



If a tree fell ...? [slide]  
by Robert A Durden

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.  
Montana State University  
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Abstract:  
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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bozeman, Montana

May, 1990

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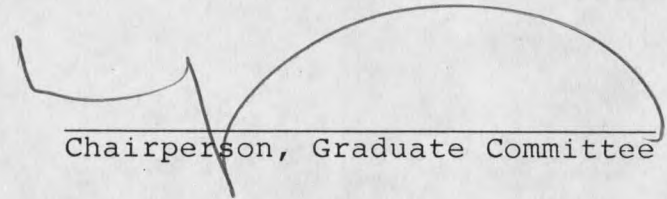
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of a thesis submitted by

Robert A Durden

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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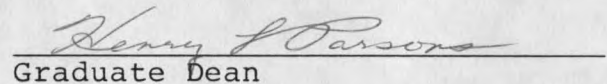
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## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

The work produced for this exhibition has been centered around the forest as a lyrical metaphor. The sculptures are meant to be seen as human-like tree forms. It is my intention to describe whimsical characters which are based both on imagination and specific individuals in my life. It is the similarities between the human form and trees that I find most interesting. The branches of the trees relate to human appendages, the bark to the clothing that one might wear, and the color to the spirit of the individual, etc. . . . In some cases, the relationships are very evident and at other times they are less apparent or more symbolic because of the way in which they are exaggerated.

The narrative aspect of the sculptures has become more and more important in my work. This is apparent in the sculptures The Weeping Tree and The Donut Tree. The Weeping Tree retains more of the human qualities of the vertical forms than does The Donut Tree. These two sculptures present the contradictions of life. The Weeping Tree has a movement which radiates from the center outward to the ground indicating the sadness and suffering that is an ingredient in life. The Donut Tree, on the other hand, has a repetitive upward movement which is intended to promote an optimistic point of view. In all of the sculptures,

the connection between the ground and the figure has been de-emphasized. This transition provides an awkward visual tension which implies that this figure is either standing precariously bent on falling or it has the ability to stand firm on very little ground.

All of the work present in this exhibition is produced by the method of displacement casting in sand. Because of the method that is utilized, the castings are relatively spontaneous. The immediacy of the process allows the freedom of working through ideas quickly and capturing the spirit of the moment of creation without becoming too removed from the initial conception. In using this process, the tree forms are literally cast from the earth and dug up to be cared for.

The manner in which the sculptures are painted is symbolic of the spiritual or emotional character of the individual or narrative which is being portrayed. The color provides an awkward and humorous feeling to the work. This quality is a direct reflection of the way I view the world and is not contrived to evoke any particular response. What the viewer finds humorous I may actually intend to be taken very seriously and vice-versa. The color is also used to enhance the form or embellish the surface of the form without hiding the fact that these are cast aluminum sculptures.

Ultimately, the works are intended to interpret the process of living in a positive manner, not unlike the Classical Greek search for harmony in a chaotic world. Hopefully, the viewer will see the beauty of nature and the optimism of the human spirit present in these forms.

## LIST OF SLIDES

1. Divinitree  
Cast Aluminum  
66"x12"x8"  
1989
2. Divinitree  
Detail
3. (Left) Personalitree #1  
Cast Aluminum  
106"x12"x6"  
1989  
  
(Middle) Slender Pine  
Cast Aluminum  
82"x12"x8"  
1989  
  
(Right) Short Pine  
Cast Aluminum  
72"x9"x5"  
1989
4. Personalitree #2  
Cast Aluminum  
96"x18"x15"  
1989
5. Personalitree #2  
Detail
6. (Left) Night Pine  
Cast Aluminum  
81"x10"x10"  
1989  
  
(Right) Personalitree #3  
Cast Aluminum  
110"x17"x15"  
1989
7. The Weeping Tree  
Cast Aluminum  
120"x60"x60"  
1990
8. The Weeping Tree  
Detail



## LIST OF SLIDES (CONT.)

9. The Weeping Tree  
Detail
10. The Weeping Tree  
Alternate View
11. The Donut Tree  
Cast Aluminum  
120"x60"x60"  
1990
12. The Donut Tree  
Detail
13. The Donut Tree  
Detail
14. The Donut Tree  
Detail
15. The Donut Tree  
Alternate View

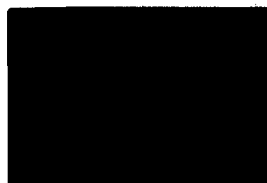
The Donut Tree

The Weeping Tree

The Weeping Tree

Personalitree#2

Divinitree



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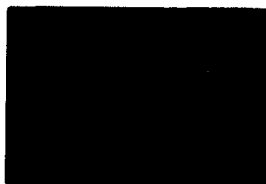
The Donut Tree

The Donut Tree

The Weeping Tree

Personalitree#2

Divinitree



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The Donut Tree

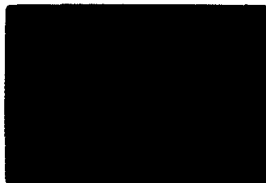
The Donut Tree

The Weeping Tree

Night Pine (Left)

Personalitree#1 (Left)

Slender Pine (Center)



Personalitree#3

Short Pine (Right)



































