PERSPECTIVES ON EXCELLENCE:
A Century of Teaching and Learning at Western Washington University

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WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Bellingham, Washington
The Outdoor Sculpture Collection: The Development of Public Art at Western

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The context and rationale for Western's Outdoor Sculpture Collection was established during the first 50 years of the university while its formation and critical recognition came within the last 50 years. Its history actually begins outside the walls of the university.

Fountains Reign: 1890s through 1950s

From the late 1890s through the 1950s, art works in urban areas of Washington State were privately commissioned by non-profit corporations or citizen groups. World fairs, such as the Alaska-Yukon Pacific Exposition (Seattle, 1909), also occasionally inspired city agencies; for example, the Seattle Street and Sewer Department decorated a watering fountain with James Wehn's "Bust of Chief Seattle." A few sculptures commemorating statesmen and fallen heroes, architectural decoration of ornamental cornices and high relief friezes also brought public art to its citizens but not on any grand scale.

Two important precedents for Western's idea of public art were a decorative fountain and an emerging sculptor. Seattle's first public fountain (a private gift from Father Francis Prefontaine) to beautify the city was placed at the edge of Pioneer Square; it was designed in 1926 by Carl F.
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Gould. Two years later, Gould, one of Seattle's leading architects, would become the designer for Western's Wilson Library. The second important example for Western's future was not a type of art but the artist himself—James Fitzgerald (1910-1973).

While the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s enabled artists to teach and to create art works for public buildings, this federal program in the Northwest was primarily oriented to painters (for example, Mark Tobey, Morris Graves and Guy Anderson). Although a painter, James Fitzgerald was not on the WPA payroll. In fact, his first public art commission was sculptural reliefs for the east end of the Mercer Island tunnel to the first Lake Washington floating bridge. Paid by the State Highway Department to be a foreman on the bridge, Fitzgerald also executed the decorative motifs, "The Portal of Pacific Reliefs" (1938).

Fitzgerald remained in the forefront when Seattle took one of its major steps in acquiring art. In 1958 the Seattle Public Library board of trustees gave Fitzgerald his second commission, a decorative sculptural screen of sand cast bronze, enamel on brass, and fused layers of colored glass; it was finished in 1960 with the assistance of his wife, Margaret Tomkins. The other public library commissions were George Tsutakawa's first fountain and Ray Jensen's bronze figures.

One year earlier at Western, the board of trustees had hired the architect Paul Thiry to design Haggard Hall and to become supervisor of the university's first sketch for a master plan. Western's board, recently expanded by Governor Albert D. Rosellini, saw in this architect the opportunity to respond to the governor's charge to build new kinds of institutions. Therefore, board members—Don Eldridge, Marshall Forrest, Bernice Hall, Joseph Pemberton and David Sprague—made a general declaration concerning the campus environment. They believed that since art was worth teaching and in the curriculum, Western should have the best examples of architecture and art to enrich the student experience. Early in 1958, Thiry revised his plans, broke ground in the fall of that same year, and by June 1960, had completed his job. While the merits of Haggard Hall can be debated by architectural historians, it was Thiry's incorporation of art associated with the building which put Western on the map of public art. With the knowledge and full support of the board, Thiry commissioned James Fitzgerald's first fountain (1957-59); he did not necessarily call it art but simply put it under the general plumbing contract as part of the
“waterworks." Working on Higgenson Hall at the same time, Thiry finally decided to place the Fitzgerald fountain between the formal entrances of Haggard Hall and Wilson Library. He also had his firm design reliefs on Haggard Hall's columns and exterior panels framing the building.

James Fitzgerald had obtained a degree in architecture from the University of Washington in 1935. Although he began his career in the late 1930s as a painter and assistant to Thomas Hart Benton in Kansas City, Fitzgerald did not begin to devote himself to sculpture until the 1950s. In his designs for the Mercer Island Bridge Tunnel, he referred to Seattle's role as a link between the United States and Asia by carving in relief a whale flanked by a Northwest Indian motif with an eagle and an Oriental motif with a dragon. For Western's first public sculpture, Fitzgerald created a fountain symbolizing the rain forest of the Olympic peninsula. Reflecting the general science program in Haggard Hall, he interpreted the process of nature at work: a tall, vertical element weathered by wind and rain. Observant of geographical location, he also placed in the pool a horizontal element incorporating shapes reminiscent of Asian calligraphy and architectural details.

In Paul Thiry's reliefs on Haggard Hall, Northwest Coast Indian motifs of clouds, mountains, sea and animals predominate. Here, Thiry and his assistant, Dale Cox, tested the reliefs which he would use as designs two years later at Seattle Center for the World's Fair. His cast concrete fountains for the southwest and northwest sides of the Seattle Coliseum and its perimeter have low relief designs with these same motifs.

The idea of Seattle's second World's Fair had been born in the mid-1950s. By 1962, the city, through donations from private citizens, the World's Fair Corporation, and local and federal sources had accepted gifts of sculpture and paintings and had commissioned fountains and murals. While the Fair can be touted as a milestone for public art in Seattle, Western's role as a provider for a work place for artists was already born. The board of trustees had set the tone.

James Fitzgerald's 1961 "Fountain of the Northwest" (gift of Catherine Gould Chism) in the courtyard of Seattle Center's Intiman Playhouse has been hailed as one of his finest, but Western's example is his first sculptural fountain. Second in scale, it remains unique, since the Center's fountain is a duplicate of one Fitzgerald made for Princeton University. Fitzgerald would continue to create three smaller sculptural fountains for
downtown Seattle in the mid-1960s and his largest, though without his characteristic craggy and eroding shapes, for the waterfront before his death in 1973.

Fitzgerald's "Rain Forest" fountain was placed on campus prior to Western becoming a state college in 1961. Comments on the Fitzgerald work in *The Collegian* reflect more what some felt about changes at the school than on the sculptural fountain itself. In May 1960, *The Collegian* showed a detail of "Rain Forest" with the caption, "Like Rain Forest—Misshapen or Misinterpreted." The lead article was titled, "A Crash Program for Intellectuality?..." By the first of July, "Rain Forest" was on the cover with the headlines more explicit: "For an Old Campus, the New Look." This article detailed the fall's new humanities program incorporating art, literature, history, music, philosophy and history of science; a new honor's program and "new science" in the new building of Haggard Hall. By January 1961, "intellectual" capacity had indeed increased when the student reporter compared Fitzgerald's fountain to a fertility or rain god. By fall 1962, the caption under the photograph of the fountain with students at its edge simply read, "a local conversation piece."

From Exterior Decoration to Totemic Forms: The Early 1960s

At the time of the Seattle World's Fair, another architect who came to Western and influenced its sculpture collection was Fred Bassetti (b. 1917). With the design of the Ridgeway complex under way (1961-65), Bassetti hired Richard Haag as landscape designer and rehired Douglas Bennett who already had been the interior designer for the Viking Union. Haag argued for retaining the natural foliage and terrain as close to the dormitories as possible; he and Bassetti also conceived of placing small animals in this habitat. In 1962 they commissioned Noel Osheroff (b.1929), a ceramicist who had just worked at Central Washington University and who was interested in an ancient hollow-built clay technique, to form small animals: for example, bear on rock, raccoon up a tree, deer and fawn in ivy, owl in brush. Executed in her California yard, the clay animals were installed at Western by her husband, a concrete contractor. Speaking of them as "totems of their former occupants," Osheroff received an award for design and execution from the Seattle chapter of the American Institute of Architects
in 1964. Later in 1977, Marian Mellum (b. 1928) added to the animal menagerie with Richard Roselle, a designer at Western.

When Bassetti was asked to design the Humanities Building and Lecture Halls in 1962, he commissioned Douglas Bennett (b. 1920) to create abstract murals in the stairwells of the Humanities Building and to paint a background for one of Norman Warsinske's interior sculptural reliefs; unfortunately these murals were accidentally painted over in the 1990s by an outside contractor. Bennett made a successful career as an industrial and interior designer, including furniture designs.

Norman Warsinske (b. 1929) had studied journalism in Montana and jewelry making in Germany prior to receiving his degree from the University of Washington in 1958 in interior design and sculpture. His first sculpture was a steel screen for the University Unitarian Church in Seattle (1959), designed by architect Paul Kirk. In commissioning him four years later, architect Bassetti, adhering to the unfashionable Beaux Arts attitude of decorating buildings, told Warsinske to create art around the two campus buildings, humanities and the lecture halls. Warsinske identified the corners of the building and the main entrances with bronze reliefs of hex signs and a tower-like, freestanding sculpture. Thinking more in terms of architectural surfaces, he cut into the sculptural tower with a torch to open it up to faceted light; he allowed the wall reliefs to grow as if vines. Warsinske also created a smaller pedestal sculpture, “Organic Growth,” destined for a garden with fountain in the area of the present rose garden of Old Main. After Ibsen Nelson designed Fisher-Fountain, this idea was abandoned and the kinetic sculpture was placed in the Ridgeway complex. Subsequently, the small sculpture was moved to the new Visitor's Information Center in 1982, only to be stolen one year later.

In February 1963, The Collegian reported that industrial arts had grown with Western's campus, particularly with the increase of enrollment after World War II. There also were some overall changes in the late 1940s; while woodworking and metals remained on the first floor, the art department took over a portion of the upper floor in the new building. Perhaps, it was no surprise, then, that student Steve Tibbetts (1943-1983) began to work in 1963 on a sculpture made out of 1948-1953 car parts. After Tibbetts won second place in a student competition during his senior year, H. A. "Barney" Goltz, outgoing director of student activities, conferred with the Associated Students who purchased Tibbett's work, "Scepter" (1966). The totemic
sculpture was erected in front of the Humanities Lecture Hall by Walt Wegner, the head of the art department's sculpture area, several months later after Tibbett's graduation.

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The Sky Opens Up: The Late 1960s

The Tibbett's installation was the only interlude in the various architects' domination of public art in the 1960s. Perhaps, the most important architect in terms of selecting art for Western was Ibsen Nelson who came to design Bond Hall (1967) and the addition to Miller Hall (1968). For the interiors he chose: drawings of historic Bellingham houses by fellow architect Victor Steinbrueck; a series of abstract waterfall paintings by Nelson's associate Laurie Olin; a large scale painting by the second generation Northwest School painter and established Skagit Valley artist Richard Gilkey, who was born in Bellingham; a mural by the younger Charles Kraft; small ceramic objects by the funky ceramicist Ken Hendry who was associated with Pottery Northwest in Seattle; and, for the exterior, the stenciled ceramic tiles on the porch floor of Miller Hall by the emerging Seattle artist Richard Beyer. Later, in a 1978 letter to Goltz, Nelson spoke of the exciting leadership and general inspiring times of the 1960s in shaping the campus. "I recall for example neither the math nor physics faculty under Ray McLeod ever questioned leaving space unfinished while funds were being reserved for art." But, it was Nelson's selection of Isamu Noguchi for a work in Red Square, which pushed Western's sculpture collection into the national spotlight.

Nelson knew Noguchi (1904-1988) who was in Seattle in connection with one of the first National Endowment's Art in Public Places projects: Noguchi's "Black Sun" installed in the summer of 1969 in front of the Seattle Art Museum, Volunteer Park. Inquiring whether Noguchi might be interested in creating a fountain for Red Square, Nelson allowed him to produce a design for the water jets in Fisher Fountain which Nelson was planning. Noguchi suggested "a marvelously intricate, yet simple, pattern of a symmetrically arranged square of lotus head jets"; but Noguchi's design was aborted due to funding of the complicated piece. On his various trips from New York to Tokyo, Noguchi would stop over and walk the square with Nelson. Finally, Nelson approached Noguchi to see if he wanted to design a sculpture in connection with construction of Miller Hall. Already
recognized for his sculptural gardens in the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris (1956-58), his sunken garden for the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University (1966), and his exterior steel sculpture for the Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo (1968), among numerous other projects, Noguchi became Western's first internationally acclaimed artist. One of the great 20th century masters, he gave Western its first large-scale sculpture. While the engineering drawing for Noguchi's "Skyviewing Sculpture" was executed by the architectural firm of Buckminster Fuller and Sadao, Noguchi had a strong hand in all the decisions, including the base and the location for his work in Red Square. Noguchi wanted to tie his sculpture not only to the site but also "to the awareness of outer space as an extension of its significance, much as one finds in very early observatories." The dedication of "Skyviewing Sculpture" in early December 1969 was documented by the Northwest photographer Mary Randlett. As the story goes, the crowd cheered when the crane operator placed the sculpture on the three pegs, the initial base. By 1970, Noguchi had requested that Randlett's commissioned photographs of the fabrication in Mountlake Terrace, of the transportation up I-5, and of the installation and dedication be sent to New York for his exhibition at the Cordier and Eckstrom Gallery.

By taking this step of commissioning Noguchi, Western placed itself also in the forefront of public art. Although the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities had been established in 1964 and the NEA public art program in 1967, the nation's first two art works were not installed until 1969: Alexander Calder's stabile in Grand Rapids and Noguchi's "Black Sun" in Volunteer Park. By this time both the state (1961) and Seattle (1955-1969) had arts commissions which acted primarily as advisory bodies since they did not have budgets. In 1967, King County created the first public county arts commission and was the first to accept a one percent-for-art ordinance in early 1973. In 1971, the Municipal Arts Commission of Seattle, with Virginia Wright as one of its members, was recreated with its first budget and a one percent-for-art law by summer 1973. The state was the last to follow with a one-half percent law in 1974. Yet, at Western the board of trustees had already instructed Thiry; they had approved his use of building funds for "waterworks" featuring Fitzgerald's "Rain Forest" (completed 1959, installed 1960) and Bassetti's art allowance from the Humanities Building for Warsinske's " Totem" and reliefs (1962).
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Art of the Environment: The Early 1970s

By November 1969, Western had won the State Arts Award from Governor Dan Evans for its "high quality of campus planning, architecture and sympathetic incorporation of works of art as integral parts of the plan." In March 1970, at one of its meetings, the American Institute of Architects' chapter in Seattle displayed photographs of the art recently purchased by Ibsen Nelson for Western. At that time, Goltz, director of the office of campus planning since 1966, published a statement for the meeting. With intimate knowledge of the 1957 charge by the board of trustees, Goltz prepared "Art and Campus Development at Western Washington State College." Part of his statement was the following:

... Western Washington State College recognizes the impact of the environment on man and seeks the creation of a campus environment conducive to learning, contributive to aspiration and instructive to human needs. Space itself should become an experience, color and materials should play upon perceptions and moods; and integral works of art should be a part of every student's general education.

... [T]he regular establishment of project art allowances for capital projects is a positive and important implementation of this statement.

This policy is consistent with the broad objectives of the state of Washington and the federal government to include works of art as a part of every major capital project. It is consistent with the objectives of the college and with the needs of the people. It places art not only in galleries, but also in the paths and mainstreams of students and faculty.

In mid December 1970, Goltz sent a memo to various campus officials requesting comment on the first written document for the procedures which had been used so far to select art associated with allowances from capital projects; the goals and procedures also had been expressed in the "Long Range Plan for WWSC" (August 1970). For the first time, a special Art Acquisition Review Committee (later shortened to Art Acquisition Committee) was officially designated: the provost as chair, college architect, art department chairman, and campus environment committee chairman.
The college architect would be the liaison between the AARC and the capital project art committees, generally consisting of a project architect, staff architect, the college art curator, and project program chairman. In the memo, the project architect of each capital project was given certain responsibilities. For the future of the Outdoor Sculpture Collection, the most important response came from Larry Hanson, a member of the art faculty and college art curator. He speedily sent a memo arguing that the draft “puts way too much decision making powers in the hands of the architects.” Typical of the turning tide in public art, he believed that the architect’s role should be strictly advisory and that the decisions concerning appropriate sites, general concepts, and potential artists should be decided by the committee of the whole. In retrospect, Goltz agreed that at first “we relied heavily on the architects and their connections with the art world.”

One year later, provost Frederick Sargent had extended the capital funding procedures to other possible acquisition sources, such as gifts, competitions, and class projects.

Perhaps, what precipitated Provost Sargent’s effort to extend the art acquisition procedures to other sources besides capital funding was the fact that the Virginia Wright Fund of Seattle had indicated interest in Western. In 1968, Prentice Bloedel, Vancouver and Bellingham lumber magnate, had given his daughter, Virginia, funds to benefit institutions in Washington State. Ibsen Nelson had invited Virginia Wright to the Noguchi dedication in December 1969. On March 15, 1970, the Sunday edition of the Seattle Times reported the Virginia Wright Fund and quoted Virginia Wright as admiring the incorporation of art as an integral part of the environment on a “magic campus” which she had recently visited. Soon after the newspaper article, President Charles J. Flora in a letter to Wright acknowledged her comments and expressed the university’s great appreciation of the fund’s interest. In anticipation of recommendations, he assured her that a committee, all working with various project architects, was in place: Goltz, campus planning director; Robert Aegerter, college architect; David Marsh, art department chair; and R D. Brown, academic dean.

In mid January 1971, Goltz reviewed with Flora ongoing developments between Nelson, Hanson and Wright. Goltz “indicated that the Virginia Wright Fund is prepared to recognize [Western] ... as one of the few capable locations where there is evidence that the institutions are prepared to maximize these gifts in terms of a philosophy towards art, commitment to
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art as an integral part of the campus environment and capability of proper display and care of [these] gifts of art.” Furthermore, Western with its new procedures could meet one of the stipulations that a committee of knowledgeable people from the university make the decisions rather than leave the selection solely in the hands of the architect. Goltz informed the president that, through Hanson, Wright had been kept abreast of Western’s history, interest and capabilities. In January 1970, Hanson had showcased Virginia and Bagley Wright’s collection in “Painting of the Sixties” at the Western Gallery. Next, he had arranged the fund’s first loan of a sculpture by David Smith, one of America’s great masters of the 1950s and 1960s. Smith’s “Fifteen Planes” (1958) would be used in a Western Gallery exhibition, “Contemporary Sculpture from Northwest Collections” in the spring of 1971; it remained on view at Western until late 1971.

The Virginia Wright Fund was also active in the region. It matched a NEA grant to provide a kinetic sculpture by George Rickey at the Whatcom Museum of History and Art. In spring 1970 while Rickey was having a one-person exhibition at the Whatcom Museum, he also had been the distinguished juror for the Western Gallery’s 7th annual exhibition of small sculpture and drawings, an ongoing national exhibition series at the university since 1963. His lecture on “Kinetic Art” at the Whatcom Museum was cosponsored by the university’s artist and lecture series and the Western Gallery. In late 1971, the Virginia Wright Fund also made a gift of “Broken Obelisk” (first of an edition of three) by acclaimed painter Barnett Newman to the University of Washington. But for Western, the excitement came one year later when the Western Front quoted Henry Klein, architect for the addition to the Music Building, saying that the plaza would have a new sculpture. By late 1973, the board of trustees had accepted the Virginia Wright Fund’s first gift, a work by Mark di Suvero. An interlude would follow.

About the same time, when Western was lauded by the American Institute of Architects and Virginia Wright had found Western’s campus “magical,” the Western Front reported the following news: the founding of Huxley College Ecology Week, the steam plant expansion, the Kent State University May Day massacres, and a multi-arts festival in which an air-filled tent took over one-third of Red Square. At the same time as the David Smith loan from the Virginia Wright Fund, Western had a Continuing Symposium on the Arts (May 1971) which would prove significant for the
Outdoor Sculpture Collection. Besides the avant-garde musicians, Robert Morris and Yvonne Rainer were invited to give a performance. Morris, well known for his art and writings, also gave a lecture on "Disappearing Art" and later joined a panel on "Disorder and New Ideas of Order in the Arts."

Aware that he had one of the best contemporary artists at the right time, Hanson as college art curator asked Morris (b. 1931) to consider creating a piece for Western. In 1968-69, Morris had presented an astonishing work for a New York gallery—an art work on the floor simulating the earth and the principles of order/disorder. In 1969, in front of the Corcoran Gallery of Art in the nation's capital, he had created a temporary work based on steam emitting from the earth. He later participated in the historic "Earthworks" exhibition at Cornell University. Based on the burgeoning ecology and earthworks movement and on the fact that Morris' budget would come from Western's construction of the steam plant, it was natural for him to propose "Untitled (Steam Piece for Bellingham)." Provost Frederick Sargent, called the art acquisition committee together to consider their first project.

In anticipation of both the Di Suvero and the Morris sculptures, Hanson would make one of his best statements in a December 1972 memo to Goltz:

Certainly every work of art that will ever come to this campus will provoke positive and negative responses—that is in the nature of art ... They are challenging works (that is much of their value) and I expect to be on the firing line when the initial reactions occur.

This is probably the hardest part of this memo to accept but I must point out that there are two types of reactions to a work of art—the informed and the uninformed (and they can be either wide apart or, interestingly, very close). When I criticize a work of art I do so from the point of view of a professional who has spent his entire adult life thinking about, studying, worrying over, and trying to understand the art of our time. I do this with the same kind of passion and detachment (this is possible, as contradictory as it seems) that I assume other professionals bring to their fields.
This professionalism puts me in a strange position. On the other hand I want, passionately, to see the Arts (all of them) flourish at Western and want, in particular, to see your policy of acquiring works of merit fulfilled here. I agree entirely with your idea that these "things" are an important part of the student's education ... I would much rather see that money be spent on works of high quality, especially when I contemplate the fact most of the pieces acquired will adorn our campus for a long time (for ever?) and prove to be a source of pride or embarrassment to future Western generations.

There are educated "experts" in the field of art whose job it is to speculate on qualitative value from a position of broad knowledge of the arts. They will make mistakes ... However, a professional has a greater chance of predicting value than one who has only a cursory attachment to the arts. Even those of us who have dedicated our professional lives to art disagree, often violently, about individual pieces but we do so from a position of educated guesses.

Typical of the quality Western was seeking, Robert Morris was awarded, at the same time, the NEA's third Art in Public Places commission for a land art piece in Grand Rapids. But, with completion of the steam plant and pipelines to Fairhaven College in 1974, Western received one of Morris' most famous land art sculptures.

In 1994, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York requested permission to borrow Western's steam piece for his retrospective exhibition. With great aplomb, Western's Physical Plant personnel "loaned" the magic formula, but the steam piece did not achieve the success Western's version enjoys due to the lack of Northwest terrain and environment. However, "Untitled (Steam Piece for Bellingham)" received the highest praise awarded by art scholars and critics; it was lavishly spread across the inside back cover of the Guggenheim's major museum catalogue.

In the meantime at the north end of campus, art allowances from the addition to Wilson Library (1970-73) gave Bassetti a chance to make several proposals. Besides summoning six art students to provide drawings, prints, paintings and small scale sculpture for the interior, he nominated himself for a commission at the south entrance and Richard Beyer (b. 1925) at the north entrance. Beyer had already been working at Western: the ceramic
tiles "Einstein and the Crows" for the Miller portico (1970) and the sculpted brick work for the base of the Noguchi (1969). With a strong background in literature, history, education and economics, Beyer chose to emphasize the bond between man and nature in a changing world. Carved on the front lawn of Old Main, "The Man Who Used to Hunt Cougars for Bounty" (1972) has a particular resonance in the 1990s with more cougars reported on the move due to suburban development. Beyer would become one of the most popular as well as controversial sculptors in the city of Seattle collection in the late 1970s and 1980s.

The fact that Bassetti, the architect, had given himself a commission did not go unnoticed in the region. Argus, a Seattle weekly, berated him for Western's commission as well as for his future one at his Seattle Federal Office Building. Bassetti chose to relate his work to the Noguchi sculpture just across Red Square. As did an earlier work by the sculptor Harold Balazs for Seattle Pacific University Library (1962), Bassetti focused on reading and writing as his theme but also added mathematics. Instead of a relief, he created an open cube of 12 redwood beams surrounding a polyhedron incised with letters of the alphabet, numerals, and the math symbols for pi and infinity; the ends of the timber were stamped with names of authors and books in a cryptogram. In the early 1990s, due to renovation of Haggard Hall, Bassetti's work, "Alphabeta Cube," was moved to the Fairhaven College Courtyard, a site selected by the architect.

Back at south campus from 1972-74, architect Ibsen Nelson had been contracted again to design the Environmental Studies Building and Arntzen Hall. As in his commission of Beyer's ceramic tiles for the porch of Miller Hall, Nelson emphasized the relationship of art and architecture. He retained the Beaux Arts idea of decoration and proposed that a series of ceramic tiles be placed on the exterior walls of the environmental center. The tiles would have ancient life symbols, such as Egyptian scarabs and derivations of ancient Japanese art in conjunction with raku, a firing technique used by Zen monks. By the summer of 1975, the final tiles were embedded in the wall by Pottery Northwest, the same Seattle cooperative from which Nelson chose Ken Hendry in 1970.

While funding for the architect's choice for decorative wall tiles was through a grant from the Washington State Arts Commission, the art allowance from the Environmental Studies Building was used on a new proposal for the Outdoor Sculpture Collection. In an era of strong NEA
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support for artist’s workshops and public art, Larry Hanson, with approval from the administration, had applied for a federal grant to be matched by Western’s art allowance. He suggested that Lloyd Hamrol, a California artist, would work with Western students to construct a sculpture. Just as Robert Morris had conceptualized his funding source, so did Hamrol. In the spring of 1974, he proposed a structure, which would seem to rise out of the earth on a vacant site opposite the Environmental Studies Building. Hamrol wanted “Log Ramps” to be covered with sod as if the earth was opening up, but he abandoned the idea of grass on the logs for technical reasons. Nevertheless, Hamrol and the students created a sculpture which calls upon the viewer to participate literally on the Douglas fir and cedar ramps while reflecting on the natural resources, terrain and other types of ceremonial structures of the Northwest. Most importantly, Western gave Hamrol his first opportunity to create a permanent, large-scale work outdoors. No doubt recognizing the reputation of the artist and Western’s sculpture, Seattle commissioned him five years later for a work in Denny Regrade Park. Later, when Parks Hall (1981) was under construction, Hamrol was called to Western to rectify a misguided move on the part of physical plant workers to cut down the sculpture at its base. In 1983, “Log Ramps” was erected at its present site and today crowns the north end of Haskell Plaza.

With the past additions to the Outdoor Sculpture Collection, student reactions in the Western Front were quizzical until the spring and summer of 1974 when budgets were cut and a staff reduction in force was looming. The predictable complaint against the steam sculpture was that it was a waste of energy and calculations as to cost per minute ranged wildly. In his research one student was fair in comparing its operational cost to the repair of the sculptures due to student defacement. Director of planning Goltz wisely reminded the critics: “One percent of the cost of the recent steam line construction is required for use in some retainable art form.” English professor Richard Francis, soon to be one of the art acquisition committee members, replied to the student newspaper: since the steam sculpture could provide educational dialogue on the environment, why could it not also provide art education? Francis also suggested that the Associated Students should contribute to the cleaning bills when defacement occurred, particularly at feverish times of the year. By 1977, the Western Front reported the more characteristic viewpoint on the Morris steam piece: “Sculpture produces part-time beauty.”
Obviously the background of budget cuts in 1974 set up a confused situation when faculty and students returning from winter holidays saw the Mark Di Suvero sculpture. Plans for a sculpture had been indicated with the announcement of the addition to the Music Building in late summer 1972. Throughout the fall and into the spring of 1973, the Art Acquisition Committee worked with the Virginia Wright Fund, which had offered its first gift of the Di Suvero sculpture. The approval of the gift came in late 1973 by the Board of Trustees, but work did not begin until fall 1974, just after the Morris and Hamrol installations. Since an earlier work approved by the Art Acquisition Committee was unexpectedly sold, the Virginia Wright Fund rose to the occasion and commissioned Di Suvero (b. 1933) for an entirely new work for Western.

Mark Di Suvero worked on the site—the roof of the Music Building and plaza—in late November. He had wanted to do the work in the fall when students could observe, but he was required to build the sculpture first at the Physical Plant due to expected noise. Thus, Di Suvero was away from the flow of students and was forced to abandon his more direct approach of building a work at the appropriate site. When the university community returned in January 1975, after the holidays, they rushed to question or accuse Western's expenditure of funds even though the work was a gift. Confusion turned to outbursts over the scale of the Di Suvero, since no artwork to date had been this grand. As he stated in his lecture, Di Suvero had sited the sculpture where there was "a marvelous piece of sky"; furthermore, he had carefully designed the work with an open base so that this view would not be obstructed. Also, students could not grasp the idea that an artist, who had found his materials at a Bellingham scrap yard, might want to use in a non-utilitarian manner the steel I-beams of modern architecture. In the same lecture, Di Suvero talked about "the toughness and rightness of steel." The final clamor occurred when a few weeks after its completion the swinging element which hung down from its center broke under pressure of the football team's playful activity. Twenty years later in an interview, Di Suvero stated that he was still satisfied with the decision not to replace the swing on his sculpture, "For Handel." He felt that the meaning of the work, a metronomic sculpture, was still interrelated with the site—for example, the plaza as actual roof of the music rooms below, the angles of the exterior stairs and the expanse of the sky.
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An exceptional artist, Di Suvero had left the United States in 1971 in protest against the Vietnam War. Immediately upon his return from working in France and at Western, he was given his first major retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Today, Di Suvero’s work is shown worldwide, and Western’s sculpture is featured in major retrospective catalogues and books on his work.

In an April 1975 issue of the Western Front, the Art Acquisition Committee, anticipating any type of controversy, announced that the Virginia Wright Fund would be placing on long-term loan a work by Tony Smith; they asked to hear any objections. The following fall, the Virginia Wright Fund generously loaned Smith’s “Wandering Rocks”; it was first installed in the Western Gallery. The art department’s request for placement in the courtyard in front of the Art Building was granted, and the Smith sculpture remained there until 1981. First educated as an architect, Tony Smith (1912-1980) began his sculpture career late in life, but he soon was nationally recognized not only for his sculpture but also for his inspiring ideas for students and fellow artists. His background of working with architectural models inspired him to develop the cube into a series of multifaceted forms which seem to unfold; yet the simple shapes remain complex with the shifting conditions of light and angles of view. At the same time at Seattle Center, the Virginia Wright Fund and the Contemporary Art Council of the Seattle Art Museum contributed matching funds towards the city commission and installation (1972-75) of the steel version of Tony Smith’s “Moses.”

The Industrial and the Natural: The Late 1970s

While the Henry Moore sculpture at Seafirst Bank (Seattle, main headquarters) is the only work by the English master (d. 1968) in the state, the Virginia Wright Fund gave to Western in 1977 a work by Anthony Caro, considered to be Moore’s brilliant successor. An assistant to Moore from 1951-53, Caro by 1960 had moved away from Moore’s figurative style, incorporating natural shapes such as animal vertebrae and rock formations. With his radical changes and choices of scrap, steel girders and industrial paint, Caro (b. 1924) was soon hailed as the most influential sculptor among young artists, especially in England and the United States. Western’s work “India” (1976) belongs to a new period in the 1970s when Caro began to
heighten the industrial history of his work, particularly the process of steel rolling mills; perhaps, his title is also a reference to England's past. When asked about the mill scale remaining on the work, Caro replied that he preferred the natural process of rain to remove it. Later, he told liberal studies professor Rodney Payton, acting chair of the Art Acquisition Committee (1979), that the work was not a pedestal piece creating an imaginary space; the work on the ground was to have a presence, a one-to-one relation with the viewer. Typical of Western, this acquisition set the precedent for owning a work by the most important sculptor, still today, in Great Britain; not until the mid-1980s did another Caro sculpture enter the regional arena (Selig Corporation Collection, Seattle).

Although the Caro sculpture was approved and installed in the late fall of 1977, the *Western Front* did not comment until early 1978. At the same time of the Caro installation, the announcement for another new work came: the Richard Serra steel sculpture. Whether decided by committee or individually based, the members of the Art Acquisition Committee made statements to the *Western Front* on both the present Caro and the future Serra. Rather than counterattacking the usual student reaction—"useless object costing money or pile of junk"—Larry Hanson declared that "the reason for having art is the same as having Shakespeare and Einstein in the library. It is important to make students think ..." Vice Provost William O'Neil, chair of the committee (1975-78), also took several positive approaches: "Art is an individual thing and I don't think we should be taking any polls." Again, "I don't know much [about art], but I thought 'India' is a credit to this institution." And, "Deciding you don't like something is as educational as deciding you do like it."

During the early spring 1976, Hanson had written to the artist Nancy Holt inquiring whether she might be interested in doing a work at Western. Holt (b. 1938), as interested in land based art as Robert Morris, came to visit in the summer 1977 and gave a lecture sponsored by the Continuing Symposium on Contemporary Art Series. Inspired by the Northwest terrain—mountains, enveloping mist, towering firs and water—she decided on a site in the south campus, adjacent but high above the Morris steam piece lying between two hills. As a sculptor, she had already created several works connecting man and nature. Besides framing vistas, she also had utilized the movement of the sun and the placement of the constellations. She returned late in 1977 to search for ancient mountain rocks. She also
asked William Dollarhide at facilities development and Willard Brown, Western's astronomer, to help her calculate angles of the sun, where the sun rises and sets on the winter solstice. Western had the telescope capable of plotting the path of the sun and identifying the true north-south axis from the North Star, Polaris. Using Ferndale mason Al Poynter, and hand quarried rocks from Red Mountain of the Lillooet Mountains near Harrison Hot Springs, B.C., she completed “Stone Enclosure: Rock Rings” during the late summer 1978. Perhaps, Holt's most dramatic work was “Sun Tunnels” (1973-76) on the western edge of the Great Salt Lake Desert (Utah), but Western's “Rock Rings” has remained one of Holt's few permanent works in her oeuvre and one of the most published. The third work in Western's collection to receive a NEA grant under Larry Hanson's pen, “Rock Rings” was also funded by an interesting group of matching sources: the Virginia Wright Fund, a special grant from the Washington State Arts Commission, the WWU art fund, and Holt's own contributions.

The second work under a NEA matching grant was Richard Serra's steel sculpture. The major “Project Intertie” was a landscaping/architectural project to tie in the older portion of campus, bordering and radiating from Red Square with newer (Environmental Sciences Building and Arntzen Hall) and future buildings to the south; a large scale sculpture was to be part of the plan. Although the decision of the NEA jury (Francis and Hanson representing Western along with four other regional art professionals) as to artist was announced in November 1977, the plan to site a new work at the foot of the steps leading to the south entrance of Red Square was curtailed by Art Acquisition Committee members in January 1979. The reason given was the high costs of rectifying the site; an old pond area on the original campus and basically a sinkhole for any multi-ton sculpture. Rather than funding the foundations under art, the committee began to rework the problem. By the late fall of 1979, Serra's sculpture was back on track but at the opposite or south end of “Project Intertie.” The new site was the top of a small grassy knoll on the end of the walkway, north of Carver Gym and the Art Building.

At the time of his commission, Richard Serra (b. 1939) already had an international reputation for his large-scale interior and exterior work; private and public sites ranged from the United States and Canada to Holland and West Germany. Described by one critic as "an artist of extraordinary sensibilities as well as one of prestidigitatorial daring," his proposal was
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the most technically challenging to date for Western. Serra's sculpture was initiated when a special run at the Bethlehem Steel Plant in Indiana was ordered. After all the steel plates were delivered to Everett and sandblasted, Serra and his crew constructed at Western one of his best-sited works. Each of the triangular openings of his sculpture echoes one of the three paths—one north and two south—which meet at his site. Concerned with the freedom to make spaces that are different in kind than architecture, Serra wanted the viewer to walk around and through his work so to come to terms with ideas of confrontation, enclosure and the union of physical action and intellectual thinking. Countering the comments to the Western Front editor, such as "Is it mail order art?" Serra himself replied: "Just walk through it ... It needs no correlative description ... and don't ask me about the cost. That's unfair. How much do buildings cost? How much do C-15 fighters in Germany cost? Cost is always a scapegoat ... You go where you can build your work." Thanks to Western's ability to rise to a challenge and the matching funds to the NEA grant from the Virginia Wright Fund, Serra named his sculpture "Wright's Triangle."

Concurrent with the Holt and Serra works, but on an entirely different scale, was the placement of a work by Mia Westerlund-Rosen (b. 1942). Recognized in Toronto and New York, she was invited first to the Vancouver Art Gallery to create in the gallery itself several works; one was "Flank II" (1978), a low-lying wedge. On extended loan from the artist, her work was first placed in the Art Building courtyard. When she came to relocate it in 1979, she had to consider the work's scale and texture in relationship to the campus landscape. In the work Westerlund-Rosen had emphasized a process which joins together the dense forms of sculpture and the surface qualities of painting. Therefore, combining the industrial—hard steel, molding capabilities of concrete, and oxidation of copper—with the natural—the curtains of trees, she chose an intimate space: the grove now to the west end of Parks Hall and the south end of the Biology Building.

Bureaucratic Developments

When the percent-for-art law was discussed at the state level and passed in 1974, H. A. "Barney" Goltz, by then a state senator, was instrumental in demonstrating Western's history and model. However, the college began to realize that while its public art program was held up as a model at the
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State level, its program also was being undermined by new authority from the state. In its revised guidelines in late 1975, the Washington State Arts Commission actually singled out Western as “having a one percent-for-art policy for years, applied to most projects.” Still a member of Western’s administration, Senator Goltz stepped forward to remind the Arts Commission that Western already had successful procedures for the same objectives for regularly making art acquisitions through capital funding. Although he knew Western was the only agency to qualify, Goltz championed local jurisdiction of internal procedures of selection, including approval by Western’s president and board of trustees. In turn, he praised the Arts Commission’s new role of developing and supporting artists and educating the public on the significance of the program.

Given the University’s need for new buildings, its leadership in initiating its own projects, and the history of its benefactors, Western did not actually participate in the state’s percent-for-art program until the construction of Parks Hall. Yet Goltz, from mid 1975 to mid 1980 made sure that Western had the executive director of the Commission’s understanding and approval of the university’s internal procedures. The basic responsibility was to keep executive director Jim Haseltine informed on all public art acquisitions and to forward those selections to the Commission for approval.

In March 1977, William O’Neil, chair of the Art Acquisition Committee, responded to the, yet again, revised state guidelines; he asked Western’s committee to update its own procedures and committee structure. He also requested two new members: William A. Gregory, dean of the College of Fine and Performing Arts, and Goltz, who served as chair from 1978-81. Two primary members, Larry Hanson and Richard Francis, forwarded statements incorporating generally accepted views of the entire committee. As with the earlier 1970 policy by Goltz, they stated that the exterior displays of art and a university gallery enhanced the intellectual environment and quality of the learning experience. They emphasized contemporary art—“the art of our times”—as important to the fabric of life and in accordance with state support of living artists in the region and nation. The exhibition of art demonstrated the university’s commitment to freedom of expression, yet in making selections they eschewed randomness; they favored variety yet threads of commonality. Reflecting on the development of the university’s collection and the need to protect 118
its reputation, the Art Acquisition Committee set forth, for the first time, the policy to ensure an adequate budget for maintenance of the collection, facilities, and a program under a director/campus curator. Realizing the need for professionalism in the field of public art, the committee refined itself and broadened its jurisdiction over all public art spaces and displays, except for the Associated Students gallery. The earlier emphasis on decisions by architects was redirected towards a committee oriented to art. By June 1979, Vice President for Academic Affairs James Talbot, had approved the revised policies and membership. The Art Acquisition Committee now consisted of the following representation until the mid 1980s: director of Western Gallery/campus curator; a member of the art department; the dean of the College of Fine and Performing Arts; one to two faculty outside the college; director of facilities development and university planning; and one year later at the request of the Arts Commission, a community representative with expertise in the arts.

**New Gifts: The 1980s**

The move to strengthen expertise on the Art Acquisition Committee was a wise one. By late 1980 Michael Croman had become the new executive director who ruled that all percent-for-art projects were to be totally administered by the Arts Commission; agencies, such as Western, could no longer develop and operate independently. The change was “due to difficulties of compliance” with the state law and, Western, again, was held up as the wise, exceptional agency. In spite of the new language, Goltz informed President Paul Olscamp that Western had prior approval to proceed with the south academic building and south campus field projects.

Given the budget crisis in the early 1980s at the university and new regulations from the Arts Commission, there was some discussion led by Richard Francis, chair of Western’s Art Acquisition Committee (1981-84) that, perhaps, the sculpture collection was complete with the possible exception of future gifts. Francis also felt that the new regulations might point to collaborative works between artists and architects.

In fact, Francis assigned the Art Acquisition Committee a new task: during May 1981 it was to be the Design Review Feasibility Committee to explore possibilities for bringing more coherence to the complex, interrelated problems of design at Western. Experts and interested members
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of the university community were invited to comment on such topics as architecture, landscape architecture, and campus facilities and services. Executive Vice President/Provost James Talbot, responded to the temporary committee's recommendation that there should be a permanent design review committee responsible for all proposals affecting the physical ambiance of the campus. By early 1982, Talbot moved to re-establish the campus architect as guardian of the master plan. The review committee was to advise the campus architect on individual projects as well as recommend policy to the president.

After this interlude in May, the Art Acquisition Committee under Richard Francis met with the South Academic Building (Parks Hall) project building committee to determine possible interior or exterior sites for art and to decide further procedures, such as a competitive selection. Soon after, Western participated in its first jury convened by the Washington State Arts Commission. Along with the other members of this special state panel, Hanson and Francis representing the university, and George Thomas, director of the Whatcom Museum who represented the community, selected its first artist under the state percent-for-art law: internationally recognized sculptor, Beverly Pepper.

While the state jury selected the artist, Western's Art Acquisition Committee chose the specific work: "Normanno Wedge" (1980). As with other works in Western's collection, this work was pivotal for Pepper. She had been one of the first to use Cor-ten steel in the 1960s but by 1976 was looking at cast iron for its symbolic possibilities. Outside Todi, Italy, she had purchased from a scrap yard a set of cast and forged iron tools, molds and cones. To her, both the material of iron and the wedge shape suggested past civilizations as well as continuity. She reworked the original tools into a metamorphic series of small sculptures for a New York show in 1979; during the summer she enlarged some works from the series into large scale columns for the Piazza di Todi.

Pepper was particularly interested in Western taking a pairing of columns; but even with the pooling of funds from the south academic building and south fields project, the funding was insufficient. With the singular "Normanno Wedge," she requested that the work be at an angle with the campus' front steps and brick walk from north to south so that the piece kept its unpredictable nature: in profile a column, frontally an altar. Although Western's prime example for the wedge shape was created
in a studio and not site-specific, Pepper was very concerned that her work fit with the campus' surrounding landscape and architecture but retain its separateness. After several discussions with committee members and alterations by physical plant staff, she was satisfied that her conditions were met when the work was installed in 1983. When the original green area was redeveloped into a plaza with the addition of the two new science buildings to the west, the landscape architects Campbell & Campbell retained and even accented the shape of the mound on which "Normanno Wedge" was originally placed. The reason for the mound was that Pepper wanted to evoke the sense of an altar. As she stated, it would give people in an urban area, such as a plaza, the chance to stop, not so much to look up physically but more so to reflect emotionally.

When the Virginia Wright Fund offered two new works in the early 1980s, the dire prediction that the collection had no future was happily dismissed. The Fund's first offer was a work by Western alumnus Robert Maki (b. 1938). When he went to work in 1981 to find a site, Maki was returning to a place which had nurtured him. Leaving behind a major influence of massive wood sculpture in his graduate studies at the University of Washington, he had begun to try a new method in planning a work: small scale, cardboard cut-outs placed outside so he could envision the restructuring by sunlight and by his own shifting viewpoint. In 1969, he had made a proposal for a project at Western which involved wavy plates of metal set in the undulating curve of a hill; with no funding for an exterior work, he followed through with a show of his wall sculptures at the Western Gallery in 1970. Just after he had won one of the most sought after commissions—the central plaza area of the new Sea-Tac International Airport (1971-73), a critic for Art in America called him the most serious, monumental sculptor in Seattle. Soon, he began a new series of studies; his first chance to enlarge one, "Curve/Diagonal," came in 1979 in a gallery exhibition in Seattle. Interested in perceptual issues, Maki had the opportunity to site this work outdoors at Western at the offer of the Virginia Wright Fund and with the acceptance of the board in April 1980. A year later, one of Western's best graduates (class of 1962) in art won the second prestigious commission in Seattle; with the Olin firm (Philadelphia) Maki began to plan the Westlake Mall Park in downtown Seattle, completed in 1989.

At the same time Maki was involved in siting his sculpture adjacent to Viking Commons, the board of trustees approved a second commission
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from the Virginia Wright Fund. Visiting Western in early 1981, Donald Judd (1928-1994) was one of the foremost artists of the post-war era; he was ideological yet versatile. Avoiding the traditional terminology even for "sculpture" and pedestal art, he held firmly to his belief that art should center on the exploration of space, scale and materials. This exploration towards a larger concept or unified whole incorporated every detail, from his own construction to furniture and architectural details of the surrounding space.

Judd first proposed a series of four concrete boxes. Besides flexibility in positioning, he wanted long distance visibility so he first looked at three potential sites: the area across from the track along 21st street; a cul-de-sac near the Parking Office; and the court in front of the Art Building. After much discussion with the Art Acquisition Committee, Judd made a second proposal dramatically different: one Cor-ten box whose exterior sides are perpendicular to the open ends but whose interior panels are on the diagonal, thereby creating an unusual sense of space. Contrary to the student reporter for the *Western Front*, who called the work "uninspiring, without human touch," Judd enlarged the students' tunnel vision. Richard Francis, chair of the Art Acquisition Committee, had been stimulated by his conversation with Judd and further explained the site: Judd's installation (1982) of his sculpture beside Edens Hall on the Old Main lawn is similar to the way ancient Greek temples, as well as Western's most classic architecture, framed mountains in the background. In this case, Judd's art work is a contemporary structure framing a regional view, the Cascade Mountains and the Canadian Coastal Range. At his death, Judd was cited in 1994 in *The New York Times* as one of the most crucial figures of the 1960s generation who redefined sculpture.

In addition to the two gifts from the Virginia Wright Fund, Annie Dillard and Gary Clevidence offered to President G. Robert Ross in 1985 a work by John Keppelman. Dillard, a distinguished writer-in-residence at Fairhaven College, had become acquainted with Keppelman, an artist with several commissions in California and Washington state. She and Clevidence had purchased for their collection a late 1970s work by the Northwest artist, who resided in Bellingham. "Garapata" (1979) comes from a series in which Keppelman was using an automatic method of cutting and folding paper to arrive at shapes for sculpture. Because these shapes suggested a sense of soaring motion, he named the work after a dramatic California setting, a
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river and canyon intersecting with the Pacific Ocean. Originally sited against an embankment of trees, the work was moved due to construction of the new Chemistry Building. Both the original site of the “ridge” and its present location at the edge of a row of trees adjacent to the south campus road allow a frontal view; thus, nature provides a wall to accent the simple shapes.

A Site Specific Symposium: The Late 1980s

As Judd eloquently and precisely insisted, siting is critical to any outdoor work. In 1984 Larry Hanson proposed to put together a summer symposium where artists and students would focus on the issue of site specific work. This was not a new topic. For example: in Seattle, Michael Heizer, one of the first earthworks artists, had created an enormous three-part boulder and concrete work down on the waterfront (1976). Also, in 1978-79 the King County Arts Commission had sponsored a nationally acclaimed symposium co-sponsored by the NEA: “Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Art.” Yet, Hanson knew his proposed topic had resonance at Western. Not only had Western taken the first step in focusing on site related work, with Morris’ steam piece and Hamrol’s “Log Ramps” in the early 1970s, but the university had continued to highlight this contemporary trend in the work of Nancy Holt (1978) and Richard Serra (1979) before planning of the national symposium in Seattle. In fact, Hanson had been chosen the sole Northwest representative among seven other artists, including Robert Morris and Beverly Pepper. No doubt to the King County Arts Commission, Hanson’s association with Western’s history and expertise on the topic was as important as his own work.

The primary topic of the King County symposium had been rehabilitation of environmentally devastated sites by artists. Hanson was proposing a variation of the theme for Western’s symposium. By selecting artists who generally used architecture and landscape as their subject matter and by narrowing selection to artists who had a history of working in unusual places, he probably knew they would solve the design problems of some of the out of the way areas of the campus. With NEA funding, three artists came to work with students in the summer 1987.

Known for his leadership in using architecture and landscape as subject and material, George Trakas (b.1944) had created sculpture as routes through woods, over gulches and as resting places at the edges of ravines and water.
The Outdoor Sculpture Collection

At Western, Trakas chose to work on the hillside behind the College of Fine and Performing Arts facing Garden Street. Alice Aycock (b. 1946), recognized for her mesmerizing complexes from underground mazes to structures rising high in the sky, chose a hidden green space framed by Carver Gym to the north, the “ridge” of trees to the south, and a parking lot to the west (now the site of the Chemistry Building and Science Education Lecture Hall). The only Northwest artist, Michael McCafferty (b. 1947) focused on the edge of campus, a cul-de-sac ringed by the Visitor Information Center, campus roads, and tennis courts.

Earlier in 1983, Trakas had worked in Seattle. Stemming from one of the landfill sites—the Sand Point Naval Station—in the Earthworks Symposium, the City of Seattle later commissioned Trakas, among others, to create works for a new park and National Oceanographic Center. While Trakas had worked there along the shoreline, he would face a greater challenge at Western. He chose to integrate into his work a dirt path behind the College of Fine and Performing Arts which was begun by students as a short cut to bypass the winding hill of Garden Street. He used cobblestones from the Nooksack River to emphasize the existing natural path and to form a foundation for his new welded steel catwalk. In responding to the more unwieldy site conditions—primarily a steep weedy hill rising to the concrete pillars of the Performing Arts Center and the obscure benches on the concrete pad at the top of the hill—Trakas weaved his path and his irregular shaped decks across the entire hill. His “Bay View Station” creates a pedestrian’s passageway between the industrial waterfront, city, and the university on the west side of campus and a viewing station for reflection on these communal connections.

Alice Aycock, as well as Morris, Holt and Trakas, had come to the critical foreground on the national art scene; they all had challenged the prevalent concept of outdoor sculpture as a unified object brought from an interior gallery to a plaza. Aycock conceived a type of architectural sculpture integrated with the landscape, which enlarged both the behavioral and perceptual patterns of the spectator. Rather than forcing the viewer to traverse the structure, as in Serra’s sculpture, sited above hers, Aycock emphasized a bird’s eye view from the top of the same hill. Inspired by Tantric drawings of the origin of the world, landscapes and various views of heaven and hell, she focused on the sacred Mt. Meru which is at the center of the universe and which has different plateaus and islands. With
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her assistants—students and Dale Gilmore from the physical plant—she transformed a two-dimensional drawing into a three-dimensional theatrical structure; she called it, "The Islands of the Rose Apple Tree Surrounded by the Oceans of the World for You, Oh My Darling." This second concrete fountain for Western also has Asian references, but with its slow, flowing water it sets up a dialogue more between the natural and the artificial or fantastic world.

Whether working in Ireland or in Washington, Northwest artist Michael McCafferty has always oriented his work towards private reflection. His idea of ceremony focuses on past associations with an area as well as on the ongoing ritual of nature. Contrary to a quiet spot, he found a lot of "intrinsic energy" at the front door of the university. Working with the premise that land is sculpture, he decided to create a series of five mounds that would echo the wind patterns moving up College Way towards Parks Hall or a student's path winding around the perimeters of the campus. McCafferty was not interested in a collaborative design of "Whirl, Wind, Wood," but he depended upon the vast knowledge of the grounds crew at the physical plant; Joe Mackie assisted him with his palette of green, white and gold plants blending with the existing lilac bushes, fir and poplar trees.

When the symposium was initiated, these were to be three temporary works. Funding in the last planning stages from the Washington State Arts Commission allowed Aycock's work to be made permanent. Through their generosity Trakas and McCafferty extended loans of their works, also built to perfection. Yet, when McCafferty participated, he knew that his earthwork's lifetime would depend not only upon nature itself but also upon changing uses of adjacent areas, such as parking lots and roads. Although a long wait between approval to find funds and a vote of acceptance by the board of trustees in 1995, the perfect partnership came to fruition; Trakas' temporary work funded by the NEA symposium was purchased for the University by the David and Kay Syre family.

New Directions

Although in the late 1970s the Art Acquisition Committee had recommended hiring a full time director/curator, this event did not occur until 1988 when Sarah Clark-Langager was named the new head of the completely renovated Western Gallery. At the same time, the dean of the
The Outdoor Sculpture Collection

College of Fine and Performing Arts, Robert Sylvester, made several changes to the Art Acquisition Committee; he became chair of the Outdoor Sculpture Collection Advisory Board and invited Virginia Wright to serve along with generally the same professionals who had previously administered: the new campus curator; Gene Vike, art department chair; two faculty members, Hanson and Francis; Peter Harris, physical plant director; and besides Wright, one other community member, George Thomas, director of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art. Later, in the fall 1996, President Karen Morse appointed the new dean, Bertil van Boer, as chair; replaced long serving faculty member Richard Francis with the appointment of Tom Schlotterback, professor emeritus; and community member George Thomas with Seattle landscape architect, Johnpaul Jones.

The new director/curator went to work to accomplish long overlooked tasks in collection management and educational programs. In recognizing that neither the Outdoor Sculpture Museum nor the Western Gallery had the encyclopedic scope of a traditional museum, she recommended to the advisory board and to Provost Sam Kelly that the name be changed to the Outdoor Sculpture Collection. Later, in the comprehensive collections policy and procedural manual (approved by President Morse and Provost Roland L. De Lorme in 1995), Clark-Langager recommended a separation between the Outdoor Sculpture Collection Advisory Board and an acquisition/deaccession committee oriented to other university collections; for example, Western Gallery collections of prints and drawings, including founding membership in and co-ownership of the Washington Art Consortium Collections of American works on paper and photographs; an international twentieth century chair collection begun by the home economics department; portable interior art works ranging from initial purchases by the early architects and occasional gifts to academic and administrative units, to the Lummi Totem Pole. At the request of Provost De Lorme the totem, “Thunderbird and Bear and Steelhead,” by Dale James (d. 1996) was acquired for the entrance to the renovated Haggard Hall, now an addition to Wilson Library.

While graffiti attacks throughout the 1980s were reduced by increasing security and lighting, Clark-Langager further addressed the societal problem by introducing educational tours during student/parent orientation periods. In addition, Clark-Langager obtained a grant (1995-96) from the National Institute of Conservation for a maintenance program on the
sculpture collection. The Syre family also generously initiated funding for future maintenance.

With national and international recognition of the Outdoor Sculpture Collection, including signage on Interstate Highway 5, the demand for tours from public school groups, Elderhostel seminars, and distinguished visitors greatly increased. In the early 1990s, Clark-Langager obtained a NEA grant for a new brochure and an audiophone tour highlighted by interviews with the artists. In progress for Western's centennial celebration is the first, full-scale catalogue on the sculpture collection.

The greatest challenge in the 1990s stemmed from dramatic changes in the physical nature of campus. The first Art Acquisition Committee wisely realized that it had a chance to make public art history by concentrating on significant sculpture spread across the entire campus rather than on small works decorating foyers and hallways. Varying in placement, whether plaza, rose garden, field, grove or corner of building, sculptural works are now located throughout campus.

The past Art Acquisition Committee and the present Outdoor Sculpture Collection Advisory Board have always consulted with the office of facilities and master planning and the physical plant in the overall design process and selection of site by the artist. In general, the campus has been open territory. For the most part, building crews have successfully moved around existing sculptural works, but occasionally conflicts have occurred. Western's historic "Rain Forest" by Fitzgerald had to be moved from its Haggard Hall site at the time of the recent renovation. Appropriately, as Western begins its second century in the year 2000, the fountain will be relocated to a new site across from Edens Hall and near Mathes Hall. The Haggard Hall renovation also brought attention again to the Thiry reliefs. Contrary to partial demolition of those at Seattle Center, Western in 1996 chose to retain the figural reliefs on existing columns; larger reliefs were stored for future relocation.

A more difficult problem with construction occurred with the Aycock site specific sculpture. Originally given permission to place her sculpture in a quiet area near Carver Gym, Aycock had to work with the curator and the office of facilities and master planning to maintain the integrity of her work when the new science complex was built. The original site for the Aycock was totally transformed from a small private glade to a major plaza. The team of artist, curator and architects have successfully maintained
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Aycock’s original intent of the public having a bird’s eye view of her work through the overhead curving walkways connecting the Chemistry and Science Education Lecture Hall and the series of steps down to the low lying sculpture. Furthermore, the theme of the origins of the world, nature and fantasy in Aycock’s sculpture has been amplified through the context of the science complex.

A Balance in the 1990s

In terms of public monies for the Outdoor Sculpture Collection, the next opportunity came approximately 10 years after the Pepper sculpture with the development of the new science complex on campus. The bureaucracy at the Washington State Arts Commission had grown, adding a hefty administrative fee. In working towards a more equal partnership with the Washington State Arts Commission, Clark-Langager addressed the issues pertinent to the selection process. In accordance with Western’s goals, the commissioning of a work of art was considered an award in excellence. Artists invited to submit their work for review had to have an established career in art, a proven record in public art, and critical review by a large arts audience. During two long sessions in 1992-93, the state selection panel, consisting of representatives from Western and of art professionals from the region and West Coast, nominated Magdalena Abakanowicz, an internationally renowned artist, as their first choice.

Having served as a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznan, Poland from 1965-1990, Abakanowicz (b.1930) lectured at Western during her first visit where her deeply rooted respect for nature was evident. Abakanowicz in the early 1960s had begun to earn an international reputation as a sculptor working with fibers, creating, for example, room size environments. In the late 1970s, when Serra and Holt were working at Western, Abakanowicz was working on her famous environment for the 1980 Venice Biennale: a cycle of 800 sculptural forms called “Embryology.” Over the years, her work ranged from sculptural studies focusing on the powerful presence of a single figure to the resonance of crowds. She often thought in terms of cycles, both emotional and physical aspects of nature. At the time of her spring 1993 visit to Western, she had stunned the art and architectural professions with her vision of an urban project, an arboreal type of architecture for Paris. After visiting the campus, the artist made two
sculpture collection. The Syre family also generously initiated funding for future maintenance.

With national and international recognition of the Outdoor Sculpture Collection, including signage on Interstate Highway 5, the demand for tours from public school groups, Elderhostel seminars, and distinguished visitors greatly increased. In the early 1990s, Clark-Langager obtained a NEA grant for a new brochure and an audiophone tour highlighted by interviews with the artists. In progress for Western’s centennial celebration is the first, full-scale catalogue on the sculpture collection.

The greatest challenge in the 1990s stemmed from dramatic changes in the physical nature of campus. The first Art Acquisition Committee wisely realized that it had a chance to make public art history by concentrating on significant sculpture spread across the entire campus rather than on small works decorating foyers and hallways. Varying in placement, whether plaza, rose garden, field, grove or corner of building, sculptural works are now located throughout campus.

The past Art Acquisition Committee and the present Outdoor Sculpture Collection Advisory Board have always consulted with the office of facilities and master planning and the physical plant in the overall design process and selection of site by the artist. In general, the campus has been open territory. For the most part, building crews have successfully moved around existing sculptural works, but occasionally conflicts have occurred. Western’s historic “Rain Forest” by Fitzgerald had to be moved from its Haggard Hall site at the time of the recent renovation. Appropriately, as Western begins its second century in the year 2000, the fountain will be relocated to a new site across from Edens Hall and near Mathes Hall. The Haggard Hall renovation also brought attention again to the Thiry reliefs. Contrary to partial demolition of those at Seattle Center, Western in 1996 chose to retain the figural reliefs on existing columns; larger reliefs were stored for future relocation.

A more difficult problem with construction occurred with the Aycock site specific sculpture. Originally given permission to place her sculpture in a quiet area near Carver Gym, Aycock had to work with the curator and the office of facilities and master planning to maintain the integrity of her work when the new science complex was built. The original site for the Aycock was totally transformed from a small private glade to a major plaza. The team of artist, curator and architects have successfully maintained
The Outdoor Sculpture Collection

As he works, Otterness accents the fact that his art can be read on many levels; consequently, there are serious and whimsical sides to his narrative work. Standing in the plaza, named after F. Murray “Red” and Betty Haskell, the viewer can see the surrounding academic buildings dedicated to science, technology and business. But the viewer can also see: (a) the past—geologic history, a primitive tool and a primary structure; (b) the present—habitation of the region and islands (both the real and miniature version), a monument to tools to further civilization, and a ceremonial sculptural structure for man and nature; (c) and the future—the intertwining of natural and man-made resources.

In their gifts to scholastic and athletic activities, the Haskells had expressed their belief in the all-round potential of students. Otterness’s proposal to install (summer 1999) an extended vignette of seven small-scale bronze figures among the sandstone boulders reinforces the idea of natural and cultural forces at work in the region today. The small scale of his vignettes calls attention to the overwhelming forces of nature—rocks—as well as the ongoing feats and the hopeful intelligence of man. Just as important to him is the goal of engaging the spectator on a more playful level: there is the view that these small scale figures lifting and pushing rocks and/or sitting and lying on a ledge are faculty and students simply working and relaxing in this university setting. As one critic noted, “In Mr. Otterness’ world, just about everything is observing and being observed ...”

To Otterness art is that public dialogue. To Bruce Nauman (b. 1941) art is a philosophical inquiry; he is interested in “investigating the possibilities of what art might be.” With this daunting attitude, Nauman came to visit Western in January 1997 as the Virginia Wright Fund was proposing another major work for the sculpture collection. Working with public juries convening at Western during 1992-93, Wright knew Nauman’s name had been placed high on a list. Honored throughout his career with major retrospectives and prestigious prizes in the arts, Nauman recently has been called the best artist of the last quarter century as well as one who will be important in the next millennium.

In thinking about what he might propose for Western’s campus, Nauman became intrigued with an area of campus south of the steps between Parks Hall and the Environmental Studies Building. His choice of site was based on several factors: (a) proximity to other works which share concerns for site specificity as well as the dichotomy of inside/outside, for
example, Holt's and Morris' sculptures; (b) the appearance of Western's "front door" staircase; (c) the potential relationship of an art work to the playing fields and eventually to the communications and multi-purpose buildings in the master plan; (d) the view towards the mountain ranges with snowcapped peaks in the Northwest environment.

With approval from the board of trustees late in 1997, Nauman constructed what appears to be a series of steps, but the structure also has qualities of a stadium or theater. The activity in a stadium or open theater takes place on the field; spectators on bleachers watch the activity below. He liked the idea that students would use his steps as seats to watch the playing fields or pedestrian and/or vehicular traffic. But he also knows that ordinary notions can be inverted or turned upside-down. Therefore, he turned his stadium-like or theatrical structure upside-down and invites the stationary viewer to perform on a stepped structure or new type of playing field where everyone can participate. Also, when the lights shine underneath the white-tinted, poured concrete form, the entire stepped shape echoes the snowcapped mountain ranges in the distance. Nauman's art work, "Stadium Piece" (1998-99), signifies students' education about how to communicate and perform in a larger environment. Typical of Nauman, he mixes up categories (inside/outside, here/there, public/private, etc.) and reopens questions, which we thought were settled.

The Future

Looking back, one particular art work tells the story. Acknowledging the contemporary emphasis on conceptual art in the 1970s, Western's Art Acquisition Committee had allowed Northwest artist Charles Scott, who had worked at Western, to place a bronze plaque on the concrete planter on the northeast edge of the Performing Arts Center plaza. Both the planter and the plaque—"Things are Seldom What They Seem" (1976)—mark a site extending from the man-made university plaza to the natural wonder of Bellingham Bay and beyond. Directly below, George Trakas again integrated art and architecture, art and nature with his "Bay View Station" (1987). In 1999, this plaza, where the Di Suvero sculpture also resides, was dedicated to the extraordinary generosity and daring vision of Virginia Wright.

Today, the world beyond Bellingham Bay recognizes Western for its wisdom in highlighting the ongoing creativity of contemporary art,
specifically through the Outdoor Sculpture Collection; through its selection of esteemed artists; and for its decision to maintain the symbiosis of art, landscape and architecture. In contemporary art, artists want to work in alleyways, parking lots and secluded corners; on roofs, sides of buildings and even underground. In the future as the campus grows, there will be demands to respect the integrity of the present works. Yet, with the proximity of art works to each other and intertwined with the architecture and landscape, their contexts will be richer; for example, the case of Aycock and the science complex; Otterness, Pepper and Hamrol in the Haskell Plaza; Nauman in relation to the communications and multi-academic and recreational buildings to the south. Rather than a museum sculpture garden or a secluded rural park, this entire background and context of art enhances the university's intellectual and didactic mission and parallels the investigation, research, and debate within the traditions of a liberal arts education.

Sources

The office of the Western Gallery Director has continued the Outdoor Sculpture Collection archives. For this essay, see: (1) Annual records of committee minutes; individual memos and letters among committee members and the administration; records of juries; (2) Policy statements of Western's committees and from the Washington State Arts Commission; correspondence pertaining to all policies; (3) Files on each artist include biographies and bibliographies; commissioning process with contracts and gift agreements; correspondence after commission; continuing articles, books and catalogues on the specific work at Western and artist's oeuvre; (4) Records of interviews: H. A. "Barney" Goltz with Richard Francis, 5/23/84; Sarah Clark-Langager with artists for NEA audiophone tour, summer and fall, 1991; Goltz with Jim Scott, 3/12/93; Ernst Gayden with George Bartholick, 2/4/95.

Specific references and quotations from the above files are: Virginia Wright in The Seattle Times, March 15, 1970; Mario Amaya's quote on Serra in Art in America, May-June 1971; Bassetti's art in Argus, April 14, 1972; Jan van der Marck's review of Maki, Art in America, September-October, 1974; Di Suvero letter to Goltz, November/December 1978; Nancy Holt on "Rock Rings" in Arts Magazine, June 1979; Noguchi's statement in The Isamu...
Sarah Clark-Langager


Previous research has been done by Sarah Clark-Langager for: introduction to brochure on Site Specific Sculpture, Symposium and Exhibition (WWU, 1989); “Sited/Sighted at Western: Drawings for Sculpture,” exhibition on Outdoor Sculpture Collection drawings and plans from artists and Physical Plant, Western Gallery, summer 1990; NEA interviews and subsequent audiophone and brochures, 1991-94; statement for WWU Draft Comprehensive Campus Master Plan, November 1996; statements for administration and board of trustees on Otterness and Nauman, 1997.

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Since 1988 Sarah Clark-Langager has been the director of the Western Gallery and the curator of the Outdoor Sculpture Collection. She has a Ph.D. in art history with a specialization in 20th century art from the Graduate Center, City University of New York. Before coming to Western she was involved in educational and curatorial roles at museums and university galleries on both the east and west coasts: educator for Yale University Art Gallery (New Haven), Albright-Knox Art Gallery (Buffalo), New York City Cultural Center and Seattle Art Museum; associate curator of modern art, Seattle Art Museum and curator of 20th century painting and sculpture, Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute (Utica); director, University Gallery of University of North Texas (Denton).
Dedication of Skyviewing Sculpture by Isamu Noguchi, 1969. Ibsen Nelson (left), Isamu Noguchi (center), Barney Goltz (far right)

For Handel, Mark di Suvero, 1975

Photo: Daydre Phillips
South Campus view showing three works: Nancy Holt's Stone Enclosure: Rock Rings, 1977-78; Robert Morris' Untitled (Steam Sculpture for Bellingham), 1971; and Magdalena Abakanowicz's Manus (bronze), 1994.

Stadium Piece, Bruce Nauman, 1998-99

Photo: Rod del Pozo