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# Toronto, a showcase for vibrant sculpture



"Zo" team, *Shi Shi Odoshi*, 1988. Waterworks, Toronto. Photography: Daniel Pokorn

## Viewer-friendly sculptures at Waterworks

Waterworks, R. C. Harris Water Filtration Plant, (east of the Beach area), Toronto, June 22-September 30, 1988. Organised by Visual Arts Ontario, 439 Wellington Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5V 1E7. Executive Director: Hennie Wolff.

Waterworks brings together over twenty artists from Japan, Italy, West Germany, the United States and Canada. The project endeavours to integrate various art forms, such as sculpture, architecture, photography, installations and video art, with a major structure completed in 1937. It also reasserts how fruitful a collaboration between different creative forces can be.

The "Zo" (elephant), a Japanese four-member team consisting of Reiko Tomita, Hiro Higuchi, Keiko Arimura and Tsutomu Shigemura installed a water system called *Shi Shi Odoshi* ("a device to scare lions away"). Some hollow bamboo trunks, held in the

middle by a rod attached to supports, tip down as they fill up. The water then drops into a drain lined with pebbles from the shore of Lake Ontario. When empty, the trunks resume their initial position and strike a man-made hillock with a bang traditionally intended to frighten off wild animals in Japanese gardens of the past. This serene work, which incorporates both sound and movement, reminds us of some water systems in natural settings, brings us back to the refreshing ingenuity of man in a simpler, more contemplative world. One feels like touching the inviting water. This installation can have a soothing, therapeutic effect on the viewer.

Rebecca Horn, from West Germany, produced *The Little Painting School Performs a Waterfall*, a duo of whimsical, enigmatic painting birds. Their wings are actual brushes that dip into pans and, when spreading out, project paint against the wall and a set of opaque screens. Gradually the wall and screens become a waterfall under the viewer's very eyes. One finds oneself a privileged witness of this self-generation art. These strange custom-built machines explore, in an unthreatening way, the relationship between technology and mythology.

Jonathan Borofsky, from California, installed his *Moving Molecule Man*, a 25-foot tall sty-

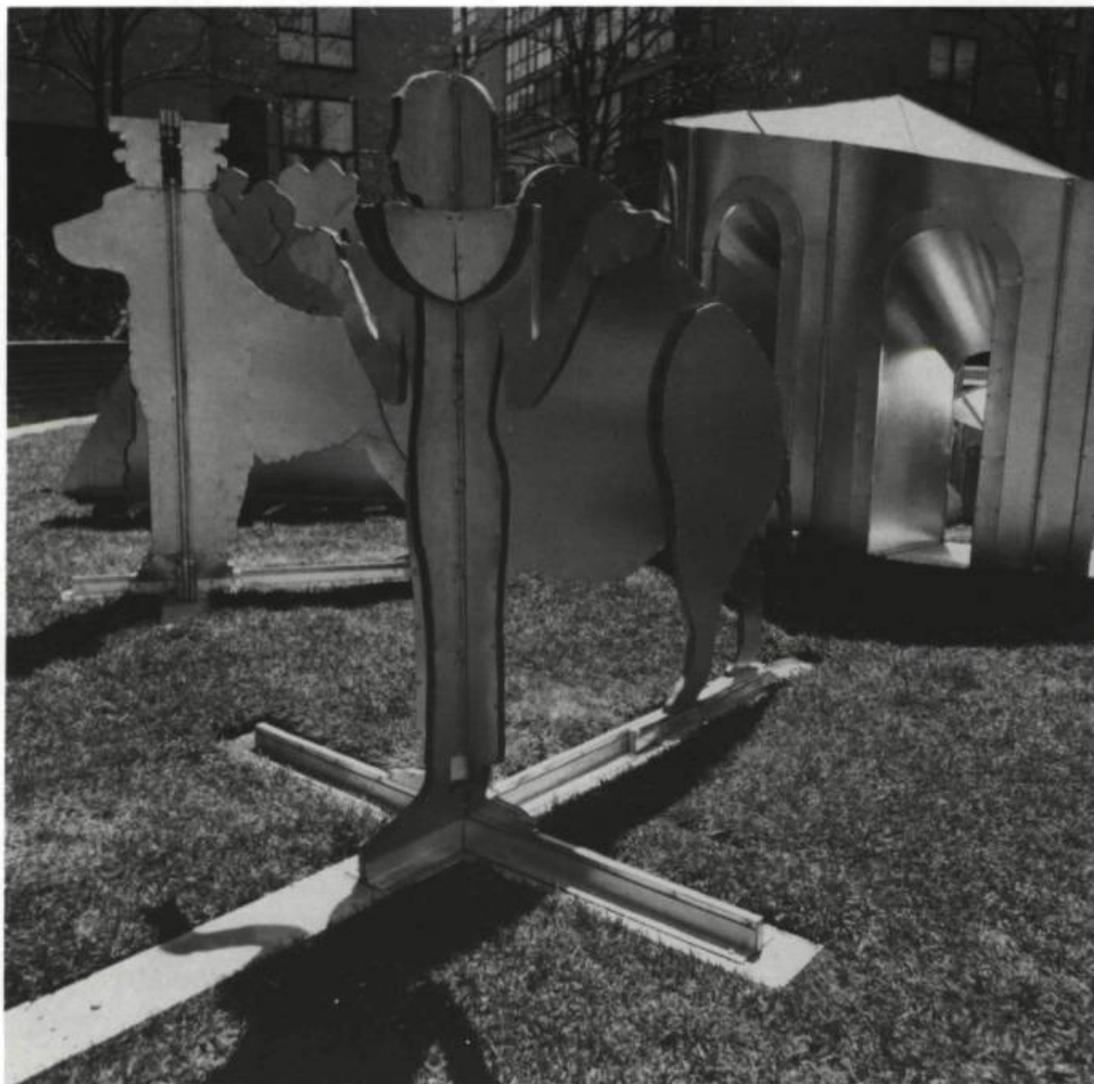
rofoam and steel cable figure, in the lower level pumping station. Activated by a robotic computer and some compressors, the figure contracts and expands in a dance-like fashion, looking sometimes like a cluster of white balls in space, sometimes like a schematic man. This cyclic, metamorphic movement strangely responds to the pervading hum of the pumps. The machine becomes Man.

In *One Hundred Workers*, Toronto artist John Scott, known for his socio-political art, displayed repeated images of skulls, hands and roses in a winding, narrow and long service tunnel. Beneath some pictures of skulls are the names of victims of documented industrial accidents. These photographic catacombs have a direct, awe-inspiring, flesh-creeping effect on us, as the cumulative, obsessive, imagery reminds us of our precarious human condition.

Jacques Rousseau's concrete *Crusts* can evoke gently-flowing waves frozen in time and space. As an extension of the actual waves of the lake below, they climb the grassy hill up to the plant, acting as a transition between unprocessed and processed water, as a link between nature and technology. During my visit, these people-oriented structures were used by a dozen relaxed viewers enjoying the lake scene.

Waterworks has presented vibrant, interacting forms of art in a contrasting and challenging way. The pieces work against one another, work together, contradict and complement one another. The water theme provided the focus, whereas the multidisciplinary approach and stylistic independence added variety.

My warmest thanks to David McClyment, from Visual Arts Ontario, for his perceptive introduction to Waterworks.



Pierre Granche, *Thalès au pied de la spirale*, galvanized steelmetal, Toronto Sculpture Garden, 1988. Photography: J. Richards. By courtesy of Records & Archives, City Hall, Toronto.

## Sculptural Icons from a Renaissance Man

*Thalès au pied de la spirale* (Thales at the foot of the spiral), by Pierre Granche, Toronto Sculpture Garden, 115 King Street East, P.O. Box 65, Station Q, M4T 2L7, May 3-July 3, 1988. Director: Rina Greer.

Well-known Quebec sculptor Pierre Granche handles themes as diverse as industry, cityscapes, energy and pollution to address today's concerns and refers to Antiquity and the roles of legendary or real animals to go back to

our common past. The spiral -a potentially infinite, mathematical structure that goes inward and outward at the very same time- is the centerpiece of this 19-unit philosophical installation, with multi-layered historical and intel-

lectual references, that invites us to think about the progress of mankind. Each theme includes three sculptural pieces forming a line that bisects the spiral: the first and third pieces being outside, the second inside. Time and space re-

verberate. For instance, the animal theme confronts the past and present: a dog symbolizes the contemporary guardian of a house, a lion the timeless guardian of a heritage (reference to the crest of Ontario) and a sphinx the past guardian of temples. In the theme on antiquity, references to Roman, Greek and Egyptian myths and realities provide us with a mind-expanding time and space perspective, as the frontal head and torso of an Egyptian woman, a stereotype of the past, is boldly combined with the rear body of an American buffalo, a threatened species. Cities with clouds, a steam engine train and factories with chimneys emitting smoke fumes emphasize the destructive nature of man's progress. The cityscape theme brings together landmarks from Toronto (CN Tower, St. James Cathedral spires) and Montreal (Tower of the University of Montreal). This encyclopaedical approach to wide-ranging, complex civilization concerns is unified by the compositional strength of the installation (which clearly separates themes from one another and makes a dramatic use of space), the low-reflection material (galvanized sheet metal screwed onto wooden board) and superb workmanship. Clearly a masterpiece!

Daniel Pokorn is president of the Sculptor's Society of Canada, Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.