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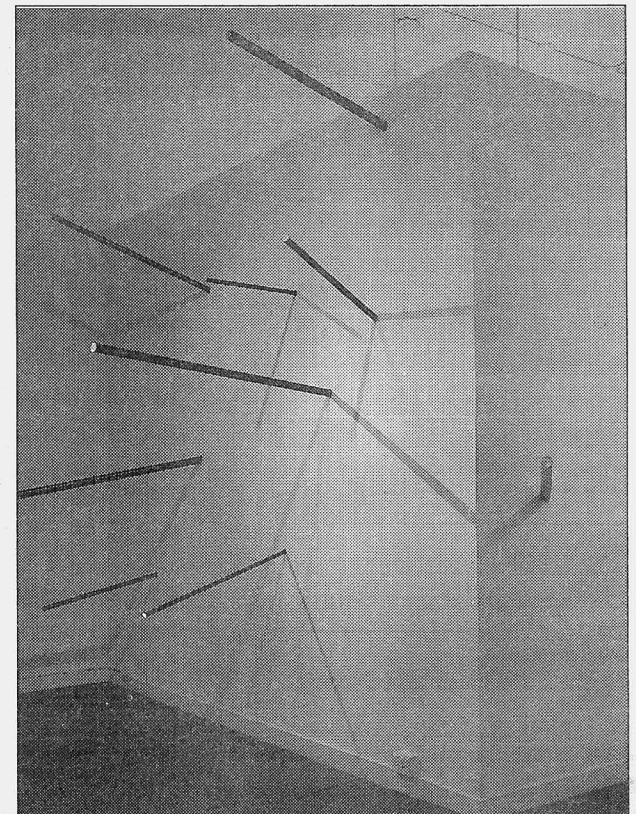
## TOM JOYCE

LEWALLEN CONTEMPORARY  
129 W. PALACE AVE., SANTA FE

**When I arrived at LewAllen Contemporary** I was not entirely in the mood to look at a roomful of post-minimalist cubes. But, thanks to Tom Joyce's ingenuity and restless creativity, I didn't have to. Joyce's command of his primary media—iron and steel—is pretty phenomenal, and it allows him an exceptionally broad, expressive vocabulary. In this show, Joyce extends that vocabulary even further by introducing some new materials into his work. One body of work, the *Rio Grande Tablet* series, integrates plaster and “forged refuse” with mild steel brackets that frame the pieces and mount them to the wall. The “forged refuse” is jumbled metal detritus that Joyce heats and sets into plaster squares and rectangles, creating something like a three-dimensional mixed-media “painting.” In fact, one particularly notable aspect of Joyce's work is that he creates a lot of wall-oriented pieces—somewhat atypical for a metalwork artist, and indicative that he does not consider himself to be bound to any standard notion of what a guy who works with fire, a hammer, tongs, and an anvil should produce.

Another interesting grouping in this show constitutes an abstract self-portrait. In *Apron*, *Three Part Wall Piece*, and *Self-Portrait*, *Seven Part Wall Piece* Joyce dissects his used leather apron, denim shirt, sweater, work gloves, and boots—all liberally scorched and pock-marked with burn holes—and collages them in open square frames of mild steel. These pieces emphasize the nature of the artist's activity as genuine work—creative labor involving a not inconsiderable degree of physical peril. Joyce has been experimenting with burned books for some time now, and his four *Printer's Chase* sculptures consist of densely packed charred books set into open squares. The edges of the charred books and the steel squares are incised with contiguous grooves, which compare and contrast the relative strength and delicacy of the materials. While several of the pieces in this show evidence a raw, found-object sensibility, Joyce is also rightfully celebrated for his exquisitely crafted sculptural vessels, plates, and wall pieces, of which several are included here. Elegant and decorous as they may be, Joyce's vessels are never simply decorative, for they always have content relating to process and never attempt to deny their hard-earned physicality.

DAVID CLEMMER



Tom Joyce, *Pierced*, detail from installation, iron bars, 13 x 20', 1998  
Photograph by Nick Merrick