

## Espace Sculpture

### Angus Bungay

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Number 64, Summer 2003

Hochelaga-Maisonneuve

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/9146ac>

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#### Publisher(s)

Le Centre de diffusion 3D

#### ISSN

0821-9222 (print)

1923-2551 (digital)

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#### Cite this document

Varney, E. (2003). Angus Bungay. *Espace Sculpture*, (64), 40–41.

## Angus Bungay

ED VARNEY

mouvement à même la frontière où se départagent des instruments de la mécanique, d'une part et de l'autre, le temps des êtres animés. D'un point de vue phénoménologique, Merleau-Ponty insiste : « ce qui donne à une partie du champ valeur de mobile, à une autre partie valeur de fond, c'est la manière dont nous établissons nos rapports avec elles par l'acte du regard... La relation du mobile à son fond passe par notre

nous voyons est toujours à certains égards non vu : il faut qu'il y ait des côtés cachés des choses et des choses "derrière nous", s'il doit y avoir un "devant" des choses, des choses "devant nous", et enfin une perception », avançait Merleau-Ponty<sup>5</sup>.

Enfin l'art — et plus manifestement l'art cinétique — incarne l'idée de mouvement, sa vicariance. En fait, l'œuvre complexe de Morosoli rescape le temps à même l'espace, lui donnant lieu à travers toute une série de motions qu'elle fracture et recompose inlassablement. Lieux de séjour et de passage qu'elle fait être, qu'elle bâtit. Nous voilà retrouvant le sens du bâtir qui veut dire aussi habiter, comme le démontre Heidegger<sup>6</sup>. « Bâtir est déjà, de lui-même, habiter », nous assure le philosophe — selon l'histoire sémantique, avant d'ajouter : "je suis", "tu es", veulent dire : j'habite, tu habites... être homme veut dire : être sur terre comme mortel, c'est-à-dire habiter<sup>7</sup> ». Ainsi le regardeur séjourne dans cette architecture du temps qu'il arpente nécessairement. Corps en marche qui errent, exilés, déportés. (R)appelés. Question d'être. Entre passer et demeurer, nous nous déplaçons dans ce lieu non seulement où nous sommes mais qui nous habite et nous meut. ←

JOËLLE MOROSOLI, *Lézardes*, 2000. Détail. Photo : Michel Dubreuil.

corps<sup>4</sup> ». En raison de quoi, nous ne saurions perdre de vue la place du spectateur dans l'œuvre, telle que l'a soulevée Duchamp et retracée délibérément Robert Morris dans ses fameuses *Notes on sculpture* alors qu'il l'inscrivait spécifiquement dans la mise en situation de l'objet d'art ouvrant la voie, entre autres, à l'art de l'installation.

Mais revenons au théâtre d'ombre. Travailler directement avec l'ombre des corps rend visible leur projection dans l'espace alors qu'elles s'avancent vers nous *in situ* et s'étalent sur les murs. La réalité et la représentation sont tendues sous le poids des ombres portées ; la matière sculptée se transforme en objets d'illusion en proie aux leurres médiatiques qui prétendent pourtant à la réalité. Mirages spectaculaires. En même temps que l'immobilité est perdue, la ressemblance qui nous rassure est ébranlée par ces reflets qui dédoublent l'apparence ainsi mise en doute. L'œil du regardeur qui bouge réfléchit la scène et il en est la réflexion. Le dedans et le dehors se renversent perpétuellement allant du réfléchi au projeté. Le regardeur aperçoit l'épaisseur du corps, derrière lui. Ici, le paradigme du regard qui arpente est doublement présent. Mouvvance anthropologique. « Réciproquement, ce que

### NOTES

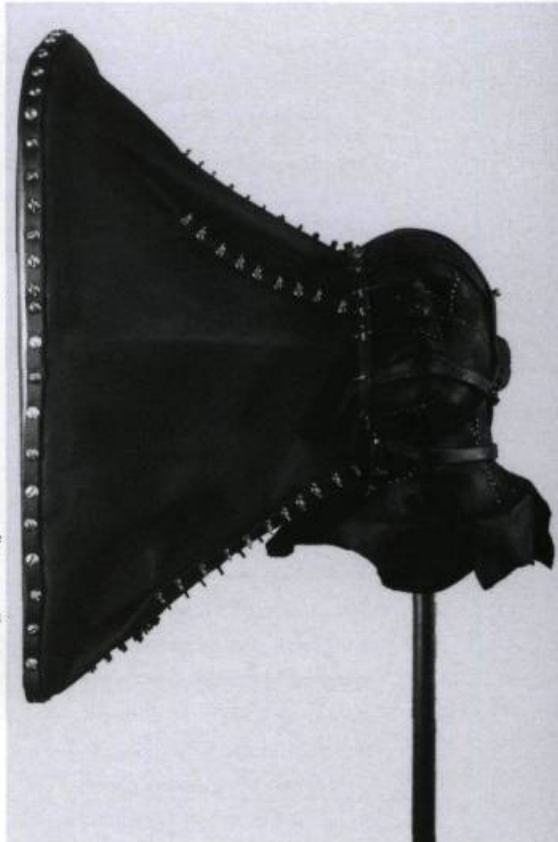
1. L'exposition *Architecturer le temps* (1989-2002) de Joëlle Morosoli a été présentée au Centre d'exposition du Vieux-Palais, à Saint-Jérôme, l'hiver dernier. Joëlle Morosoli. *Architecturer le temps* — *Architecturalizing Time*. Une publication parue aux Éditions d'art Le Sabord accompagne cette rétrospective. Le texte est partagé en deux temps : Jocelyne Connolly porte un regard analytique fouillé sur l'exposition tandis que Joëlle Morosoli commente fort judicieusement sa production, au fil des œuvres reproduites.
2. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris, Gallimard, 1945, p. 294.
3. Marcel Duchamp, *Duchamp du signe*, Flammarion, Paris, 1975, p. 49.
4. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, p. 322.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 321.
6. C'est dans « Bâtir habiter penser » que Heidegger réunit les sens de ces trois termes de même qu'il fait se rencontrer « être » et « habiter ». En allemand, rappelle-t-il, « bâtir » signifie non pas uniquement « bâtir » mais de plus « cultiver » tout en désignant « habiter ». Martin Heidegger, « Bâtir habiter penser », *Essais et conférences*, Paris, Gallimard, 1958.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Artists aren't told what to do, they have to figure it out for themselves. Sure, other artists, gallery owners, critics, family and friends all have opinions, but most artists seem determined to go their own way, to create objects and ideas that well up out of their individual obsessions and that they themselves only partially understand. Perhaps it is this central ambiguity which makes it art — a transaction between the artist and the viewer that can't be summed up by words, a phenomenological experience that only comes out of direct apprehension of the work.

Angus Bungay's sculpture asks a lot more questions than it answers. Ambiguity and contradiction coax the viewer to allow their own prejudices to surface and to recognize that their response to the work is totally the result of what they bring to it, not what is latent in it. These sculptures use extremely subtle devices to allow our deepest emotions to bubble up to where we can turn them over in our psyches and examine them.

Bungay's sculpture has centered on life-size representation of the male human head and, occasionally, torso and arms. He often covers them with irregularly sized pieces of black leather, meticulously attached with small brass nails, and uses various found objects to suggest bizarre experiments, restraints, archaic medical apparatus, and prosthetic devices. The faces themselves are disturbingly unemotional, placid, despite what might seem to be painful manipulations and interventions. Are these the faces of madmen, who have to be contained and caged, or are they the faces of saints who, despite mutilation and torture, endure with an inner peace?

Bungay, a British expatriate who has lived in Vancouver for the past ten years, is a warm and gentle man. His sculpture, for the most part, would seem to emanate from a somewhat morbid sensibility, but closer examination



reveals that it is we, the viewers, who project our own interpretations onto the works. The cast faces are calm, caught in a peaceful and contemplative mode. There are various objects, such as household items, cones, horns, etc., attached to the heads with leather straps, harnesses, and chains. Although black leather and chains suggest punk and biker culture, bondage and sado-masochistic rituals, electroshock and other medical restraints from the 1800s, this range of possible associations itself points to the multiplicity of interpretations of the work.

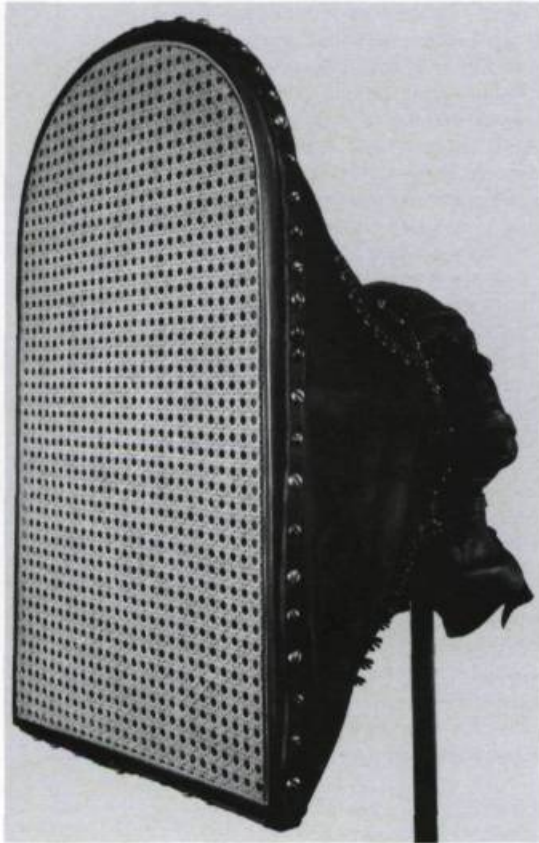
*Hammer Man* (from the 1997 series *Leathered Heads*) presents a head and torso, clad in what looks like leather protective armor, standing in a sea of nails and holding a hammer. His face is also covered with black leather and there are various objects (which could be read as tools of torture) attached to the armor. He presents an ambiguous figure — is his muscular stance threatening or is he contemplating a job well done? Is the leather outfit some sort of pro-

ANGUS BUNGAY, *Confessional*, 1997. Plaster, leather, found objects. 50.8 x 63.5 x 40.6 cm. Photo: Courtesy of the artist.



# Karen Trask: Touch Wood—Touchez du bois

JULIA BLUSHAK



ANGUS BUNGAY,  
*Confessional*, 1997.  
Plaster, leather, found  
objects. 50.8 x 63.5  
x 40.6 cm. Photo:  
Courtesy of the artist.

pective restraint which keeps him focused on his objective, or is it really armor which conceals a latent violence?

Some works in this series allude to the senses. A head completely covered in leather sports a giant "ear" in *Confessional* (1997). With the megaphone-like contrivance strapped to the head, it is as if all the other senses were covered and deadened to support this primitive but effective device for the amplification of hearing. But the question remains — who is doing the confessing? *Discipline* (1997) presents a painted head balancing a heavy medical dictionary. The closed eyes betray a steadfastness and a tangible sense of the control needed to accomplish this task.

*Cross* (from the 1999 series *At Arm's Length*) incorporates an eight-foot life-size aluminum cross with leather forearm and calve bindings. At first, this piece looks like a piece of quasi-religious bondage apparatus, but the viewer soon sees that there are castings of the exposed hands and feet in the leather bonds, you can't use this apparatus because someone,

for the most part invisible, is already there.

Bungay's approach changed in 2001. Although he still uses life-sized plaster casts of the head (he has also done an ongoing series of smaller maquettes as well), the character of the clown entered his work. *Leathered Clown* (from the 2001 series *Head Games*) uses the leather to define the oversized down-turned mouth, red nose, and exaggerated face painting of a clown. It is as if the dichotomy between inward and outward, happy and sad, tortured and placid has become more overt. And for the first time, colour has appeared in his work.

Up to this point, Bungay had used found objects as part of the stimulus for the development of a specific work. The object would suggest an idea, its nature and its range of associations would play an important role in the direction of the work. With the *Head Games* series, Bungay began to make drawings of a potential work and then seek out or fabricate the objects that had appeared in the drawing. A yellow duck, for instance, a found object, ended up in several drawings, but the sculptor realized that he had to make the multiple ducks the drawing called for. *Shooting Ducks* (2001) is a good example. The initial idea surfaced in a small working sketch derived from an exploration of the carnival theme or midway games. The idea was further developed in a large three-foot by four-foot drawing. Bungay then created a whole shooting gallery of ducks, fabricated an aluminum mask, and found an appropriate gun to complete the work.

These later works, because they depend more on artist-fabricated apparatus (rather than found objects), seem slicker and more finely crafted than some of his earlier works. The net result, however, is equally compelling. Bungay's sculptural works are unique, direct, and powerful — yet at the same time psychologically ambiguous and mysterious —, demonstrating a rare and original fusion of idea and execution. ←

<http://angusbungay.tripod.com>

It's a late summer afternoon and you are driving between meetings, from one community to another. Perhaps a small break is in order. Instead of pulling into a local coffee shop for a jolt of caffeine, you turn off road to lie in a meadow and quiet your agenda-riddled mind. When you open your eyes again, you are aware of a large elm tree shimmering just yards away. There are only the two of you, caught together in the afternoon light. The light flashing off each leaf is accentuated by a gentle rustling sound that carries across to you. It is a dry, soothing sound, like thin paper fluttering. For now, any thoughts that form move slowly to the surface of your mind and hang gently — for to bear witness to this fleeting moment to anyone other than yourself would require so much more. And for now there is only you, and the tree.<sup>1</sup>

Now transport yourself into an art exhibition by Karen Trask, entitled *Touch Wood—Touchez du bois*. Although you find yourself inside an artificially lit room surrounded by carefully arranged art pieces, you may eventually enter a sizable space within yourself — the space that nurtures dreams, memories, and yearning palpable.

For over ten years, Trask has been giving sculptural treatment, often through artist books, to the relationship between the abstractions of spoken and written language and their visceral roots. The works exhibited here are part of an ongoing exploration inspired by the venerable tree and its sublime offspring, word and book. Like a cultural anthropologist determined to put our current day's digital preoccupation in its proper place, Trask draws together a narrative on how tree, bark, leaves and branches connect with our own human legacy of sounds, signs, words, and pages. You now shed the world of contem-

KAREN TRASK, *Livre ouvert*, 2000.  
Wood (elm), steel. 41 x 104 x 39 cm.  
Photo: Paul Litherland.

