

GROUP SHOW

THE SCULPTURE RANCH
15 NOVA ROAD, SANTA FE

Things are pretty kicked back at The Sculpture Ranch. The wind blows across the field where the sculptures stand—some thirty-odd works are arranged in a rough triangle, but not really. The *rancho* has got nothing but room, so each piece has space to graze. Purdy sight to see the whole herd ranged out against the desert wildflowers, running free. Inside stuff is stuffed inside a bright white gallery like feathers in a feather bed, and the big un's are out yonder all a-splayed in the dirt. Yippee aye A is for Art and the spirit it takes to make it happen outside the conventional gallery, auction house, artworldy structures.

"Twenty-eight sculptors showing over sixty table – top to monumental works of art," that's the horseshoe the Guild is pitchin'. And it's a heavy one in the old school categories of metal and stone. A lot of bronze, a lot of steel, and a bunch of sculpted rocks. Excepting *Chico* by Geronimo Marquez, a limestone carving with solid symmetries, and a few other pieces, much of the stone carving seemed only half done. "Like," as one wily stone carver says, "the stone hasn't been really penetrated." In making art, there's sometimes a thin line between being successfully subtle and not really getting started. At this point, I can only ask that the rest of these as yet unnamed Guild members search their consciences.



Installation view

Colorful glass castings by Carol Nicola caught the eye in the cool but crowded gallery space as the sun spun through a thick slab of transparent glass in the form of a spiral, called *Infinity*. Dana Chodzko's *Ancient Quivers of Time 1-7* are perfectly crafted objects suspended in perfectly crafted shadow boxes using a wide variety of material—bronze, plexi, aluminum, wood, brass, copper, etc.) Good golly. They hover between art and artifact, between pure useless beauty and a richly ambiguous imaginary range of archetypal functions.

Outside, the laugh-out-loud favorite was Alice Van Buren's *Gas Stations of the Cross*. Van Buren's miniature golf course sports easy access holes marked with the logos of international oil and gas companies. The arm of the cross holding the holes for the big three in energy—wind, sun, and water—are deliberately blocked by little barriers making a clear putt impossible. *Can't really afford not to go extinct, Dick, as a species I mean, the human race isn't in the economic position to avoid extinction, just the plain economics of it...* Still, there's hope, as the little mini-roadblocks look removable. *Gas Stations of the Cross* stands out as a really smart and funny piece of conceptual art.

Similar in political wit was the *Wheel of Terror* by Nat Hesse. A large wind vane with a giant spinning wheel of colors harnesses the wind to gauge the level of potential for the next terrorist attack. Perfectly balanced, the instrument registers not only the color - coded alertness level, but also gives you, the average citizen or government official, a specific direction in which to focus your tremendous fear. It is not clear, actually, whether the giant indicator arrow is the direction from which terror might come, or rather the direction in which to run to avoid the incoming terror, but no matter. And, of course, both of these vectors are constantly changing (especially on a windy day), but these are the times that we live in. *Hey Nat, It's me, Dick, where are we at today? Orange tipping into red, huh? You got a direction for me on that? Okay, thanks, I'll let everybody know to be very afraid.*

Wheel is also a fine piece of steel sculpture in the tradition of artists like, say, David Smith, with a touch of Tinguely. Stripped of its political barbs, it is still a great Dada object for generating chance readings in color directly from the wind, and it could easily be modified to generate electricity. Basically, every home in America needs one.

Frank Morbillo also checks in with an ambitious outdoor work with social intent. *The Future Without Water* is a large-scale ruin in steel and concrete that looks exactly like what will be left after the humans are all gone. There is also a cabinet holding a couple of hydro-maps. (Like somebody was still trying to make a last ditch effort way after it was too late.) Unlike Van Buren's or Hesse's work, there is no humor here, just an apocalyptic sense of crumbling failure as the piece succumbs to the elements. Nevertheless, this dry warning works.

Other artist's deserving of mention are Donna Quasthoff, with her intriguing little *cholla*-legged individuals in an art-brut style that would make Dubuffet happy; Dan Collet, who presents *Disappearing Boy*—a fragmented figure afloat in a tear - drop shaped cage made of chain; and Richard Mole, whose *Surfer on Wave* in bronze and aluminum has a surprising 3-D cartoon appeal. Totally, dude.

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