



DANVILLE CHADBOURNE



Plate 1 THE UNSTABLE TRUTH OF INEVITABILITY 2003
Front Cover SILENT MARKER ALONG THE TORTURED PATH 2002-03

DANVILLE CHADBOURNE

RECENT OUTDOOR SCULPTURE

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FOREWORD

The invitation for a solo exhibition on the beautifully landscaped grounds of the Beeville Art Museum presented a unique opportunity for Danville Chadbourne to create a special body of work. This new series of sculptures incorporates his use of material, technique and personalized visual language that he has developed and refined over the past 30 years as an artist.

This new series of totem sculptures, assembled and created of ceramic, concrete and stone, reflect the result of the artist's journey that demonstrates a new high level of resolve and refinement. Their craftsmanship, mastered technique and process employ his career experience and knowledge of his chosen medium. These contemporary totems serve as a culmination of the artist's aesthetic issues, ideas and artistic development. Chadbourne's oeuvre has always been imbued with contradictions and a contrasting duality – man-made geometric shapes against natural organic forms. Utilizing elemental shapes, symbols and abstract patterns and motifs, these sculptures combine historical and current aesthetic issues with the artist's strong interest in and the influence of folk and tribal art. These ritualistic totems are assembled of color-stacked segments, geometric elements of cylinders, rectangles and rings, and are topped with enigmatic shaped forms suggesting metamorphous growth and change. Pastel pigments of toned-stained color appear to be the results of natural, worn and weathered surfaces with texture seemingly created by abrasion and worn with age. The subtle color of these sculpted elements is an integral physical aspect of the form, not a superficial surface coating.

Because there is no implied hierarchy between the bases and the sculpted shapes, these works allow for direct access that encourages an empirical entrance into the viewer's world. There is no apparent priority between the subject/content and its pedestal/presentation placing the sculpture in the intimate space of the spectator.

These symbolic, ritualistic, sculptural totems of a developed personal iconology and visual vocabulary evoke a spiritual and psychological experience that journeys through time, place and cultures while extending universal feelings and emotions.

George W. Neubert
Director
San Antonio Museum of Art

STATEMENT FROM THE ARTIST

The first sculptures that I produced that I considered to be works of consequence were relatively small salt-fired ceramic pieces that were placed in the back yard. These works seemed to be emergent forms, strange and ambiguous organic growths from the earth. They seemed natural. The most important aspect of this experience was that these works seemed to come from within me. They were not the fulfillment of assigned projects or obligations, nor did they seem to be particularly influenced or guided by teachers, other artists, or art history. They seemed, if anything, biological, some organic synthesis of intuition and intellectual decision-making. Although unknown to me at the time, these works were the beginning of the path that I was to follow for the next thirty years with my art.

The new works in this outdoor sculpture exhibition on the grounds of the Beeville Art Museum are the most recent manifestations of that compulsive act of creation that I began many years ago. Inevitably the works have changed and evolved during this time but the essential impulse and vision has remained constant. These new sculptures are now part of a vast array of works that encompass a large range of materials, forms and formats. Over time, most of the various ideas are revisited on a complex, irregular and elliptical cycle. The last group of outdoor sculptures dates from the early 1990's. The new pieces have been gestating for the last few years and were produced in a relatively short concentrated period over the last year and a half. They expand my ideas regarding single unit, vertical, monument-like forms first begun in the early 1980's, adding the expanded dimensions of color and materials like bronze and stone, as well as a more complex sense of structure. The opportunity to control the installation of the works on the park-like grounds of the museum allowed for a composition of forms and ideas that is true to my conception of aesthetic unity. Each piece has a clear identity, animates its immediate space, engages the surrounding environment, and relates to other works within vision. I wanted the pieces to be in a natural relationship with their surroundings, the ambiguous product of natural occurrence and human will. My intent was to create a condition in the natural world conducive to a personal experience of discovery, thought, speculation and, hopefully in the end, self-reflection.

This exhibition has been a rather intense and demanding project. I would like to thank the Joe Barnhart Foundation, which generously provided the opportunity to use the beautiful grounds of the Beeville Art Museum for this exhibition and for funds to produce this catalogue. I would also like to thank George Neubert, Director of the San Antonio Museum of Art, for his introductory statement as well as his friendship and support. Finally my deepest gratitude to Conan Chadbourne and Diana Roberts, the people closest to collaborators that I have ever had, for their amazing assistance in all aspects of the project, especially the installation in August.

Danville Chadbourne
October 2003



Plate 2 THE ENDLESS CYCLE OF EXPECTATION - ALTERED VISION 1998-03

“The history of art like the history of any other subject depends for its coherence on the arbitrary choice of a principle, though ‘principle’ is perhaps a solemn word for what is no more than a convenience.”

“A chronological sequence must be attempted, with the full realization that it is an arbitrary simplification and involves repetitions, contradictions and ambiguous problems of *value*.”

-Herbert Read, *A Concise History of Modern Sculpture*

When attempting to describe a given segment of an artist’s body of work, it is important to acknowledge at the outset some of the potential pitfalls in doing so. One runs the risk of overstating the relative importance of a given artistic direction within the larger body of work as much as one runs the risk of oversimplifying the creative process. There may be an overarching linear progression of development, but that sense of linearity is likely the distillation of innumerable convergent and divergent tendencies. This is particularly true of an artist like Danville Chadbourne, who follows hundreds of creative impulses and formal threads at a time and has created a huge, diverse body of work. Yet within that body of work there is a coherence and internal consistency that few artists achieve. One of the arbitrary conveniences one can choose in examining this coherence in Chadbourne’s work is to look at the outdoor works which, despite the fact that they represent a small percentage of the total works produced, have been a recurring impulse since the artist began making sculptures in the early 1970’s. Without making too much of this distinction, the most recent body of outdoor sculptural works, exhibited on the grounds of the Beeville Art Museum, can be seen equally as a unique set of sculptural ideas, a continuation of the general tendencies in the artist’s sculptural works, and a means of looking at the underlying principles that govern this artist’s production. In keeping with the general aesthetic developed over the years of his artistic endeavors, these works present a complex interaction of form, material, implied function, metaphorical implication, poetic and psycho-spiritual association, and a sense of the artist’s own aesthetic history.

Before engaging in the broader discussion of how these works fit into the overall scheme of things it should first be mentioned that each piece in the exhibition stands on its own as a complete

sculptural entity, with a distinct character and particular set of formal qualities that come together in a uniquely satisfying way. This is a diverse group of sculptures exploiting a range of forms and ideas that seem, at certain points, incongruous. Some are quiet, meditative and self-contained while others are dynamic, bold, even potentially menacing. Yet there is an internal consistency from piece to piece uniting even the most seemingly disparate works. Cumulatively each sculpture is related to the next in some way, the visual and poetic correspondences revealed by increment as the viewer’s eye lingers, roams or jumps from one work to the next.

Some of the unifying elements arise out of practicality. Because these works are intended to remain outdoors there are certain considerations Chadbourne feels must be addressed, such as permanence and durability of materials and colors. Likewise, in all of these works there is a certain degree of stability in the forms, a sense of weight, mass and scale that can sustain both the physical and visual demands of existing in nature. But aside from the intentional differences and the practical similarities, the specific contextual demands of being outdoors create a particularly dynamic visual interaction: shifting light as the day progresses or clouds move across the sky; the changing of the seasons and different qualities of light; the way water saturates the surfaces, affecting the colors; the subtle color relationships created as leaves turn and fall.

Looking at these works in the landscape engages the viewer in a more fully three-dimensional experience. One notices the shape of the ground, the relative scale of works as they are viewed from across the park, the way the forms shift as you move around them, approach them, or see them from a distance. This complex visual interaction implies a different level of conceptual interaction as notions of time, change and relationships enter the arena. Over time the works gain a certain “patina” as organic matter accumulates on the surface, incorporating the man-made into the natural order of things. Bold colors and textures that seem almost garish when viewed in isolation become simultaneously muted and enhanced as they absorb and synthesize colors picked up from the environment. The eccentric, mottled surface of THE REMARKABLE COMPLICATIONS OF DESIRE (plate 13) is echoed and softened in the dappled sunlight and leaves

fluttering around it, the dramatic colors of THE FLUID GEOMETRY OF DETERMINATION (plate 14) and THE INADVERTENT REDEMPTION OF UNFULFILLED PROMISE (plate 15) become harmonized, almost muted, as they blend with and reflect the colors, shapes, and motions around them.

All this said it is only fair to point out that notions of time, change and interrelationship are present in all of Chadbourne's works. Sculptural or wall-oriented, indoor or outdoor, Chadbourne constantly references the effects of time and usage in the painstakingly worn, abraded, and handled surfaces. Because they are clearly man-made, certain assumptions about their origin can be inferred even if their specific use or meaning can not. Therein lies one of the problems in making the somewhat arbitrary indoor/outdoor distinction: all of the works *suggest* outdoor placement in the sense that they project an implied ritual, and therefore somewhat public, function.

To make sense of this arbitrary distinction at all, one must take into account that the number of works created specifically for an outdoor context represents a relatively small percentage of the total works produced. Primarily a sculptor, Chadbourne's work runs the gamut from freestanding sculpture to small-scale graphic works. Graphic elements more typically associated with two-dimensional works adorn the surfaces of sculptures, and sculptural elements adorn the surfaces of wall pieces. Among the large, complex oeuvre of this very productive artist there are delicate small-scale works in wood, stable forms in stone and ceramic, mid- and large-scale sculptural works in a range of materials including wood, ceramic, cast concrete, stone, stucco over plywood forms, and utilizing every possible combination thereof. There are suspended sculptures, works that rest on the floor, lean against the wall, works intended to be placed on pedestals, relief works and paintings ranging, again, from miniatures to huge works that take up entire walls. Yet within this diversity each work has an internal logic and fits smoothly into the larger context of the artist's output.

Chadbourne has, from the very outset, not paid particular attention to traditional habits of Western artistic convention. Working in both two- and three-dimensions, combining natural and painted wood, pigmented cast concrete, ceramic forms that are often painted rather than glazed, incorporating beads, bones, antlers, human hair, fabric wrappings

and streamers, and utilizing simplified metal techniques for adornment, Chadbourne has a tendency to subvert Western convention in favor of combinations and techniques more aligned with "folk" or "tribal" art. This tends to give the works an accessible, almost craft-like appeal while at the same time addressing complicated, intricate and frequently volatile psycho-emotional issues. The content of any given work, alluded to in the long poetic titles, tends toward the paradoxical complications of the human psyche most readily associated in Western intellectual traditions with philosophy and psychology. Of course, these are the same issues addressed in most cultures through ritual imagery and ceremonial contexts, albeit without the Western trappings of "intellect" and "sophistication".

The combined formal and conceptual tone of Chadbourne's work frequently leads to the metaphor of the "artifact", a notion central to appreciating the full range of his output. As time goes on, in fact, it becomes an ever more apt description. The formal correspondences become more complex and more ingrained as the work evolves, increasing in range and implied function. Conceptually, the metaphor speaks to the level at which Chadbourne integrates and projects his philosophical world view through his artwork. Whether indoor or outdoor, all of the works imply some level of interaction between man and nature. The larger works, as stated above, imply some public function or display, the smaller ones a more intimate scale that suggests personal usage. The somewhat arbitrary nature of the indoor/outdoor distinction does not apply here. One could make disproportionate claims about the relevance of placement to the impact of Chadbourne's work, but the ethnographic and ritual qualities are distinct and fully intentional.

The relevance of the "artifact" is apparent in the outdoor works installed on the grounds of the Beeville Art Museum. Many of them seem to suggest monuments of some kind; shrines, markers of ritual places or graves. The physical features of the museum grounds accentuate the inherent qualities of the sculptures, creating a remarkable range of experiences as one travels the imaginary pilgrimage routes.

SILENT MARKER ALONG THE TORTURED PATH (front cover) sits quietly atop one of three mounds in the park, watching over the rest of the yard in self-contained



Plate 3 UNEASY MONUMENT TO THE FEAR OF IMPENDING TRUTH 2003



Plate 4 THE DISLOCATION OF OLD MYSTERIES 2002-03



Plate 5 THE UNFORESEEN OCCURRENCE OF PERMANENT INSTABILITY 2003

silence. Somewhat removed from the main grounds, the organic stone-like surfaces of each section find correspondences with every color and texture in the yard. The affinity to the large boulder anchoring the open area in front of it adds to the sense that this work is, in some way, the lodestone of the exhibition, drawing each work together even as it remains formally somewhat removed.

UNEASY MONUMENT TO THE FEAR OF IMPENDING TRUTH (plate 3) lurks menacingly on the periphery of the grounds, like the dark forces so typically associated with nighttime and village boundaries. The suggestion in the title of a great truth adds conceptual weight to the awkward gravity of the form, bulky and firmly grounded on its base, watching the more graceful, dynamic forms in the distance. THE UNHOLY MECHANICS OF DISSONANCE AND LUST (plate 11) commands the central open area, suggesting a public display that requires movement and space. The tallest work in the exhibition, its active surfaces and color patterns demand attention as the work defiantly engages the rest of the yard, even peering over the boulder at the more subtle works nestled in the trees in the distance. APPARITION BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES (plate 10) stands tall and alert, almost watchful, a guardian spirit on the second hill. Birdlike, it looks out beyond the physical boundaries of the yard like a strange pelican looking out to sea, waiting for the wind to take flight.

On the third mound, DREAM SEQUENCE – THE DECEPTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS (plate 7) stands jubilant, a monument to some unknown ritual reenactment. Self-contained in form and situated on its own hill, seemingly oblivious to the other works, it seems joyfully lost in some private abandon, unaware of its obviousness. In contrast the low, stable, quiet form of THE DISLOCATION OF OLD MYSTERIES (plate 4) rests shrine-like in a low place in the corner of the grounds, under the canopy of a small grove of trees. With minimal cues, the full range of lore surrounding forest spirits is called forth. In this outdoor context, the elements of time and place become simultaneously visual and conceptual. These are not displaced artifacts removed from their intended functions. They are in their proper context. It is up to the viewer to determine what that function might be.

The sense of mystery and paradoxical relationships evident in these pieces has been a central theme throughout Chadbourne's production. The subtle formal relationships and associations are punctuated by elaborate, enigmatic titles full of references to the intricacies of human relationships and psychological impulses, religious or spiritual conceptions, observations on the forces of nature and, by comparison and contrast, on human nature. There is a vague anthropomorphism present in almost all of the works despite the non-representational, archetypal imagery. Much of the compelling, mysterious quality in these works comes from our tendency to identify with them, interpreting their gestures and characters.

This interaction is sometimes fostered simply by the traces of human creation. A central element in Chadbourne's working procedure is to use technologically simple processes, earthy materials, and techniques that obscure a given time or place of manufacture. The result is a body of objects that raise some of the same questions as archaeological or ethnographic artifacts from an unknown culture: who made this thing, and for what purpose? Some of the indoor works suggest a functional artifact exhibited museum-style in an abstracted, out of context manner. With true ethnographic objects, there is an ongoing debate about the propriety of displaying cultural artifacts in glass boxes, detached from their traditional use or purpose. The abstraction of viewing an object in a gallery may create an ideal setting for appreciation of the purely formal qualities, but it frequently subverts the symbolic meaning, function, and socio-religious power of the object. Chadbourne's work exploits this dilemma: these artifacts *are* intended to be viewed this way. They aren't displayed in glass boxes and they don't have any real or defined ritual function, but this rational fact does not detract from the symbolic power or the nascent spiritual qualities of the work.

The anthropomorphic interaction is compounded in a different way when it results from a sculptural gesture or shape. Many of Chadbourne's works evoke some sort of animate presence, but it remains ambiguous whether it is a human characteristic or a doubly anthropomorphized reading that we are responding to. For example, the bird-like qualities of APPARITION BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES (plate 10) cited earlier could be purely bird-like or we can (and frequently do) project human qualities onto the



Plate 6 EXTREME GRAVITATION - THE MYTH OF COINCIDENCE 2003

bird-like qualities. By contrast, the gently rounded, feminine form of *EXTREME GRAVITATION – THE MYTH OF COINCIDENCE* (plate 6) bowing demurely and the swirling, vigorous, dance-like gesture of *THE UNFORESEEN OCCURRENCE OF PERMANENT INSTABILITY* (plate 5) evoke more specifically human gestures. Perhaps the most ironic and ambiguous example is *THE FLUID GEOMETRY OF DETERMINATION* (plate 14). The simple, geometric star-shaped form has just enough movement and gesture to suggest either a friendly, waving starfish or the cartoon abstraction of a human form with arms outstretched, leaning forward on one leg, about to turn a cartwheel. As silly as these interpretations may sound the fact is that, as humans, we have a tendency to project human characteristics and personalities onto non-humans or inanimate objects on a regular basis. If Chadbourne’s forms aren’t suggestive enough on their own, the titles add a degree of complexity and abstract, philosophical weight even as they encourage an anthropomorphic reading. But even at their most explicit, Chadbourne’s works are never particularly narrative. There is a formalized presentation in these works that orients them squarely in the realm of pure sculpture. This is where the more recent works seem to differ most from the earlier outdoor sculptures.



Fig. 1

The evolution of Chadbourne’s mature style has been a gradual one based on an increasingly clear expression of the fundamental issues at work in his aesthetic and personal vision. As with any successful artistic endeavor, this clarity is the result of continuous examination and articulation of the conceptual or philosophical content in tandem with examination of the formal means to convey those concepts. The physical manifestation of this process can be seen in the repetition of certain forms, procedures, and ideas over the years. Continuing the artifact metaphor, one can draw an analogy between Chadbourne’s repeated motifs with the codification of a cultural world view in the body of symbols and forms that appear over and over again in ethnographic traditions (the inherent contradiction of a one-man culture notwithstanding). Forms are revisited as new formal and aesthetic interests are incorporated into the basic idea that generated the shape or image in the first place.

Take, for example, the difference between the older work in fig. 1 (*UNTITLED, 1972*) and the three newer works that are directly related to it (plates 7,8,9). There is a clear relationship between the bulbous, segmented form with arm-like appendages in each piece. The older work emerges like a strange growth from the earth, folded and scarred, the constriction near the top delineating a head-like appendage. It might be seen as some sort of strange, exceptionally large fungus or an aberrant mineral concretion, perhaps an unknown substance leaching up from an underground reservoir and hardening as it reaches the surface. Whether it is interpreted as an organic or inorganic formation, it seems to be naturally occurring. By contrast, the same basic form reappears in *DREAM SEQUENCE – THE DECEPTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS, 2003* (plate 7), but in a very different manner. The carefully formed stone column and concrete base are clearly man-made, with a consciously harmonious relationship between the surface textures and coloration in the concrete, stone, and ceramic sections. The blue tips echo the color scheme, gesture and the “tuft” of the older work, but the overall impact is very different. A similar form appears in *THE UNCONTROLLABLE DENSITY OF ASPIRATION, 2003* (plate 8). The controlled verticality of this work, the clearly defined banding and the use of the stone base again place it in a clearly monument-like category despite the formal similarities. Likewise, *DANGEROUS MOCKERY – THE PHANTOM SURROGATE, 2003* (plate 9)



Plate 7 DREAM SEQUENCE - THE DECEPTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS 2003



Plate 8 THE UNCONTROLLABLE DENSITY OF ASPIRATION 2003



Plate 9 DANGEROUS MOCKERY - THE PHANTOM SURROGATE 2003



Fig. 2

repeats the bulbous, constricted form with arm- or head-like projections delineated by contrasting color bands. Like the others in this cycle the controlled presentation of the work is more purely fabricated than the older work, but the natural, gestural qualities are clearly linked to it. The title of this work is particularly provocative. In light of the formal correspondence to the other works, what is the nature of this mockery, and what kind of surrogate?

This ambiguity between naturally occurring form and man-made object is key to Chadbourne's overall aesthetic. The tendency in the very early works of the 1970's was toward relatively small, single element organic forms arising directly from the earth, as in the example given above. Some of the forms suggest plantlike growths, others some sort of amorphous, invertebrate organism with undulating gestures. As already mentioned, there is frequently the sense of an ambiguously animated presence, implying movement, like something one sees out of the corner of one's eye, uncertain as to whether the movement is due to internal, self motivated forces or external forces acting upon it. Take for example, *DRIED, BUT ACHING AND WHISTLING AROUND THE CORNER*, 1973 (fig. 2). The form itself implies some form of movement and gesture. In this work, the human scale (approx 5') lends itself to a human

or at least anthropomorphic reading. The title also suggests life-like actions and, in a rare example, an almost narrative emotional state. However, dried and whistling around a corner could also be the state of movement of a plastic bag, the aching part merely a touch of empathic ambiguity. The irony of course is that none of these works are moving at all but sitting silently still. *OCCURRENCE IN THE PATH OF AMBITION*, 1976 (fig. 3) rests rock-like on the ground, but the relationship between the two forms suggests an interaction of some kind. Like the human tendency to name mountain formations, the anthropomorphizing of this work is accomplished primarily through the title with reference to the distinctly human impulse of ambition or, at very least, the human tendency for self-centered and causal interpretations of events.

In looking at the evolution of Chadbourne's work, one should be cautious about these causal interpretations. The repetition of forms, while occasionally resulting from an unresolved formal issue in a much earlier work, is typically not a means of "correcting" an earlier work. In keeping with a strong personal belief that one cannot go back to a previous state of experience, Chadbourne almost never re-works or alters a previously completed piece. Evolution, in the true sense of the word, simply means change over time. It does not imply that the thing that comes *later* is inherently *better*. The relative *value* of any given work or style depends on the subjective criteria and tastes of the moment. The artist has, no doubt, developed a more refined and self-assured mastery of his materials and formal vocabulary, but one shouldn't draw too deterministic an interpretation of repeated images. The more compelling argument, and the one cited by

Fig. 3





Fig. 4

the artist, has more to do with a physical memory of the forms and processes. Certain shapes, gestures, and forms reappear in various guises and contexts, reflecting the aesthetic concerns guiding production at any given time.

A clear example may be drawn by comparing APPARITION BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES, 2003 (plate 10) with the much older work DEATH SONG OF THE ANGEL, 1979 (fig. 4). For convenience, the physical features can be discussed as anatomical structures, and the similarities are striking: the long neck and upturned head suggesting a beak of some sort, the low center of gravity and wing-like structures, even the suggestion of the forms looking out over some distance or, in the older work, away from each other. Yet in the older work the unified surface and the singular forms, in relation to each other but unrelated to a base, suggest complete and self-contained organic entities. These characteristics and the relatively small scale give the piece an almost personable, animated presence. In the newer work, these characteristics are replaced by multiple sections, more clearly and geometrically determined proportions and markings, and a clear relationship to the sculptural pedestal or base. The large scale and delineation of sculptural space create a more monumental presence, removed from

personal interaction. The suggestion of an animate being is present in both works: the older suggesting that the object might actually *be* the entity in a static phase, the newer merely referencing that entity in a formalized manner. This increasingly formalized presentation is one of the main aesthetic tendencies that distinguish the older from the newer works.

As already mentioned, one of the characteristics of Chadbourne's work from any period is the ambiguity between natural and man-made forms. The more consciously organic forms and processes of the early 1970's, in both sculptural and two-dimensional works, are characterized by a distinct rejection of geometry in the sense of regular, measured, calculated proportional relationships. The sculptural forms tended to be slightly irregular and consciously awkward, with surface irregularities intended to emphasize the organic, volatile nature of the ceramic process. Parallel to this endeavor, Chadbourne was creating meticulous paintings on canvas with very controlled, intellectualized surfaces. The imagery in both two- and three-dimensional works ran along similar lines, but the formal and creative processes began to diverge. The artist began to feel that the paintings and sculptures were two separate bodies of work and that the paintings were becoming, in some ways, illustrations of the graphic qualities of the sculptures.

In the mid-1970's Chadbourne was also becoming increasingly aware of the artifact-like nature of each piece within the body of work, both as a conceptual and formal impulse. As the artist sought to create a more unified body of work there were radical shifts in the way he created paintings, along with changes in the sculptural works that included the introduction of stacked forms, architectonic references, and more monument-like compositions. In the late 1970's and early 1980's there was a shift of emphasis toward more consciously man-made objects and a more controlled presentation of the work in general. At the core of this intellectual and philosophical shift was the cautious, methodical integration of the geometry the artist had rejected in the earlier, self-consciously organic works.

Chadbourne refers to it as "hand-made geometry", and it represents a fundamental shift in the evolution of his artwork. It's a softer, less rigid form than that typical of pure math and architecture, but the basic principles are similar. It is evident in the



Plate 10 APPARITION BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES 2002-03



Fig. 5

increasing use of monument-like bases to delineate the sculptural space, the emphasis on proportion and scale between the various stacked sections, the strong contrast between the horizontal elements breaking the vertical thrust of the whole, and the banding and registration of the surfaces that begin to appear. Yet these elements are softened by rounded forms, blunted edges, slightly irregular and undulating verticals and hand-drawn patterns on the surfaces.

With yet another word of caution against assuming a truly linear progression, the development of the geometric and monumentalizing tendency in Chadbourne's work can be illustrated by four works of differing time periods. *THE GREAT ENIGMA OF DEMON PRAYER*, 1976 (fig. 5) features the typically singular form emerging from the ground, the softly graduated and gently undulating shape, the unified texture and earthy color, and the suggestively animated presence already discussed in regard to the early works. However, this work was already showing the tendency toward the larger scale and more columnar presentation of the works to follow. By the early 1980's, Chadbourne had begun to incorporate his "hand-made geometry" in works like *THE DARK AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT*, 1982 (fig. 6) one of the critical, transitional works of the period.

The three columnar forms interact with one another, the bottom sections slightly irregular and emerging directly from the ground. The multiple sections, however, are carefully measured to create balanced, harmonious proportions. The horizontal sections are soft, almost voluptuous yet clearly differentiated by virtue of being a separate section altogether, and of a contrasting yet still earthy color. In the mid-1980's we see in *MONUMENT TO THE FRAGILITY OF HISTORY*, 1984-85 (fig. 7) fully delineated and proportional sections, registration within sections (mitigated by conscientiously irregular, obviously hand-carved lines), a slightly more variegated surface and use of color (though still earth tones), and a fully formalized placement. This work is no longer emerging from the ground, but fully anchored to its small square base. The man-made monument is, furthermore, clearly referenced in the title of the work. By the time we get to *THE UNHOLY MECHANICS OF DISSONANCE AND LUST*, 2003 (plate 11), all tentativeness is gone. Similar in form to the other works, the trunk-like vertical with branch-like projections is clearly a study in geometric, measured proportions. Elaborate banding, bold colors, and graphic elements on the surface assert an almost extroverted confidence in this work, anchored to a large base that both accentuates and balances



Fig. 6



Plate 11 THE UNHOLY MECHANICS OF DISSONANCE AND LUST 2002-03



Fig. 7

its height. Structurally, it is clearly related to the MONUMENT TO THE FRAGILITY OF HISTORY. The same ideas, both conceptually and formally, are being explored. The difference is in the stylistic details and the infusion of new aesthetic concerns.

The acceptance of geometry opened new possibilities for both interpretive information and formal presentation. The organic forms gradually found their way back into the works in a more controlled, formalized context that added complexity to Chadbourne's penchant for paradox, contradiction and juxtaposition. For example, the tree-like branching of AMBIGUOUS CONJUNCTION – THE MYTH OF ANTICIPATION, 1992-93 (fig. 8) is combined with the stacked, proportioned, monumentalizing features already discussed. The juxtaposition leads one to various interpretations: is it a ritual pole in the symbolic shape of a special tree, a monument to all that is evocative in the concept of any tree, or is it something else entirely? Interpretation will depend upon the experience of the viewer, the specific context in which it is viewed, and any number of other subjective nuances. The subtle contradiction of the organic tree form with the softened geometry of the cylinder and cone and, further, the juxtaposition of the generally cylindrical forms with the square base accentuate

the relationship between the organic and geometric principles. This type of formal relationship both creates and reflects the subtle aesthetic tension that emerged in the works from the early to middle 1980's. In Chadbourne's world view, the juxtaposition of organic and geometric elements refers to the fundamental distinction between unconscious and conscious, subjective versus rational order, elegant and awkward, aggressive versus self-absorbed. Yet within these formal and philosophical debates there is nothing particularly jarring. The beauty of it all is that Chadbourne manages to take these opposites, both conceptual and physical, and transform them into seamless, integrated, unified forms.

During the 1980's the distinction between indoor and outdoor sculptural works began to be delineated more clearly in advance. Chadbourne continued to see them as interrelated bodies of work, the main distinctions having to do with scale and materials. In most of the earlier works there was more fluidity in terms of indoor/outdoor placement, in part because the dominant material was high-fired stoneware and could withstand the natural elements. Working through the formal and stylistic changes of the late 1970's and 1980's, Chadbourne tended to use more responsive, controllable media such as painted and drawn surfaces (wood panels, sculpture



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

bases, large scale paintings on plywood, etc.), which necessitated indoor presentation. Meanwhile, the outdoor works tended to be executed on a much larger scale than either their indoor counterparts or their predecessors from the 1970's. Yet the imagery and the forms themselves continued to be somewhat interchangeable. In general one could say that as the delineation between "indoor" and "outdoor" works became more conscientiously pre-determined, the formal distinctions were diminished as Chadbourne worked through various compositional, structural, and metaphorical issues.

One of the culminating pieces of this period is THE MISGUIDED REFUGE OF BLIND FAITH, 1982-93 (fig. 9). Finished the same year as AMBIGUOUS CONJUNCTION..., MISGUIDED REFUGE... was started more than ten years earlier. The self-contained, almost self-protective top section is based on a shape that Chadbourne used repeatedly throughout the early 1980's in both two- and three-dimensional works. The large scale of this particular manifestation gives it a distinct character both formally and interpretively. Ultimately it became monument-like in the stable, stacked base sections and clearly delineated sculptural space, like many of the other outdoor sculptures of the time. Working through the many variations on this particular

shape in various media, along with the many other developments leading to the formalized, man-made presentation, it's almost as if THE MISGUIDED REFUGE OF BLIND FAITH is a monument to the process that led to its own completion.

The creative process, like evolution, is not always linear. As often as we tend to place things on an arbitrary line of historical progression, the reality is much more dimensional. Chadbourne frequently describes certain formal threads and creative impulses as "evolutionary dead-ends". This doesn't mean it wasn't worth the effort or that it wasn't an artistically successful endeavor. It simply means, as in Darwin's theory of natural selection, that a particular combination of formal ideas has run its course. As in nature, elements of those forms can and do reemerge in different manifestations. For Chadbourne, creating objects that explored the ambiguity between naturally occurring or man-made object became a moot point. What still intrigues the artist, however, is the *relationship* between naturally occurring and man-made forms, or to be more precise, the multiple levels and interpretations of those relationships. The complexity can be quite subtle within a single piece, and even more so when vestigial formal relationships appear from work to



Fig. 10



Plate 12 THE ENDLESS CYCLE OF EXPECTATION - SHIFTING IDENTITY 1998-03

work. The interpretive and metaphorical possibilities become even richer when one takes an historical perspective.

One of the important, very early pieces, CARNAL FLIGHT OF THE RIPPLE FISH, 1971 (fig. 10) embodies all of the elements of Chadbourne's early endeavors. The vitreous salt-fired surface seems almost-but-not-quite slippery, in the deceptive way the skin of a snake looks moist. The undulating gesture and implied movement suggest a living presence of some sort, extending a snail-like appendage to propel itself through space and time. We know, on a rational level, that this is a man-made ceramic object but the overall effect is that of an ambiguously animated, organic presence. The form is revisited in two of the most recent works from the exhibition at the Beeville Art Museum, THE ENDLESS CYCLE OF EXPECTATION - SHIFTING IDENTITY, 2003 (plate 12) and THE ENDLESS CYCLE OF EXPECTATION - ALTERED VISION, 2003 (plate 2). These works, along with THE MYSTERY OF THE SECOND BECOMING, 2003 (back cover), introduce the use of bronze casting to Chadbourne's work, a material only briefly explored in the very early 1970's. The top sections of both suggest archaic bronzes pulled from the depths of the Aegean, the patina a convincing mimic of ages-old organic matter accumulated on the metal, clearly man-made surface. The stone sections on both sculptures, though a naturally occurring material, have been quarried and carefully shaped and stacked with other sections with a clear eye for proportion, color, banding, and scale. The fact that the two ENDLESS CYCLE... works are cast from the same form adds to the monument-like, man-made, calculated nature of these pieces. Yet somehow the essence of the shared form persists: the similarly reaching, bifurcated "head", the tips delineated by color changes, the radial symmetry of the trunk-like body, the gestural movement. Again, it's possible to see the newer works as a monument of some kind to the older, but they also have a "life" and purpose of their own, wholly separate from the CARNAL FLIGHT OF THE RIPPLE FISH. As the titles of the newer works suggest, perhaps it is part of an endless cycle of "Altered Vision" and "Shifting Identities". Chadbourne doesn't consciously set out to revisit old forms, or to purposely reinvent meanings. Perhaps the whole crux of the matter is that these forms, and all of Chadbourne's work, are about continually engaging with the physical and metaphorical manifestations of lived experience.

Artistic endeavor is always a complex and, in some ways, paradoxical pursuit. The art making process is a dynamic one, yet the object created is often a static manifestation of a particular instance. While exploring the full range of human experience one is also placing somewhat arbitrary boundaries of form around the specific impulse of the moment, which is frequently ambiguous or at least sub-conscious in origin. One is constantly examining new formal relationships and perceptual subtleties while at the same time attempting to stay true to the foundational principles upon which one's work is based. The success of this attempt over time is directly proportional to the degree to which an artist operates *out of* an inherently derived set of formal and conceptual principles. Over time one might revisit certain ideas, but because time and experience accumulate, those perceptions are constantly evolving to fit changing circumstances.

Perhaps the ultimate paradox in Chadbourne's work is that despite all of the formal and philosophical complexities, there is a more fundamental level at which these works exist in a state of suspended rational judgment. They are, quite simply, what they are. All formal and philosophical analysis aside, Chadbourne has created a harmonious body of work that slips easily into the realm of the archetype. The metaphor of the artifact and the fundamental relationship between man and object extends to the viewer as well. As dimensional beings in the world we respond to these objects in unique ways, bringing our own experience and interpretation to the static form in front of us. That resonance doesn't necessarily depend on a rational articulation. Any one line of inquiry can be only a vaguely linear path in a multi-dimensional, polyvalent, complex body of work that has evolved over time and through various phases of interest, process, intention, and compulsion. As stated at the outset, looking arbitrarily at the outdoor works is a kind of convenience of the moment. But in that moment there are glimpses of the full range and depth of inquiry that form the foundation of Chadbourne's aesthetic and personal vision.

Diana Lyn Roberts
Director
The Center for Spirituality and the Arts



Plate 13 THE REMARKABLE COMPLICATIONS OF DESIRE 2002-03



Plate 14 THE FLUID GEOMETRY OF DETERMINATION 2003

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

- | | | | |
|--|---------|--|---------|
| 1. THE MYSTERY OF THE SECOND BECOMING
bronze, stoneware, concrete
74" H. 20" W. 16" D. | 1998-03 | 10. UNEASY MONUMENT TO THE FEAR OF IMPENDING TRUTH
stoneware, concrete
99½" H. 36" W. 27½" D. | 2003 |
| 2. THE REMARKABLE COMPLICATIONS OF DESIRE
stoneware, concrete
77" H. 23½" W. 17" D. | 2002-03 | 11. THE DISLOCATION OF OLD MYSTERIES
stoneware, concrete
67" H. 24" W. 19" D. | 2002-03 |
| 3. DREAM SEQUENCE - THE DECEPTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS
stoneware, stone, concrete
98" H. 24" W. 20" D. | 2003 | 12. THE ENDLESS CYCLE OF EXPECTATION - SHIFTING IDENTITY
bronze, stoneware, concrete, stone
82" H. 23" W. 19" D. | 1998-03 |
| 4. APPARITION BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES
stoneware
94½" H. 19" W. 16" D. | 2002-03 | 13. DANGEROUS MOCKERY - THE PHANTOM SURROGATE
stoneware, stone
68" H. 24½" W. 18" D. | 2003 |
| 5. THE UNFORESEEN OCCURRENCE OF PERMANENT INSTABILITY
stoneware, concrete
91" H. 28½" W. 22½" D. | 2003 | 14. THE UNCONTROLLABLE DENSITY OF ASPIRATION
stoneware, stone
97½" H. 14" W. 14" D. | 2003 |
| 6. SILENT MARKER ALONG THE TORTURED PATH
stoneware
98½" H. 21" W. 14" D. | 2002-03 | 15. EXTREME GRAVITATION - THE MYTH OF COINCIDENCE
stoneware, concrete
85" H. 18" W. 15" D. | 2003 |
| 7. THE UNSTABLE TRUTH OF INEVITABILITY
stoneware, stone
77½" H. 24" W. 17" D. | 2003 | 16. THE INADVERTENT REDEMPTION OF UNFULFILLED PROMISE
stoneware, concrete
90" H. 19" W. 15" D. | 2003 |
| 8. THE UNHOLY MECHANICS OF DISSONANCE AND LUST
stoneware, stone, concrete
124" H. 15" W. 15" D. | 2002-03 | 17. THE ENDESS CYCLE OF EXPECTATION - ALTERED VISION
bronze, stoneware, stone
76" H. 23" W. 19" D. | 1998-03 |
| 9. THE FLUID GEOMETRY OF DETERMINATION
stoneware
77" H. 28" W. 16" D. | 2003 | | |

OLDER WORKS CITED IN TEXT

- | | | | |
|--|------|---|---------|
| 1. UNTITLED
salt-fired stoneware
30" H. (approx.)
Collection of the Artist | 1972 | 6. DEATH SONG OF THE ANGEL
stoneware
47" H. (2 parts)
Destroyed | 1979 |
| 2. CARNAL FLIGHT OF THE RIPPLE FISH
salt-fired stoneware
30" H. 18" W. 13" D.
Collection of the Artist | 1972 | 7. THE DARK AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT
stoneware
108" H. (3 parts)
Collection of the Artist | 1982 |
| 3. DRIED, BUT ACHING AND WHISTLING AROUND THE CORNER
salt-fired stoneware
60" H. (approx.)
Collection of Keith Evans, Dallas, Texas | 1973 | 8. MONUMENT TO THE FRAGILITY OF HISTORY
acrylic and creosote on earthenware and concrete
97" H. 18" W. 18" D.
Collection of Andres and Rebecca Andujar, San Antonio, Texas | 1984-85 |
| 4. OCCURRENCE IN THE PATH OF AMBITION
stoneware
24" H. 36" W. 27" D.
Private Collection, Dallas, Texas | 1976 | 9. THE MISGUIDED REFUGE OF BLIND FAITH
stoneware and concrete
66" H. 24" W. 24" D.
Collection of Keith Kaiser and Diann Bartek, San Antonio, Texas | 1982-93 |
| 5. THE GREAT ENIGMA OF DEMON PRAYER
stoneware
58" H. 21" W. 18" D.
Collection of the Artist | 1976 | 10. AMBIGUOUS CONJUNCTION – THE MYTH OF ANTICIPATION
earthenware, stoneware and concrete
84" H. 18" W. 18" D.
Collection of Neel and Allison Hays Lane, San Antonio, Texas | 1992-93 |

DANVILLE CHADBOURNE

born Bryan, Texas 1949

BFA 1971 Sam Houston State University

MFA 1973 Texas Tech University

SELECTED ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2003 Beeville Art Museum, Beeville, Texas (catalogue)
Coastal Bend College, Beeville, Texas
Rockport Center for the Arts, Rockport, Texas
- 2002 Harris Gallery, Houston, Texas
Buddy Holly Center, Lubbock, Texas
- 2001 Finesilver Block, San Antonio, Texas
Joan Grona Gallery, San Antonio, Texas
San Antonio College, San Antonio, Texas
- 2000 Instituto Cultural Mexicano, San Antonio, Texas (catalogue)
- 1998 Michael Zarou Gallery, New Orleans, Louisiana
Local Color Gallery, College Station, Texas
Ute Stebich Gallery, Lenox, Massachusetts
- 1996 The Artists' Gallery, San Antonio, Texas
San Antonio Art League, Artist of the Year,
San Antonio, Texas (catalogue)
Midland College, Midland, Texas
- 1995 Parchman Stremmel Galleries, San Antonio, Texas
Bee County College, Beeville, Texas
Judy Youens Gallery, Houston, Texas
- 1994 The Art Center, Waco, Texas (catalogue)
Moody Library, Baylor University, Waco, Texas
- 1993 Peyton-Wright Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico
The Gallery at Los Patios, San Antonio, Texas
- 1991 Tarrant County Junior College, Fort Worth, Texas
- 1990 Mexic-Arte Museum, Austin, Texas
Milagros Contemporary Art, San Antonio, Texas (catalogue)
Baylor University, Waco, Texas
North Harris County College, Houston, Texas
- 1989 Read-Stremmel Gallery, San Antonio, Texas
- 1988 Sweetbriar College, Sweetbriar, Virginia
Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas
Bright Shawl Gallery, San Antonio, Texas
- 1986 Wallace-Wentworth Gallery, Washington, D. C.
Jim Cotter Gallery, Vail, Colorado
- 1985 Texas A&I University, Kingsville, Texas
St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas
- 1984 Wallace-Wentworth Gallery, Washington, D. C. (catalogue)
Koehler Cultural Center, San Antonio, Texas
Carver Community Cultural Center, San Antonio, Texas
University of Houston - Clear Lake, Houston, Texas
- 1982 Objects Gallery, San Antonio, Texas
The Artisan Gallery, Wilmette, Illinois
- 1981 Front Room Gallery, Dallas, Texas
Koehler Cultural Center, San Antonio, Texas
- 1980 St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas
- 1979 Front Room Gallery, Dallas, Texas
Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas
- 1977 "Relics", Mind's Eye Gallery, Houston, Texas
- 1976 "Virgin Wings", Southwest Craft Center Gallery, San Antonio, Texas
- 1975 "Snow on the Mountain of Sen", Olla Pod Gallery, Dallas, Texas
- 1974 "Lizard Wheels", Uptown Gallery, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
"Bones of the Wizard", Olla Pod Gallery, Dallas, Texas
- 1973 "Whisper Snakes of Yesteryear", Southwest Craft Center Gallery, San Antonio, Texas
- 1998 "Transformation", Southwest School of Art and Craft,
San Antonio, Texas (catalogue)
"Bucking the Texas Myth III", Dougherty Arts Center,
Austin, Texas (catalogue)
"Homecoming", Landmark Arts, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas
"68th Annual Artists Exhibition", San Antonio Art League Museum, San Antonio, Texas, Sponsors Award
- 1997 "Simple Materials", Three Person Exhibition, Duracell Corporate Gallery,
Bethel, Connecticut
"Ceramic Sculpture", Reborn Center for Spirituality and Art,
San Antonio, Texas
- 1995 "The State of the State", San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, Texas
"Wood Works", Galveston Arts Center, Galveston, Texas
PASO '95 Outdoor Sculpture Exhibition, Palo Alto College,
San Antonio, Texas
"Now and Then: Ten Years Later", Blue Star Art Space, San Antonio, Texas
- 1994 "In Wood", Martin-Rathburn Gallery, San Antonio, Texas
Jansen-Perez Gallery, San Antonio, Texas
PASO '94 Outdoor Sculpture Exhibition, Palo Alto College,
San Antonio, Texas
- 1993 "Senses Beyond Sight", D-Art Visual Art Center, Dallas, Texas; Grace
Cultural Center, Abilene, Texas (catalogue)
- 1992 Three Person Exhibition, Sandy Carson Gallery, Denver, Colorado
Two Person Exhibition, Beverly Gordon Gallery, Dallas, Texas
- 1991 Austin Annual '91, Mexic-Arte Museum, Austin, Texas
Peyton-Wright Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico
- 1990 "The Cross", Lynn Goode Gallery, Houston, Texas
- 1989 "New Art: Paintings from New York, Texas, California", Laguna Gloria
Museum, Austin, Texas (catalogue) Included in Touring Citation Exhibition
- 1987 6th Texas Sculpture Symposium, San Antonio, Texas
10th Anniversary Exhibition, Austin Visual Arts Association, Austin, Texas
- 1986 The Blue Star Exhibition, Contemporary Art for San Antonio,
San Antonio, Texas (catalogue)
"Other Gods; Containers of Belief", Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse,
New York; Fonda del Sol, Washington, D.C.; New Orleans Contemporary
Art Center, New Orleans, Louisiana; Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery,
Los Angeles, California (catalogue)
- 1985 "Texas Visions - A Celebration of Texas Artists", Art League of Houston,
Houston, Texas (catalogue) Included in Selected Traveling Exhibition
Two Person Exhibition, Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas
- 1984 Two Person Exhibition, Artist's Alliance Gallery, San Antonio, Texas
- 1983 Survey of Texas Ceramics, Objects Gallery, San Antonio, Texas
"Poetry: Visual and Verbal", Artist's Alliance Gallery, San Antonio, Texas
"Texas Clay", Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas;
University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, Texas
- 1983 1983 Amarillo Competition, Amarillo Art Center, Amarillo, Texas
- 1982 "Six Contemporary Artists", Galveston Arts Center Gallery, Galveston, Texas
"Sculpture on the Green", Connemara Conservancy Foundation,
Dallas, Texas
"Expo de San Antonio en Mexico", Polyforum Siquieros, Mexico, D.F.
"Myth Makers and Story Tellers", Patrick Gallery, Austin, Texas
- 1981 "The Earthbound Object", Lufkin Creative Arts Center, Lufkin, Texas
"Texas Crafts - New Expressions", Dallas Museum of Fine Arts,
Dallas, Texas (catalogue)
- 1980 Two Person Exhibition, Clay and Fiber Gallery, Taos, New Mexico
Two Person Exhibition, San Antonio Art Institute, San Antonio, Texas
6th Annual Outdoor Invitational Sculpture Show, Shidoni Gallery,
Tesuque, New Mexico
- 1979 13th Annual Southwestern Area Art Show, Museum of the Southwest,
Midland, Texas (First Award in Sculpture)
- 1978 Two Person Exhibition, University of Texas at the Permian Basin,
Odessa, Texas
- 1977 Two Person Exhibition, Odessa College, Odessa, Texas
- 1976 The Southwest - Tarrant County Annual, Fort Worth Art Museum,
Fort Worth, Texas
"Primary Smiles", Two Person Exhibition, Creative Craft Alliance,
Shreveport, Louisiana
- 1975 "Craft as Art in Texas", Laguna Gloria Museum, Austin, Texas
Two Person Exhibition, Austin College, Sherman, Texas
- 1974 16th Texas Crafts Exhibition, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas, Texas
- 1973 South Central Region Crafts Exhibition, Denver Art Museum, Denver,
Colorado Included in Traveling Exhibition

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2003 "Sculptors' Dominion Invitational", Texas Society of Sculptors,
San Antonio, Texas
73rd Annual Exhibition, San Antonio Art League Museum,
San Antonio, Texas Patron Award
- 2002 Oso Bay Biennial XII, Three Person Exhibition,
Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi, Texas
72nd Annual Exhibition, San Antonio Art League Museum,
San Antonio, Texas Sponsors Award
- 2000 "Earth & Fire: Contemporary Ceramic Sculpture",
San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, Texas
"Visions from the Vault: Contemporary Selections",
San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, Texas
- 1999 "Third Coast / Art '99", Bergin-Gambill Gallery, Rockport, Texas



Plate 15 THE INADVERTENT REDEMPTION OF UNFULFILLED PROMISE 2003
Back Cover THE MYSTERY OF THE SECOND BECOMING 1998-03



BEEVILLE ART MUSEUM