

## *Joel Shapiro on the Roof*

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overall atmosphere, recalling that of a cathedral, represented the artists' statement about collective worship — spiritual or material. Spaced intermittently on an area of white tiling, the andirons almost look like human figures, a collectivity grouped within this schematic, cathedral-like construction that included totemic tubes of metal suggesting organ pipes. Transparent acrylic walls and windows were decorated with gel symbols like stained glass. The abstract geometrical motifs — triangles, rectangles, and finer, more intimate forms — in the windows and in one gothic-styled window frame heightened the sense that this was a sacred place. Using a variety of materials to heighten the contrast — transparent plastic and iron —, *Credo* bore ironic witness to acts of worship.

*Basic Red* creates a three-dimensional illusion of spatial depth with its vivid jagged outline in space, and bright red diamond shaped steel grids become its source-transmogrifying photos.

These photos were taken from a variety of angles and distances, and then developed by Halstead and Swinimer to become experimental collages. The result is a series of sometimes sensuous and organic abstract images of spatial density and depth, sometimes even projecting an illusion of spherical space.

*Galaxy* (1998) is a lyrical, suggestive work of pure sculpture that uses metal grill sections of varying dimensions at different depths. This cage-like work thrusts upwards and outwards on one side. Two planet-like metal balls of differing sizes in the piece look as if they were orbiting in space. This environmental sculpture is like a drawing in three dimensions that builds the illusion of movement through space. In the simplest of ways, this evocative and elegiac work transmits that sense of wonder one experiences gazing up at the sky on a clear night.

*Number Four*, exhibited in

1999, has a powerful minimalist thrust. In a cell-like room with black walls, long wooden boards hang in space at haphazard angles. This large-scale sculpture has an expressive immediacy. The free-floating wooden boards are constrained by chains attached to them from above and below. The individual wood sections are themselves already "structures," standardized 22 x 42 sections of wood. Nevertheless they evoke a sense of force and counter-force, a simultaneous breaking apart of bonds and of containment and control. The abstract character of *Number Four*, which is like a Constructivist allegory, forcefully communicates its threatening, intransigent message precisely because of its simple, sparse economy of expression.

In their ongoing collaborations, Jean Halstead and Svetlana Swinimer have developed their own language of expression. It is one that works against the hegemony of rational space and linear

time that so often limits the language of sculpture to the realm of "pure object." In their experimentation with a broad array of media — painting, photography, installation, sculpture, and computer technology — Halstead and Swinimer express the vitality of their collaborative vision by weaving together a variety of processes and materials in novel ways. The various media and processes overlap and coalesce. In the space between these processes of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction, we discover multiple layers of meaning, at times spiritual, at others physical. Their engaging multi-process approach to art-making is intensely abstract and experimental, and while the two artists, as individuals, have differing styles and philosophies of art, their collaborations are a learning process that generates a dynamism and produces artworks that achieve a harmony. ←

## Joel Shapiro ON THE ROOF

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has featured five sculptures by American artist Joel Shapiro (born 1941) in the 2001 installation of The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden.

Drawn from public and private collections, *Joel Shapiro on the Roof* included three large cast bronze and two painted cast aluminum sculptures, dating from 1989 to the present. The works have been exhibited in the 10,000-square-foot open-air space that offers spectacular views of Central Park and the Manhattan skyline. *Joel Shapiro*

*on the Roof* was coordinated by Nan Rosenthal, Consultant in the Department of Modern Art, and Anne L. Strauss, Assistant Curator, also in the Department of Modern Art.

The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden opened to the public in 1987. Annual installations have featured selections of modern sculpture from the Museum's collection and, most recently, presentations of works by the artists Ellsworth Kelly (1998), Magdalena Abakanowicz (1999), and David Smith (2000). "I had some trepidation about the roof," says Shapiro, "because I think it's not an easy space, there is a massive amount to compete with beyond

the roof. I mean, it's such a fabulous, wonderful vista of the park and buildings. So I tried to pick larger pieces because I felt that they would sort of intercede in the cityscape without blocking the view." The five sculptures are abstract, yet they allude, in varying degrees of specificity, to the human figure. They draw upon several traditions of modern and premodern sculpture to create work that is new and evocative. Shapiro's usual method of making metal sculpture (he also works in wood), including the five objects in this installation, is first to create a small wooden model by joining lengths that are square or rectangular with hot glue and a pin gun

(a tool that uses compressed air to shoot very thin pins into wood). There are no preparatory sketches; the model is adjusted by trial and error. The model is then constructed at full scale from chunks of sawn wood joined to one another. Next the wood lengths are sand-cast in bronze at a foundry, so that traces of the kerf — the saw marks against the wood grain — remain visible on the exterior surface of the finished bronze. The molds created to cast the bronze have a core built inside them, so that the bronze parts are hollow and only three-eighths of an inch thick. These parts, sometimes reinforced internally by stainless steel, are then bolted (or, more rarely, welded) together to form the nearly finished sculpture. The parts join at different angles. Once the work is constructed, Shapiro chases the surface to bring out the original pattern of the wood grain and to reduce, yet not erase, traces of the casting process — for example, the sprues, or opening's, through which the molten bronze was poured. Sometimes he then applies a light patina or, as in the case of the two cast-aluminum works from 2000-2001 in this installation, covers the entire surface of the work with primer and a coat of vividly coloured oil paint. ←  
News Release: Harold Holzer, Naomi Takafuchi ([www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org)).

JOEL SHAPIRO, *Untitled*, 1996-1999. Bronze, artist's cast. 731.5 x 434.3 x 349.3 cm. Collection of Joel Shapiro. Works of art by Joel Shapiro are © 2001 Joel Shapiro / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Bruce Schwarz.

