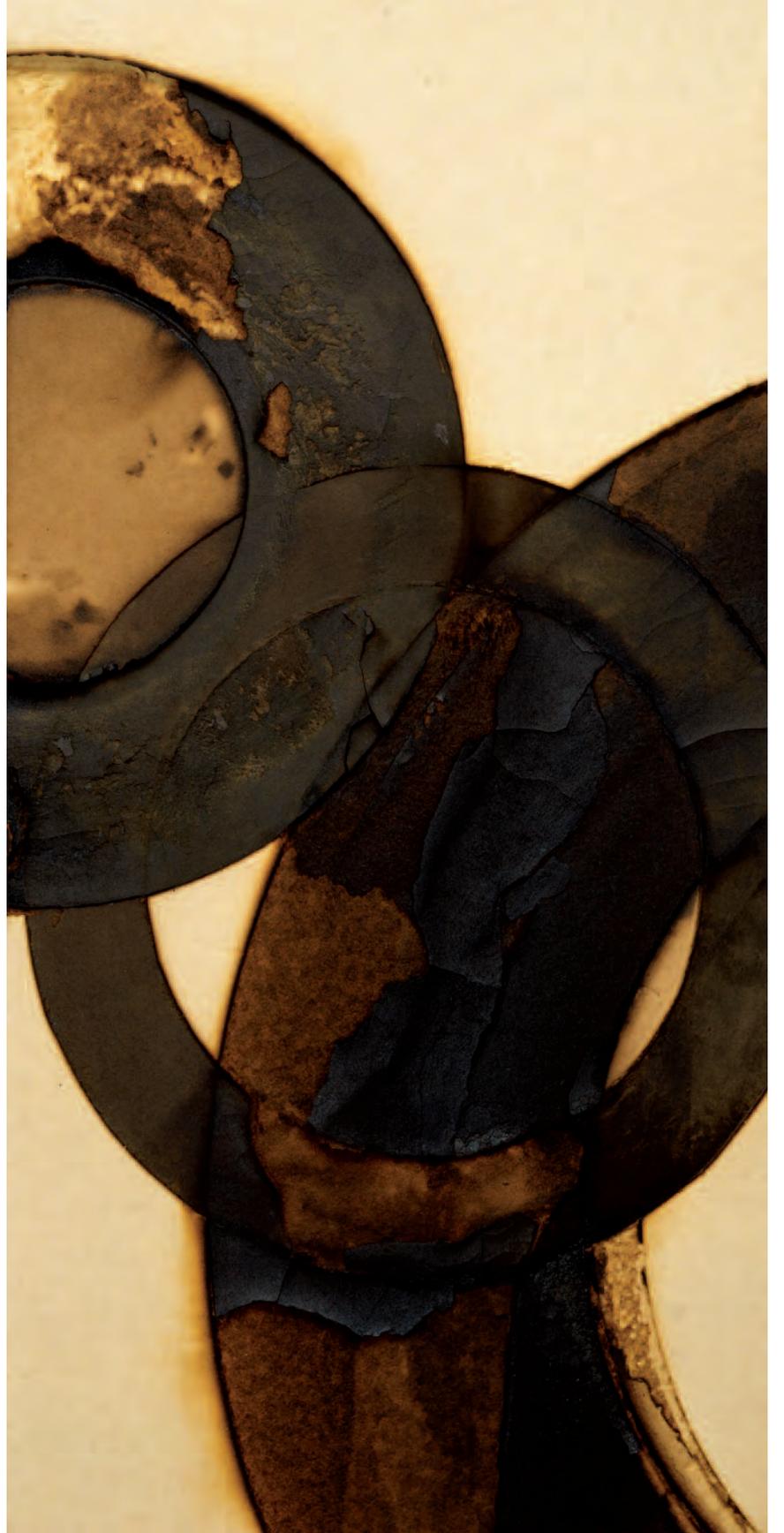




CYPHER I | 2005, forged iron, 16 x 54 x 7 inches



CAIRN | 2005, forged iron, battlefield soil, lead, dimensions variable,
ongoing project, detail (left) and in process (right)



Previous spread:

PENUMBRA IV | 2005, charred impression on wood, 48 × 24 × 3 inches
Diane & Sandy Besser collection, also shown in process

PENUMBRA I | 2005, charred impression on wood, 48 × 24 × 3 inches
Dottie & Dick Barrett collection (below)

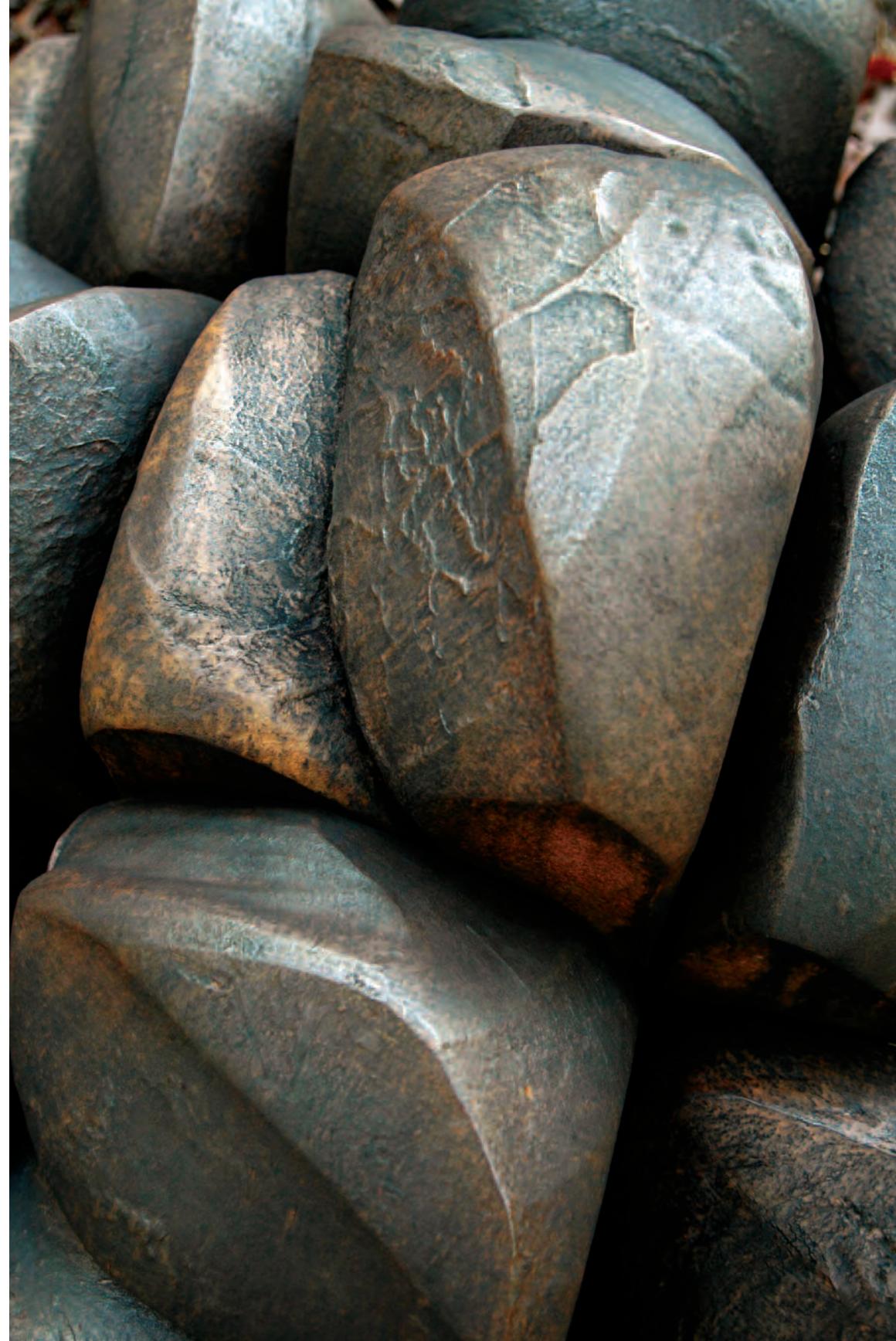




BLOOM II | 2005, forged iron, 22 × 24 × 24 inches

PENUMBRA VIII | 2005, left: charred impression on wood, 48 × 48 × 3 inches, private collection

PENUMBRA IX | 2005, right: charred impression on wood, 48 × 24 × 3 inches, private collection



BLOOM III | 2005, forged iron, 28 x 30 x 30 inches, Robyn & John Horn collection



TWO TO ONE, I & IV | 2005, forged iron, left: 22.5 × 23.5 × 20 inches,
right: 15.75 × 20 × 20 inches, private collection



TOM JOYCE Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1956.
Since 1977, Tom has lived and worked in Santa Fe,
New Mexico.

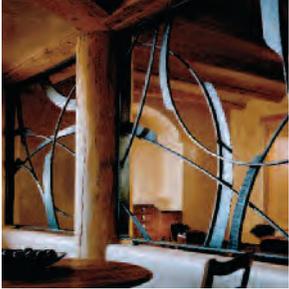
SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Albuquerque Museum of Art, Albuquerque, NM
Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI
De Young Museum of Art, San Francisco, CA
John Michael Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, WI
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN
Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, NC
Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe, NM
National Metal Museum, Memphis, TN
Phoenix Museum of History, Phoenix, AZ
Smithsonian Institution, American Art Museum,
Renwick Gallery, Washington D.C.
Southern Illinois University Art Museum,
Edwardsville, IL
Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths,
London, England



SELECTED EXHIBITIONS 1995-2005

2005 *Sotto Voce: Tom Joyce, Sculpture and Drawings*, EVO Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
Forging Ahead, Kentucky Museum of Arts and Design, Louisville, KY
2004 *Insight Out: Reversing Vandalism*, Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe, NM
International Biennial Exhibition of Sculpture Stia, Italy, Tom Joyce, Guest Juror
2003 *New Works/Group Show: Lynda Benglis, Harmony Hammond, Tom Joyce & Richard Tuttle*, Dwight Hackett Projects, Santa Fe, NM



2003 *Art/Industry: A 28-Year Collaboration*
John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI
2002 *Objects for Use: Handmade by Design*
Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY
Tom Joyce: New Work, Katie Jones Gallery, London, England
2001 *Ancient Futures: The Art of the Blacksmith at the Third Millennium*
Nova Scotia Centre for Craft and Design, Halifax, Canada
Round About: Reinventing the Wheel
National Metal Museum, Memphis, TN
2000 *Tom Joyce, Christina Shmigel, David Secrest & Hoss Haley*
John Elder Gallery, New York, NY
An Inaugural Gift, The Founders' Circle Collection
Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, NC
1999 *Earth-Fire-Water: Contemporary Forged Metals*
Travelled to museums in Dubuque, Iowa; Oak Ridge, TN;
Sioux Falls, SD; Monroe, LA; and Dover, DE
1998 *Explorations: An Invitational Exhibit of Forms in Metal*, University Art
Gallery, Cal Poly State University, San Luis Obispo, CA
Tom Joyce: New Work and Sculpture Installation
LewAllen Contemporary, Santa Fe, NM
The Point of Contact of Architecture and Blacksmith's Work
Lounais-Suomen käsi-ja taideteollisuusoppilaitos, Mynämäki, Finland
1997 *Selections from the Permanent Collection*
National Metal Museum, Memphis, TN
1996 *The Pull of Beauty*, Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York,
NY and National Building Museum, Washington, D.C.
Tom Joyce, Master Metalsmith: A Twenty Year Retrospective
National Metal Museum, Memphis, TN
1995 *Pyrophyte, New Sculpture, Tom Joyce*, Okun Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
The International Library Project, a sculpture collaboration with
Helmut Lohr The Center for Book Arts, New York, NY,
and Weisman Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

Opposite, from top: *Baptismal Font*, Santa Maria de La Paz Catholic Community, Santa Fe, NM, 1994; *Rio Grande Gates*, Albuquerque Museum of Art, 1997; *Room Dividers*, Tobin residence, Tesuque, NM, 1991; *Lighting Centerpiece*, Phoenix History Museum, 1996



SELECTED AWARDS & HONORS

Distinguished Artist of the Year,
Foundation for the Arts,
Rotary International, 2006

Archives of American Art, Oral History
Program, Smithsonian Institution,
Washington D.C., 2004

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur
Foundation Fellowship, 2003 – 2008

American Craft Council College of Fellows,
Aileen Osborn - Webb Award for
Distinguished Contribution to the Field,
Chicago, IL, 2003

Artist Blacksmith's Association of North
America, Honorary Award for Outstanding
Contribution to the Art and Science of
Blacksmithing, 1996

Addy Taylor Silver Chalice, Highest Honorary
Fellowship into the Worshipful Company of
Blacksmiths, London, England, 1989

From top: *Inside Out*, 2002, cast iron; *Pith*, 1994,
iron/books; *Southwest by Northeast*, 2003, cast iron



This catalogue is published on the occasion of Rotary International's
Foundation for the Arts 2006 Distinguished Artist of the Year Award
honoring Tom Joyce of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The mission of the Santa Fe Rotary Foundation is to inspire youth
in northern New Mexican communities by providing support and
funding for arts in education, scholarships and personal development.
Each year, the foundation acknowledges a local area artist who has
received national distinction as the Distinguished Artist of the Year
and holds a dinner and auction in October to honor this artist.
Funds received from the dinner and auction are then distributed to
organizations that support arts in education. Over the past 10 years,
the foundation has granted more than \$225,000.

The foundation also produces a video documentary about the Distin-
guished Artist of the Year at work and distributes them to all secondary
schools in New Mexico. These videos are meant to inspire the creative
spirit of school-age children by demonstrating the art and path of a
successful artist.

Tom Joyce thanks the men and women at Scot Forge for making this work possible.

Page 1: *Berg I*, 2005, forged iron, 22 x 24 x 20 inches, in process

Frontispiece: *Cypher I*, 2005, forged iron, 16 x 54 x 7, detail

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20, 23); Tom Joyce (p. 2, 4, 7, 11, 16, 17, 26, 27); Nick Merrick (p. 31, 32, center); Robert
Reck (p. 10, 28-29); and the John Michael Kohler Arts/Industry Program (p. 32)