

# Walking Tour with Artists

Outdoor Sculpture Collection, Western Washington University

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This transcript contains excerpts of interviews conducted with the artists (1991-2002) for an audio-phone tour, now no longer available. The full transcripts of these interviews were edited and published for the first time in: Clark-Langager, S., *Sculpture in Place: A Campus as Site* (Western Washington University, 2002). Excerpts of interviews here are from the 2002 publication.

## Introduction

Welcome to Western Washington University. One of the first questions asked by our visitors is how Western started its collection and how it is funded today.

As early as 1957, prior to the Art in Public Places programs of the National Endowment for the Arts, and even before the art programs of Seattle and Washington State, the Board of Trustees at Western decided to include, whenever possible, the acquisition of works of art in the budgets of any new construction. The Art Acquisition Committee, now called the Outdoor Sculpture Collection Advisory Board, realized that it had the unique opportunity to unite exterior art in the form of sculpture with Western's well-known architecture and natural environment.

Briefly stated, one-half of the permanent works which you will see came from Western's own art allowance. Other important sources have been major gifts from the Virginia Wright Fund or the private collection of Virginia and Bagley Wright, matching grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and percent-for-art funds from the Washington State Arts Commission. While the University has had a good record in finding public and private sources for funding, the real success of our collection depends on the careful development of each project. Each artist who is invited to initiate a project works with the curator of the collection and the Outdoor Sculpture Collection Advisory Board made up of professionals from the University and region. As you will see as we tour the collection, there is a unique story about the development of each individual work on campus.

## **Northern Tour [begins at the Western Gallery]**

### **Introduction**

In this part of the tour you will find that the northern part of campus contains some of the oldest buildings. Characteristic of Western's art program and public art in its early phases, architects played an important role in the selection of the artists. Today, there is a curator and an Outdoor Sculpture Collection Advisory Board. The sculpture in this part of campus features major international, national and regional artists who respond to the natural and the built environment and who address natural and cultural memory with different types of narration and spatial dynamics. You might note on this part of the tour that some artists do not speak about their work. While the death of an artist may be one reason, another reason may be that some artists have not wanted to intrude on a purely visual medium with their own narrative or verbal analysis.

### **Walking directions**

In walking towards Red Square, one of the main centers of campus, you will pass Carver Gym on your left, and the Fine Arts Complex on your right. In front of the main entrance to the Fine Arts Complex there is an area given over to temporary projects of the Department of Art. Although student sculptural projects occur there, they are not considered part of the official Outdoor Sculpture Collection. After walking up the steps to Red Square, head towards the large black sculpture by Isamu Noguchi.

### **Isamu Noguchi**

Ibsen Nelsen, the designer of Red Square and architect for two of the buildings in Red Square, originally approached Noguchi to design a series of water jets for inclusion in Fisher Fountain. At the time, this internationally known artist was in Seattle working on his project for Volunteer Park and the Seattle Art Museum.

For various reasons Western's fountain project was aborted, but the architect persuaded Noguchi to design his sculpture in connection with the construction of Miller Hall. After constructing three sets of models, graduating in scale from one inch to three inches to two feet, Noguchi sent his models to the Bakken Iron Company in Mont Lake Terrace, north of Seattle. After five months, the 12,000 pound steel sculpture was then carried via a flatbed truck up Interstate 5 and erected in Red Square in November, 1969. Photographs by Mary Randlett of this process are located just inside the front entrance of Miller Hall. While we may describe Noguchi's steel sculpture as a tilted cube with cutouts on three sides, its special quality is its weightlessness. Rising on brick piers designed by Richard Beyer, a Northwest artist in the sculpture collection, Noguchi's *Skyviewing Sculpture* invites the viewer into its interior, the cube. Noguchi's sculpture allows the viewer, first, to measure himself against the scale of the cube, to find his place within the cube, and, then, to sense the uplifting of the sculpture as the viewer looks up and out towards the moving sky. At night with lights on it, Noguchi's sculpture takes on a different appearance. **Noguchi has said**, "I thought of a luminous object as a source of delight in itself. Like fire, it attracts and protects us from the beasts of the night." The subtleties of space found in Noguchi's work is also heard in his statement about art and nature.

**Noguchi has said:**

"Can you really recreate nature or do we go on and do something other? Man's involvement with nature requires that he leave his imprint there, too, because he is part of nature, too." (statement from video, *Portrait of an Artist. Isamu Noguchi*, Bruce W. Bassett, Producer, Home Vision)

**Walking directions**

As you move out of the Noguchi sculpture, walk a few steps north towards Frasier lecture halls. Standing in front of the brick wall is a work by Steve Tibbetts.

**Steve Tibbetts**

*Scepter* was created by Steve Tibbetts when he was a student at Western in the early sixties. Placed in a student competition in 1966, it won an award and was purchased

by the Associated Students. Although now deceased, Tibbetts also designed the chandeliers for the Whatcom Museum of History and Art here in Bellingham. One of the important influences in Tibbetts' work at this time was the Spanish architect Antonio Gaudi who incorporated natural forms into the plans and surfaces of his buildings. In the case of Tibbetts, the materials and his work *Scepter* are pre-1954 car parts. He originally had responded to the gleam of sunrays on the junked parts. With a work ethic of avoiding waste, Tibbetts selected these thrown away parts and transformed them into an anthropomorphic presence, resembling both a human figure and a sovereign's emblem.

### **Walking directions**

In leaving Tibbett's sculpture, walk on the same side of Red Square to the front door of the Humanities building, and look at a sculptural relief on the wall by Norman Warsinske. This building has another relief on the west wall which we will see later. Then, backtrack to the walk between Frasier lecture hall and the Humanities building. To the left of the entrance of the lecture hall you will find Norman Warsinske's sculpture *Totem*.

### **Norman Warsinske**

Norman Warsinske is known in the Northwest as a craftsman and interior designer who has designed wall reliefs, sculptural forms and lanterns for homes, patios and public buildings. As he will relate, he was commissioned to do several works by the architect Fred Bassetti who designed the Humanities building and lecture hall in 1962.

#### **Warsinske said:**

"I was commissioned by the architect Fred Bassetti. We had been talking about some sculptural things, and he came over to my studio and looked around. He picked out the character of things that he liked. He mentioned the price, and what he said was that "I don't want it all in one place or don't spend all of the money in one lump." So that was the concept of having several pieces on the Humanities building. It was a great commission."

[SC-L] The 12-foot high sculpture *Totem* has torch cut patterns and the light filigree patterns gradually ascend in scale towards the top. The steel has weathered to a

deep brown tone by the natural process of oxidation. While reflecting these natural changes, such as the aging of man, the sculpture might also act as a symbol of light.

**Warsinske continued:**

“I don't know that *Totem* had as much to do with Native American tradition as it had with just a strong ethnic feeling that I enjoy. I wasn't thinking of Northwest totems when I did the tower, but more of a torch or a tall form like a tower, but not necessarily a Northwest totem.... The cut steel was where I started in sculpture - a construction of cutting things rather than sculpting chip by chip. So the steel piece, the tower, comes from something that I did for years.... *Totem*, or the tower, is like architectural jewelry as far as I am concerned. It is just getting away from the t-square and putting a finer scale of design next to the solid forms of the architecture. I think the scale of the piece in its proximity to the architecture and the sun, where the shadows fall, is important.”

[SC-L] In order to see Warsinske's largest wall relief, walk to the left and along the north side of the Humanities building to its farthest corner. Just around the west corner is his *Hex Sign*. While these types of “hex signs” traditionally ward off evil, Warsinske also speaks about them as growth forms.

**Warsinske said:**

“*Hex Sign*, the spiral form, is not continuous other than as a growth form. It has nodes that connect the form. I guess it is just a very simple human design that the Africans would have painted on a wall or that anyone would do - just a simple, sculptural form combined with the richness of the bronze rather than a flat, painted hex.”

**Walking directions**

You are now in the vicinity of the campus rose garden where you will find Anthony Caro's sculpture.

**Anthony Caro**

Very early in his career, Anthony Caro was an assistant to Henry Moore, the preeminent British sculptor. Now known internationally as one of England's great artists, Caro soon went beyond Moore in terms of his total use of abstract shapes and his lack of references to natural forms. Contrary to the work of Holt, Serra or Noguchi, Caro's work,

*India* of 1976, does not build an environmental sense of space, but it does have a strong reference to architecture. To Caro, his work is strictly a perceptual experience which emphasizes the relationship of the individual parts to the whole, as in music. When I asked him if he executed work in a series and if this sculpture *India* was part of a special series:

**Caro said:**

“...There were several pieces, all of which had heavy elements in them, ingots of mild steel. I got them from Consett in Derbyshire, England where I went to a big steel factory. The ingots would come into the rolling mills on rollers and be pressed down into much thinner pieces, rather like rolling out pastry. They would eventually come out a few millimeters thick. I had used quite a lot of pieces which had been rolled in that way. Some I used in the *Flats* series made at a big steel yard called York Steel in Toronto. Before that I had used some thinner slabs for the *Veduggio* series made at a small factory at Veduggio in Italy. The factory did not trim the pieces, but supplied them as they were, and then the workmen trimmed them themselves. The seven or eight works shown at the Emmerich Gallery were done in a series; each had one or more of those great lumps, which were not easy to move about. They were put into position and then held there with other pieces of steel. The lumps are the key to this theme.”

[SC-L] Since viewers often wonder how an artist title works, I asked Caro about the title of *India*. I had been told the title referred to the name of the ship where he got the material. But obviously this was not what Caro thought.

**Caro said:**

“The title has a reference that not even I was aware of at the time. The titles always come after the sculptures. Your assumption that it relates to the ship from which the steel came is certainly not correct, for these parts came from a steel mill. However, I think the work probably had something of the feel of the enormous size or the shape of India on the map...”

[SC-L] Caro feels that sculptors and architects are very conscious of the body, its verticality and horizontality, so it could be that Caro had in mind the architecture of India where the bodies of deities encrust their temples.

**Caro continued:**

“...It is very difficult to put up sculpture outdoors and it seldom looks good. It cannot compete in size or scale with a tree. If you are trying to make public art, you have to be very conscious where it is going to be sited and how the public will interact with it. The work helps them to identify where they are in the city. It should be a meeting place, like the fountain in the square used to be in the old days. It has to be user-friendly. All of these things are important aspects of the work. I do not think that is the case in private art or studio art.”

### **Walking directions**

As you walk out of the rose garden, walk directly west to the big stone sculpture by Richard Beyer.

### **Richard Beyer**

Richard Beyer is known for his sculpture in public parks and zoos as well as at bus stops in Washington and Oregon. Western's sculpture, carved on campus in 1972, is called *The Man Who Used to Hunt Cougars for Bounty*. In speaking about his work here at Western, he first referred to Senator Barney Goltz who was Western's first Director of Master Planning and Facilities. Goltz was extremely important in the early history of the sculpture collections by facilitating the relationship of architects and artists on campus. Later as a senator, he was instrumental in the passage of the percent-for-art law in Washington State.

### **Beyer said:**

“In the process of building the Western Washington University campus, there was a very innovative, intelligent fellow [Barney Goltz] who subsequently went to the legislature as a significant democrat. For the most part, he instituted and encouraged collecting art which was a pretty innovative program at that time. So he approved the architect for the addition to Wilson Library and the concept of using a percentage of money - and this was before it was legislated or at least before the arts commission got into the business of setting up a systematic way of selecting artists. The architect Fred Bassetti proposed two pieces of art – his on one side of the library and my idea on the other side. So I don't think anybody really knew what was going to happen when I had a

big stone brought in from California and plunked it down. Then we moved up to Bellingham and went to work. My son, son-in-law, and a friend hammered and pounded the stone for about three months with jackhammers....”

[SC-L] Wondering about Beyer’s technique, I asked him how long it took to carve the work.

**Beyer replied:**

“...My approach is to find the original concept - that is, old man hunted cougars - and to create an appropriate design for the Western Washington University campus. I fished through the library reference books to early Bellingham stories and found a story of this guy who hunted cougars. It was in a book called *Far Corner*. I believe it is available down at the historical museum and done by a local woman who went through the newspapers to tell the story of Sehome and Bellingham. One of my concerns is this: is it worth being specific and dealing with the experiences of a locality - its architecture, forms and feelings - rather than the work coming down as an international style from heaven for stupid humanity with another one of our shafts of genius? So, we dig around in the local stories or history to find a story that has some meaning. The form develops around the story. Once the form was made into a model and we had gotten the blessing from Bassetti, then, we just proceeded to order the stone from California, shipped it up and put it in place. We brought our compressor and went to work to try to pummel the design as best we could out of stone in terms of the model.”

[SC-L] Although there are many ways to tell a story, Beyer’s approach is straightforward:

**Beyer said:**

“I will tell you my version of the story: there was this fellow who lived on the upper campus years before it was expanded and whose profession in Bellingham was to hunt cougar for bounty. He got \$35 for a pair of ears, or something like that. So it was a good deal. I suppose he had dogs and was pretty professional. He worked for the state, so he was pretty well off. On long summer evenings, like that evening I was telling you about when we were working up there, with the golden trees, gray luminescent fogs, and terrible quiet, you could hear him and his dogs way across the lake. Even back up in the woods the dogs barked and you, then, heard him shouting at them; and, finally, you heard

the shot when they got the cougar out of the tree and they brought him back. The money had much more value than it has at present so that \$35 would last a week for beans, canned milk and whiskey. Well, that pretty vigorous life gave out. His lungs broke, he took to drinking more, and he sold his dogs. During the last days of his life, he would sit up on the porch of his cabin overlooking the lake and forest beyond where the cougars had been. The cougars are all gone now, they are all dead or away, and, finally, in his disillusion we have this ghostly re-meeting when a man and a cougar reconcile. He has the cougar on his lap, they both are drunk –there is a whiskey jug down in the corner of the statue- and they are singing “America”. That is a true story!”

### **Walking directions**

In leaving Beyer’s granite sculpture, walk down the path which cuts across this lawn. The sidewalk will soon intersect with a circular drive. This is the old carriage drive to the historic Old Main, the first building on campus. As you walk this old drive, you will pass on your left a large grove of trees which acts as a bird sanctuary. Near the end of the drive to your right is a large box sculpture by Donald Judd.

### **Donald Judd**

Donald Judd’s *Untitled* sculpture is characteristic of American art in the sixties which challenged European artistic conventions. As a sculptor and writer, Judd called for a maximum clarity in form and material. He rejected metaphysical speculations and metaphoric references, and tried to emphasize what art can express as true. To him, that truth was accumulated through concrete experiences. While truth was directly related to perception, he did not wish to use imitative realism. He did not wish to be ambiguous. His sculpture was to present a verifiable experience. And in an ironic way, his sculpture could deny visual expectations, but still be fully logical. While Judd’s art has remained extremely disciplined and has contained the same self-imposed limitations since the sixties, his “boxes” have come to refine the nature and versatility of enclosure. For example, his *Untitled* box for Western is not just a box; it is what is inside the box that is important. While the exterior panels are perpendicular to the open ends, the interior panels are on the diagonal, thereby creating an unusual sense of space. In fact, Judd sited

the work on the lawn so that his sculpture frames the Canadian Coastal Range in the background. Judd created in the Netherlands a companion piece to Western's box but reversed the exterior and interior panels. In **Judd's own words**, Western's commission and installation "went better than most."

### **Walking directions**

Before leaving the Judd sculpture, look across High Street at the Robert Maki sculpture. This geometric work changes its character, depending on the type of light from the Northwest atmosphere and on your viewpoint. Watch it as you move across High Street and come to its site.

### **Robert Maki**

Robert Maki, similar to Steve Tibbetts, is a graduate of Western. While Tibbetts' career was cut short by his untimely death, Maki's reputation has grown in the Northwest, and on the national art scene. Maki is an articulate spokesman on the issues involved in his work, and the difficult task of transferring a work from an interior space to an exterior site.

### **Maki said:**

*"Curve/Diagonal* on the WWU campus was selected by Virginia and Bagley Wright out of my 1979 Richard Hines Gallery exhibition. After looking at pieces in that exhibition, they decided to purchase this piece and later gifted it to the University. It was constructed in 1979, but it actually comes from models and studies in a series done between 1974-76. It was one of four pieces executed for the Richard Hines Gallery exhibition. They were all fabricated from Cor-ten steel; although, the piece at Western has since been painted gray."

"The piece appeared completely different in the exhibition space. Even though the gallery was quite large, the piece felt much larger in that space but, of course, seemed to diminish in size once it was put on the campus site. For this reason it was rather difficult to site the piece on campus. We looked at various sites and made a full-scale model out of wood and visqueen allowing us to move it easily in the siting process. This is how we decided on the present site. It is sited specifically for the flow of traffic past it and in

relationship to the giant boulder that sets under the ground and peaks through slightly. It is oriented so that the sunlight hits it and restructures the piece visually....”

“The boulder extends and reinforces the piece. It is a powerful shallow basalt outcropping that barely shows above ground. When I site a piece, I consider everything in the environment. The sculpture alters the site and the site alters the sculpture. I have always thought my sculpture a fragment completed by the site. If not site-generated, they are positioned or placed to activate the site geometry and reference their surroundings extending to engage the viewer visually and physically....”

“...As one passes this piece over a period of hours, days or even throughout the school year, it will visually change very dramatically....”

### **Walking directions**

In leaving the Robert Maki sculpture, turn back towards the Viking Union Complex and continue on the sidewalk until you reach the College of Fine and Performing Arts Plaza, where you will see the large sculpture by Mark di Suvero. By the way, this plaza is now called the Virginia Wright Plaza after one of the major donors to the Outdoor Sculpture Collection.

### **Mark di Suvero**

Mark di Suvero’s sculpture *For Handel* belongs to a period of the early to mid-seventies when he was making his first public sculptures in such cities as Bellingham, Grand Rapids, Milwaukee, Baltimore and Washington, D.C. As he states, his work for Western was made at the time of the construction of the Performing Arts Center, designed by Henry Klein.

### **Di Suvero said:**

“*For Handel* has to do with a relationship with architecture and the function of that architecture. The architecture is the music building, and they asked me to put a piece there. It was donated by Virginia Wright, and she most graciously was able to accept the idea of a different piece arriving than the one she originally chose, because there was a dealer that beat me out of the original piece and being paid for it. That happened while I was away in Europe in a self-imposed political exile because I couldn't

stand what the United States was doing in Vietnam. When I came back they asked me to come up and build the piece during the school year; then, when I arrived they told me I was too close to the library to be actually working there, so I had to build it near the Physical Plant. It took me a couple of months during the rainy season; and when it came down to the moment of meeting with the students, it turned out that there was only one student who asked me a question that did not seem important about the art. That is how the piece ended up getting there.”

[SC-L] When asked about the title of his work, *For Handel*, di Suvero replied that the context of the building was important.

**Di Suvero replied:**

“The title is the relationship that deals with the music and that is the function of the architecture. Also, I had discovered that Beethoven in the last two weeks of his life read Handel. I listened to Handel and I think that he is a magnificent conductor. I tried to give something to that space which is not just a plaza but also a roof for the rehearsal hall downstairs, and it has a magnificent view. I tried to give the sculpture a little bit of that inspirational moment/movement that Handel's music has – the sensation of rapture, a spatial concept that gives a sense of being able to make it blaze. I was trying to do something that was similar under pretty difficult circumstances. As you know, the right time to work up there is the summer which is what I wanted to do, but they wanted me to meet with students and so it ended up in the fall when you get a lot of rain.”

[SC-L] Sometimes Mark di Suvero is considered an “action sculptor” in the way he draws directly with the steel I-beams. In running his own truck crane, in using his own welding torch and in directing the blocks and cables, he attempts to build multi-directional sculptures which seem to overcome physical laws. On the site while he’s running the crane, he says he thinks about those “invisible points that are called centers of gravity.” Decisions are made about what beam to bend or to cut off, or what should be completely taken out of one work and used later in another piece. When asked about a swinging element which originally hung down from the center of Western’s work:

**Di Suvero said:**

“I think the swinging element is part of the sculpture’s history just like I had to first build it and then move it a few hundred yards which is not very easy to do onto a

roof. I saw about nine students standing on it vertically and swinging sideways on [the platform]. They were very enthusiastic about it, but I preferred in the end to leave it off.”

### **Walking directions**

In order to get to our next sculpture, walk to the far end of the concrete wall of the plaza which looks out over Bellingham Bay. Below this wall is our next sculpture by George Trakas. But to find it, you have to follow the wall to the right and continue down the set of steps at the end of the wall. At the foot of the steps, cross the driveway, pass the fenced in utilities, and walk into a small concrete pad with rectangular benches. Beyond these benches is a wooden deck structure which was sited there by the artist George Trakas. Besides sitting on this deck, be sure to walk the path leading down the hill to Garden Street.

### **George Trakas**

Similar to Alice Aycock and Michael McCafferty, Trakas was invited to campus during the summer of '87 to participate in a symposium on site-specific sculpture. George Trakas has been a leader on the national art scene in both using architectural structures in his work and architecture as the subject of his sculpture. His *Bay View Station* creates a pedestrian's passageway between the industrial, port city and the University on the west side of the campus, and a viewing station for reflection on these communal connections. Trakas integrated into his work the dirt path begun by the students as a shortcut up the winding hill from Garden Street. He used cobblestones from the Nooksack River to emphasize the natural path and to form a foundation for the welded steel catwalk. At the top of the path is a series of segmented decks constructed of fir planks of wood and steel posts. In responding to the site conditions, primarily the steep hill rising to the concrete pillars of the Performing Arts Center and the benches on the concrete pad at the top of the hill, Trakas chose to weave his path and the irregularly shaped decks across the hill.

### **Walking directions**

We are now going to go back up to the plaza where Mark di Suvero's sculpture is sited. Once on the plaza, walk across High Street to the overhead bridge connecting the

two wings of Wilson Library. Under the bridge, turn to the right and go just inside Haggard Hall where you will find works by Scott Burton and Mark di Suvero, both recent gifts from Virginia and Bagley Wright. Immediately you will find two African Juparana granite chairs by Scott Burton flanking the doorway.

### **Scott Burton**

Burton first earned a reputation with performance and installation work in the 1970s. His *Two-Part Chairs, Right Angle Version (a Pair)* represent his concept of furniture as sculpture which evolved out of his need for settings for “behaviorial tableaux” where actors were involved in staged confrontations. From his use of conventional household furniture as well as modern furniture design he evolved to rock carved chairs and interlocking granite chairs reminiscent of minimalist sculpture. Known for transforming the idea of public art, Burton integrated functional design into fine art. As guardian figures of the front entrance to Haggard Hall, the chairs share the hierarchical space with the Native American totem (Lummi Nation) on the formal staircase leading to the University’s library.

### **Walking directions**

Climb these formal stairs to the totem, turn right, and continue to the top of the stairs where you will find the library’s circulation desk. In front of you, adjacent to a large window looking back towards the Virginia Wright Plaza [College of Fine and Performing Arts], is our second work by Mark di Suvero.

### **Mark di Suvero**

Di Suvero is a key figure in the development of postwar American sculpture. Usually his monumentally scaled sculpture is constructed primarily from industrial I-beams that are welded or bolted together. *For Handel* on the Virginia Wright Plaza relates to the hand and was supposed to have a moving part. Known for his effort to involve the viewer with mobile parts, di Suvero formed a moving circular center in *Mindseye* so that the viewer has an all-seeing eye.

### **Walking directions**

Return to the front door of Haggard Hall where you found the Burton chairs. Turn to the right as you go out the door and walk towards Red Square [location of Noguchi sculpture]. Continue to the right and around the side of Haggard Hall which faces Red Square; turn to the right at the corner of the building and find the Mia Westerlund Roosen sculpture on the south side of Haggard Hall in the tree grove.

### **Mia Westerlund Roosen**

Since the early seventies, Mia Westerlund Roosen has exhibited her sculpture primarily on the east coast and in Canada. Her work at Western actually was made at the Vancouver Art Gallery and then brought here after her exhibition. The uniqueness of her sculpture stems from her approach to materials. In *Flank II*, which is characteristic of her early work, she emphasized a process which joins together the dense forms of sculpture and the surface qualities of painting. As Roosen relates, this sculpture is interesting in terms of its processes. She also wanted it to enliven an intimate site.

### **Westerlund Roosen said:**

“*Flank II* was an extension of the Slab and Muro Series done in the mid seventies combining concrete with steel and asphalt. My intent was to use concrete as an immediate and mundane material to make a reductive but imperfect geometric piece that would exude energy from its core and a monochromatic painterliness from its surface. In *Flank II* the copper is part of the form into which the concrete is poured. Unlike a very precise forming method, the varied imperfections of the shape activate the surface and accentuate the density and weightiness of the material. The wedge shape is an echo of the Muro Series, but being low and horizontal, the copper surface is facing upwards towards the viewer.”

“Although very beautiful and pure, I was never interested in making a truly minimalist object. I wanted to subvert this ideal with discrete expressiveness, drawn line, sensuous surface, inherent color and wonky geometry. Then I hoped the pieces would not only be present but alive.”

### **Walking directions**

Turn back towards Red Square and Carver Gym. Turn to the right and go up the hill to the Western Gallery where you will now begin the southern tour of campus.

### Southern Tour [begins at Western Gallery]

### **Walking directions**

We will begin the tour with Richard Serra's sculpture, adjacent to the plaza of the Western Gallery. As you walk from the Western Gallery Plaza towards Serra's work, called *Wright's Triangle*, you will be on a major pathway connecting the north and south parts of campus.

### **Richard Serra**

As you reach Serra's sculpture *Wright's Triangle*, look first toward the north or behind you where you will see steps leading into a major plaza called Red Square. This was Serra's first choice for his sculpture. Serra's sculpture was moved to the knoll where we are standing because Western's Physical Plant staff told him that this first site was too marshy and unstable for his proposed Cor-ten sculpture weighing 101 tons. The weight problem was solved when Serra chose the present site. His sculpture sits on a buried concrete cube linking the University's utility tunnels. The next decision involved the actual placement or rotation of the triangle on the present site. As you will see, each triangular opening echoed one of the three paths which meet here at this spot.

But why, you might ask, would a sculpture be placed right in the middle of a major thoroughfare? Stand outside his sculpture and look at the Cor-ten steel planes. Perhaps, Serra wanted us to think about the idea of a wall, what it is like to confront a massive wall, to be temporarily blocked in our physical and intellectual directions. Now, go inside the sculpture where you will feel the difference between the ideas of confrontation and enclosure. And, let's hear what Serra has to say.

**Serra said:**

“The presence of sculpture is different from that of architecture or other kinds of form building. It can point your awareness and orientation to spaces and places in a way that architecture cannot. My sculpture is basically about walking into, seeing through, and walking around a structure that reveals itself as it reveals the decisions that underlie its construction. In *Wright’s Triangle* the interior division creates a passage with parallel inclined walls; an opening at either end of the passage allows you to enter into a large open triangular space. There is a certain ambiguity between the experience of the exterior and interior of this particular piece. Walking around the exterior of the sculpture does not inform you about the different spaces that are contained inside and vice versa.”

“Notwithstanding the fact that sculpture is generically different in presence and function from architecture I could relate this particular sculpture to Pre-Columbian architecture – to an architecture that is based on more primary building units of great density and mass and very simple erection methods. Macchu Picchu immediately comes to mind. The building mode of lean and balance is probably closer to a pre-Columbian mode of building than to the strict vertical/ horizontal post and lintel system that to me typifies Western architecture.”

“...*Wright’s Triangle* is the first sculpture with an internal division. Subsequently I built a piece in Paris at La Défense called *Slat* [1983] which is a 40' high tower that from the outside appears to be a monolith but has an internal division inside. You walk into it and pass from a triangular section into an open parallelogram. It is a direct outgrowth of *Wright’s Triangle*.”

**Walking directions**

As you move out of Serra’s sculpture, stay in the same area but walk to the right towards the north end of the Chemistry building which is curved and has a walk leading to the science lecture hall. There are also steps which take you down to the Alice Aycock sculpture.

## **Alice Aycock**

Alice Aycock's cast concrete sculpture was built here on campus in 1987 with students during a summer symposium on site-specific sculpture. Alice Aycock, as well as Nancy Holt, came to the critical foreground in the seventies because of her challenges to the prevalent concept at that time 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. Her work here retains the early mesmerizing effects obtained from her use of maze forms. It is called *The Islands of the Rose Apple Tree Surrounded by the Oceans of the World, for You, Oh My Darling*. The low lying nature of her circular form here is similar to her very early works which hugged the ground or were virtually under the ground. Rather than forcing the viewer to traverse the architectural structure as we did in the Serra sculpture, Aycock has emphasized a bird's eye view. In speaking about Western's work several years later, Aycock allows us to see the workings of an artist's mind, the problems she encountered in transferring a cosmological concept into a theatrical structural form, and why she choose this site.

### **Aycock said:**

"I made fantasy drawings several years prior to the Bellingham sculpture, in which I incorporated diagrams and drawings from Tantric Indian art. I took the architecture of actual theaters, especially the interior of these theaters, and began to fantasize these diagrams in a three dimensional way and overlay them inside the theater. I assumed that there would be water; that you would walk inside and instead of having seats you would have this very strange environment in which water would move. Perhaps water with all different colors. These were images that I had looked at for maybe 10 or 15 years, trying to figure out how to crack them. In other words, how to utilize them in a three-dimensional way and in a transformational way.... At the time of the Western Washington project I knew what materials I wanted to use. I knew I wanted to use some of these two dimensional diagrams in a three dimensional way, but I wasn't sure why. In other words I didn't quite have a strong theoretical reason. It was more of an emotional and instinctual need to do it. Afterwards I began to understand how it relates to my ideas. But at that point I had the methodology. I was going to make the

sculpture in concrete and water and set it into the environment. I wanted some sort of interplay between these very stylized negative forms in the sculpture that imply water and the real water which flows in these spaces. It wouldn't be a traditional fountain that sprayed water but a dialogue between artifice and nature. In the actual diagram that I was using there were metaphors for the Tantric Indian religious concept of the origin of the world and also concepts about heaven and hell.... Most of these things are two dimensional, often diagrammatic. They don't have to conform to the physics of the world.”

“In Tantric art there is a sacred mountain, Mt. Meru, from which everything originates. All the rivers of the world flow from this mountain and there are many levels which conform to states of being, not unlike Dante's Paradise and Inferno. I looked at many versions of this particular Tantric diagram which is incredibly complex. For years I tried to figure out whether there was any way of using it since it came from something that was so foreign to our culture. At any rate, at a certain point in time I realized that I could use concrete and use water and that I could set this into the landscape and create this dialogue that I have been talking about between the artificial and the natural. This was really my first attempt to use concrete in this way; that is, to make it conform to very elaborate designs and to cast it in place on the site and to get these kinds of designs in the negative (where water would flow). In that sense, it was somewhat of an experiment since I had never used the technique of cast-in-place like this before....”

### **Walking Directions**

Having visited Alice Aycock's work, continue west towards the front door of SMATE building. Out in the center of the grassy plaza is our next work by Meg Webster.

### **Meg Webster**

Webster is an artist who embraces nature. Since the eighties she has enhanced earth's materials, such as soil, salt, hay and water, with minimalism's simple shapes, such as cones, mounds and spheres. From a distance you might say that her low lying copper ring looks like an ordinary planter. Once you are at the ring you will note that this is an extraordinary garden with growing Cloudberry which slowly descends in a conical shape

into the earth. With the dynamic brevity of a *haiku* [Japanese lyric poem], art and nature are intertwined. A recent gift of Virginia and Bagley Wright, Webster's sculpture fits well with other environmental or land works already in the collection.

### **Walking directions**

Return back to the Aycock sculpture and up the stairs to the major path and continue south where you will pass the glass front of the Chemistry building. You will see Lloyd Hamrol's sculpture located on a knoll in the landscape to your left and sheltered by a grove of trees.

### **Lloyd Hamrol**

Although living in California, Lloyd Hamrol is nationally known for his projects in the landscape which he began in the early seventies. Lloyd Hamrol's sculpture *Log Ramps* was his second site project. The ramps form triangular sections made with Douglas Fir and Hemlock logs. The four ramps are positioned so that the viewer can climb up them to a height of 8-feet and see an imaginary circle inscribed within the center. Besides accenting geometric shapes, Hamrol primarily intended the work to evoke references to ceremonial architecture, protecting enclosures, and the natural resources of the Northwest. His work for Western integrates the properties of the land, surrounding trees and architecture. His story of how his work originated on campus is typical in the history of the collection where often artists, as in the case of Robert Morris, or the recent '87 sculpture symposium, were invited to campus for workshops. Hamrol reflected back on this stay at Western.

### **Hamrol said:**

"...I began developing the concept through drawings and models in my studio before I came to Western. Those early concepts were important because I knew that we would need the entire quarter just to construct the work. I wanted to have a concept fairly well in mind and worth presenting to the class of 15 students. I introduced the concept as a site-specific sculpture which took as its general reference the idea of primitive Northwest shelter. In my studio, I had envisioned the four ramps covered with sod and continuous with the surrounding grass to suggest that the structure was an eruption of the

earth's surface or a peeling back of the earth. But, that idea really proved impractical as I began to explore it, since it was unlikely that the sod was going to stay on those ramps. Eventually the whole thing was going to rot and fall back to the earth. I didn't like that idea at all because I was looking for something more permanent than that. So, the notion of shelter and gathering place became the compelling concept.”

“During construction and subsequently, I began to see that I really was interested more in a gathering place and in an interactive, site-specific work than anything else. So, this project was seminal in the conceptual development of other pieces. It is like making art itself - nothing really develops in a clear linear fashion. I had been involved in participatory works of a temporary nature for some years before the Western project. I had already planted my feet and feelings very squarely in an area that involved a participating audience. But, I hadn't really brought that value into a site-specific situation or a permanent work. So in that respect, *Log Ramps* became a point, an intersection in the development of my ideas. Formally speaking, it descended directly from some smaller conical pieces that I had done a few years earlier, but they were ones with interior spaces that were difficult, if not impossible, to penetrate. So, *Log Ramps* was a breakthrough piece. I mean literally breaking through the walls and opening the interior to the outside. Nice way to think about it.”

[SC-L] Lloyd Hamrol's work had to be rebuilt due to the construction of Parks Hall. The history of the work is a classic tale on campus, but most important, Hamrol reveals in his own way the successful evolution of the work in the face of unintentional obstacles within a university community.

**Hamrol said:**

“Originally the work was not built where you see it today. From 1974 to 1981, it was located where Parks Hall now stands. When I arrived on campus for this project, the Facilities Planning Office took charge of the logistics of the project and offered me the Parks Hall site with the understanding that the vacant site fell within the future building master plan. Apparently, there was an increase in state funding which allowed the plan to be accelerated, so *Log Ramps* was demolished. Every bit of it had to be rebuilt on the present site. I originally was offered some other options, but I chose that first site because of its proximity to a major campus path and because it was across the path and

adjacent to the Environmental Sciences building. I liked the work speaking to the natural environment and being an architectural antithesis to the new Environmental Sciences building, which was a very state-of-the-art building at the time. Since *Log Ramps* was close to the campus path it was easy for students to see it, leave the path, and climb up the work. Also appropriate, the work is an *ad hoc* classroom in relation to the Environmental Sciences building. I saw it frequently used in that manner and everybody seemed to enjoy the experience. So when we moved the piece, I wanted to keep it in the same general area and really the only place left was the present site. Any further north, we would have run into Richard Serra's *Wright's Triangle*. I like where it is sited now, still in relation to the campus walkway, classrooms and general architecture. In fact, I think it is more comfortably sited now than it was originally because it seemed, back in 1974, to be under scaled for the size of those broad fields. Even though we suffered an embarrassing catastrophe, we claimed victory in the end by having a better built piece in a better site."

### **Walking directions**

As you walk from Hamrol's work further into Haskell Plaza, you will notice an increase of segmented, grassy mounds. These mounds along with the patterned brickwork represent the San Juan Islands just beyond Western and Bellingham Bay. The landscape architects, Campbell & Campbell of California, wanted to connect us through its miniature version to the larger world outside campus.

### **Tom Otterness**

The artist Tom Otterness chose this site for his sculpture which is spread around the plaza. He relates what he saw when he visited campus to make a proposal:

#### **Otterness said:**

"When I was first invited to the campus, I had a blank slate as to what I would be doing. I walked through the whole campus area and came across the plaza where *Feats of Strength* was eventually placed. I found the plaza really engaging, both the design itself and the way the students were using it. My work was in response to what I saw there. I sat around for the afternoon and drew sketches. I watched how students sat on the stones

and slept; how the light fell across the plaza and in what direction; what the main gathering points were; and where the traffic was heaviest and what this traffic flow was like. I built my drawings of both students and placement of figures and boulders in that one afternoon.”

“I initially liked the plaza’s abstract representation of a landscape. I liked the idea of layering on top of the plaza a kind of a fiction of how it was made, a little architectural creation myth. These are the small bronze figures dragging the stones around and moving them into place. I think closer to the time when I made it I would have described it more literally. Now I see as a three-layered abstraction where one layer is the architectural work that was there before I began. Another layer is the semi-reality of these bronze characters and an invented kind of making of that plaza that already existed. Then, the third layer would be the viewer walking around.”

“At the time I worked on *Feats of Strength*, I also was designing *Rock Man* in Minneapolis. One project would influence the other, back and forth. For the Minneapolis piece, I made both the figures and boulders out of bronze and animated the boulders. For Western’s work, I advanced the idea in that I used the real rocks. At Western, there’s a real conviction about their weight and their reality, that these little figures have really picked up a 2,500 pound rock. I guess that idea then carried forward to the work I did with Maya Lin at the Cleveland Public Library, where I had the figures pick up the garden gate itself. It has been a continuing process of trying to give this Mighty Mouse strength to small bronzes and this was the first step in picking up something literal in the “real” world. *Feats of Strength* would have been a completely different work at any other site on Western’s campus. The original site was a fascinating design with the blend of the artificial and the natural and this representation in miniature of a larger context around Bellingham, around Western Washington.”

### **Walking directions**

Also on one of the mounds in Haskell Plaza is a work by Beverly Pepper.

## **Beverly Pepper**

Although trained as a painter, Beverly Pepper is now known for her sculpture, which is sited in public arenas in major cities across the United States, Italy, Israel and Spain. Contrary to Hamrol's sculpture which was made here on campus, Pepper's *Normanno Wedge* of 1980 was cast in a foundry in Italy. Her discussion of the processes and steps involved in making this work is critical to the understanding of this work being a monument to tool-making and the spiritual product of tools-- that is, civilization. As Pepper relates, it is a seminal work in a recent series which emphasizes verticality as well as integrating the earth and sky. Positioned exactly on a specified mound, the wedge shape of the columnar sculpture creates a type of urban altar.

### **Pepper said:**

"*Normanno Wedge* is part of a series of sculpture based on tools and allowing their metamorphosis into something else. The embryonic state of the tool evolves into something beyond a tool. This began when I was working in foundries and factories and became involved with the beauty of the instruments I used. As a work in process, it is inevitably seductive. With each new mutation, you wonder if you're finished when you actually need to push on to a final form."

"I used wedges in making some works to split the sculptures and create a space between -- to keep them engaged in a dialogue. Then, the wedges themselves invaded my mind. This began with the first wedge I created -- a very small, forged steel sculpture, made with a drop forge. It was initially difficult because I felt I needed to do the forging myself, though I was not physically capable of manipulating the forge and maneuvering huge weights of steel. At that point, I decided to shift to casting since it would free me to work directly in iron. The originals could be made out of more malleable material."

"While working on a show for the Andre Emmerich Gallery in New York, I decided to see if the wedges would work on a large scale. This resulted in *Normanno Wedge*, the first in a rewarding series of concepts. They were cast in Terni, Italy so I used related names to identify each work. During the Emmerich show, an architect asked me if it *Normanno Wedge* would work 17-feet high. I said yes, but with reservations. One can't just enlarge a work. Proportions change -- each wedge has its own personality.

I went from 12- feet to 17- feet, but only after encountering numerous problems. And I am still making variations and exercises, using *Normanno Wedge* as a point of departure. I consider it a major piece of work because it is the first one of that series, but it was a complete hands-on experience. There was much to learn, and it expanded my vocabulary. This included the original wood patterns. They had no cores, as did my later work. Later I worked in plaster.”

“...I call WWU's sculpture Normanno because the man who owned its foundry in Terni was named Normanno. Still, it took a lot of persuasion to convince Signor Normano Bernadini to cast that wedge. Eventually, we became great friends and did a lot of work together. Other foundries followed -- my cast iron sculptures made in an industrial foundry, not an art foundry. Industrial casts are coarser and relate more to the concept of the tool.”

“Frequently, I allow my work to guide me. The columns were the natural outgrowth of using files, punches and other tools. I was doubling them up, or elongating them, or otherwise changing them. Vertical sculpture or columnar sculpture has to do with *stasis*, as with a man standing. Each invites other pieces to stand next to it. They live very well alone of course, but they assume another dimension when grouped together.”

“What engaged me in *Normanno Wedge* was its surprising unpredictability. In fact, *Normanno Wedge* is a column, or an exclamation point from one view. From another, however, it presents a flat broad expanse. Actually, this was the prelude to my "altars". In this sense, it is a seminal piece-- for it brought me to the series of *Urban Altars* that followed Normanno. They allude to the inevitable relationship of people, yet also their inability to stop and privately reflect, particularly in the urban area.”

[SC-L] Directly across Haskell Plaza on the front steps of the Biology building is another work by Beverly Pepper belonging to the same Normanno series. Again, Pepper made a large columnar or totem-like marker resembling parts of tools. She intended to keep the markers together so that they would create a procession through a square, as now *Normanno Wedge* and *Normanno Column* begin to do in Haskell Plaza.

## **Walking directions**

In leaving the Pepper sculptures, continue on the main south path and go down the steps between Parks Hall and the Environmental Studies Center. At the foot of the steps look south and in the distance you will see two works on each side of the main walkway. Walk down the main sidewalk to the large stepped structure by Bruce Nauman. [Beginning in 2007 this whole area will be under construction but hopefully we will be able to glimpse the sculptural works (Nauman, Holt, Morris, Keppelman, and Abakaknowicz) behind the construction fence.]

## **Bruce Nauman**

I asked Bruce Nauman about *Stadium Piece*:

### **Nauman said:**

“As to origins of *Stadium Piece*, I was asked to do a piece at the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque. The location that they had picked was in a plaza area that had a series of steps leading down into a big public area near the library and some other buildings. So, I thought about making a piece that would mirror the location. I made a more severe idea; it just went up and went down. You could climb on it and you could sit and face the library. It had quite a strong relationship to the existing stairway and you could walk under it. Anyway, they rejected the piece because it was a place where they played frisbee and it was not useful for another structure. I ended up doing something else at the University of New Mexico. But I made a few plaster models of the idea for the piece. I also did some proposals for a version of the piece made out of standard rental bleacher equipment for a couple of locations in Germany for outdoor installations. Anyway, nothing was ever realized.”

“So, when the opportunity arose at Western, the concept for *Stadium Piece* really seemed to fit your situation. The general area had athletic fields with the track nearby; I also was trying to work with the idea of the future buildings proposed for the open area. So, I imagined that this could be a kind of stadium situation where there would be eventually a lot of traffic because of the new buildings, the existing track and practice area, and because one of the new buildings was supposed to be an athletic facility of some sort. I knew that there was going to be construction, so trying to imagine *Stadium*

*Piece* in relationship to whatever configuration new buildings around it would eventually take...that was interesting to me. How it would change its function as the campus changed.”

“... A university is a little bit of a special situation because it is not like putting something in the middle of a downtown plaza or a shopping center where you really are dealing with an enormously diverse audience. I think that in a school you can do something that takes a little more effort. I think it can be more challenging in that situation.”

### **Walking directions**

Be sure you walk up *Stadium Piece* as well as walk underneath it. Now turn to your left and cross the field to Nancy Holt’s *Rock Rings*.

### **Nancy Holt**

Nancy Holt is considered one of the pioneers of earthworks in site-specific art and landscape. Having completed a major work called *Sun Tunnels* in the Utah desert, Holt was attracted to the quite different landscape of the Northwest. On campus in 1977, Holt felt that her idea for the present sculpture, *Stone Enclosure: Rock Rings*, would be appropriate in this location for several reasons. It was more isolated or more on the land, away from the central hub or peopled area of campus. From the road in the distance, the land dipped and rose to a plateau which was backed by trees. From this winding road you could get a more circular view of her proposed sculpture, and she particularly liked its proximity to the Robert Morris *Steam Sculpture* as its mist would flow over her work, thereby giving the area, in her words, a “dreamy, misty quality.” Besides the location of her work, another critical factor was finding the appropriate stone and stonemason with whom she could work.

This sculpture at Western is actually Holt’s first stone masonry work, although she has continued to use this process in recent projects. She selected the Brown Mountain stone of British Columbia and found the mason Al Poynter whose stonework she greatly admired. In turn, he accepted her proposal as a challenge and a chance to use his skills in a public artwork. While Poynter would do the physical labor, Holt’s job was to design

the 40- and 20-foot diameter rings which formed the sculpture. Holt has said that she is “not an absentee artist” and is involved in all the decisions and changes which do occur on a project. In the summer of 1978, Holt returned to map her art on the landscape. Previously, Holt had designed work which aligned itself to the sun. At Western, her rock enclosure is aligned to the North Star; that is, the four arches running north and south are calculated from the North Star. She knew that the North Star would be important to coastal navigators and to the people of Bellingham who live in this seaport. As she stated, “I do like the idea of celestially fixing our works on earth.”

The circular holes referring to points on the compass give a more horizontal direction in our gaze out onto the landscape. Often visitors feel that Holt’s work which combines elements of architecture, sculpture, and landscape, reminds them of a sacred site. Holt recognizes that people will bring to her site, as she says, “layers of information and layers of interpretation and metaphor.”

When questioned at a later lecture at Western Holt did state that she “felt centered within her own works.” “...*Rock Rings* did accomplish something deep in my psyche. It was like an important work for me. It was something that I felt I needed to get out that was in me, and I had a very strong need to make that work. And then once it was done, I think I was able to move on from there to other things.” (Excerpts from Outdoor Sculpture Collection files on Holt)

### **Walking directions**

As you move out of Holt’s sculpture, stop and look down the hill to see if you can see steam rising from the ground. Then, walk down to what looks like a rock pad and find Robert Morris’ sculpture.

### **Robert Morris**

Robert Morris’ *Steam Work for Bellingham* is a special type of fountain that gurgles underground and swells to an amorphous column; then, the misty cloud dissipates. Its point of origin was a U-shaped pipe above ground where steam escaped in one area from the University’s heating system of underground pipes. In 1971, after participating in a symposium, Morris was commissioned to create his steam piece that

was finally built in 1974. Morris re-planned this source of regulated but fluctuating power; he determined the amount of steam to be released, reconfigured its visual appearance, and re-sited the new work in the rolling landscape of south campus. When the fountain is turned off, only rocks fill his container, a plain square outlined by wood beams set in the ground. Natural environmental factors such as sun, wind, and condensation in the air affect the rate of evaporation and the shapes the steam will form. Economic factors such as energy conservation often erase the boundaries between those who love it and those who oppose it.

While art lovers would enjoy the steam piece's ability to regulate itself depending on the amount of heat generated at the University at different times of the year, the administrators see the need for conservation of energy and limit the work through an on/off policy. In its "on" position, the viewer experiences the duration of the piece and sensually feels his physical body in the natural landscape of rock and steam often found elsewhere in the Northwest. Here, steam is like a trace or memory of the body in the world. In its "off" position, the viewer has only his memory of the work and how he experienced it. These subjective fragments form part of the history of the work or how others viewed it and interpreted it over time. Here, the rocks overlying the square also provide a concealed portal, whether gate or tombstone.

Both Nancy Holt and Robert Morris feel that the individual visitor's response to their works will be unique. If you revisit their works, you will have a different experience, depending on your own emotional make-up that day and the physical conditions surrounding their works. Therefore, both Holt and Morris were reluctant to describe their works or to speak in detail concerning their original intentions.

### **Walking directions**

In leaving Morris' steam sculpture, remain off the beaten path and walk up the hill to the white aluminum sculpture near the campus road where you will find John Keppelman's work.

## **John Keppelman**

Similar to Robert Maki whose work you have seen in the northern part of campus, John Keppelman is an artist living and working in the Northwest. Keppelman's sculpture, *Garapata*, was made during the late seventies. Since his work was a gift to the University several years later, Keppelman was not involved in the selection of this work for Western. However, he was involved in choosing the appropriate site for the sculpture which has a specific orientation or viewing direction. In speaking of the general concept, Keppelman told me first about the process which allowed him to find an abstract sense of motion.

### **Keppelman said:**

“*Garapata* was done in 1979 and purchased by Annie Dillard and Gary Clevidence who gave it to the University when they left Bellingham. It was one of a series of pieces where I was working with folded paper. My method was to cut and fold paper in a very automatic way to avoid any specific ideas about the intent of the work and where it was going, and to get in touch with my unconscious self and maybe find some forms that were surprising and interesting. I would fold and cut until I found a shape that pleased me and then stop to figure out if it could be executed in another form. Most of those pieces were intended originally to be wall works. Very few actually ended up being pieces that would stand on posts because the shape had to have certain characteristics to work in that manner. But the quality of the shape, the way it functions in terms of two-dimensions versus three-dimensions, is the same on a post as it would be in a wall piece. If you look at *Garapata*, it postures a wall, an imaginary wall or flat plane which is behind the piece or which is the basis for the back plane of that piece.”

“My titles often have to do with experiences I have had as a child in certain places or experiences in nature as an adult while traveling. *Garapata* is a place – it is a canyon and a small river which runs out of the Big Sur area in California which was a playground for me as a kid. I think there is a connection in my mind between the way in which that sculptural shape seems to soar and the sort of mythic beauty that particular area of California has.”

“These pieces work like signs and they work best along the edges of public spaces. They relate to wall pieces in the sense that they directly orient you as a viewer.

They are viewable from positions on either side, but basically they tell you to get right in front of them; they aren't intended to be seen from behind. So, when I sited that piece in its present location, I was looking for a spot where viewers passing along the pathway or road would be able to see the piece and not get behind it. It is an unusual siting for sculpture because normally, of course, sculpture is seen completely in the round. In the case of my work, that is not true.”

### **Walking directions**

To find the next work in the southern tour, go back down to the main path and take the tunnel underneath the road. Follow the path up the hill to Fairhaven College to the first main building. Instead of going inside the building, continue on the path until you reach the plaza area. Across from the children’s playground you will see a wood sculpture by Fred Bassetti.

### **Fred Bassetti**

Fred Bassetti is a Seattle architect who has designed several buildings on campus. We have already seen the Humanities building and lecture hall in Red Square, the Viking Union Complex, and the addition to Wilson Library. In the early history of public art, architects played a vital role in the selection of artists for the environment of their buildings. At Western Bassetti, as architect, also accepted a commission for an artwork, as he now relates.

### **Bassetti said:**

“This work came into being when I was doing the design for the addition to Wilson Library. It seemed appropriate that something be said about language - about letters, words and sentences. I happened to come upon the ad that the American Public Library Association wrote with the 26 letters of the alphabet. I was so taken with the idea of a library as a resource, as a tool for people trying to learn about the world, that I decided to use that ad in a modified form. I stamped with a little steel dye the association’s statement on the end of one of the beams. Unfortunately it's gotten so weathered now that it can't be read. I felt strongly about the use of language and literacy and, therefore, wanted to pay homage to the alphabet and to the incredible usefulness that

the alphabet gives us. I developed the general form of these twelve beams together in this rather unusual shape and called it the *Alphabeta Cube*. This shape was a means to put the bronze polyhedron in the center, which is one of the sculpture's solids which has letters, numerical digits and the symbols for pi and infinity. Then, placing the sculpture in front of the library seemed appropriate to me. It is not obvious that the letters are there, but if anybody goes and happens to look in, they will see them, and think of the significance of language."

"Just as the cube that Noguchi cut and drilled, from which he made a "sky viewing sculpture," has a geometric interest, this one has it also. The shape is arbitrary, but it also has a natural quality. Each of the pieces of redwood is cut from an old growth timber, from the heartwood. I knew that kids would inscribe their initials. I hoped that it would take on the patina of time and mean something to the kids that have passed through there, looked at it, touched it and even carved in it."

### **Walking directions**

[In 2006-07, we hope to install David Ireland's *Bigger Big Chair* on the hill between Fairhaven College and Buchanan Towers. If this has occurred, follow these directions: From Bassetti's sculpture, move out of the Fairhaven courtyard through its main entrance; take a left turn on the path heading south towards Buchanan Towers.

### **David Ireland**

Ireland was raised in Bellingham and attended Western from 1948-1950. He is now considered one of the most influential Bay Area artists working the areas of conceptual and environmental art.

In his original presentation to the Outdoor Sculpture Collection Advisory Board,

#### **Ireland stated:**

"I have long thought for several years that the chair is perhaps the micro-architecture. A person who is not able to build a residential structure or commercial building may enjoy that experience in the fabrication of a chair."

“...Part of my history is the design and fabrication of furniture particularly the chair; however I range through a variety of tools and ideas that stay close to sculpture for their inspiration.”

[SC-L] Ireland does not make hard, fast statements or try to prove a theory. He prefers to pose questions, such as how can art function? Here, the answer is in the fact that he designates a functional object as art; makes the “club chair” on the edge between abstraction and representation; and changes our experience by enlarging its scale. Generally a chair is considered the seat of learning and a symbol of aspirations; when monumental, it also stands for distinction and authority. If Ireland’s chair is experienced as micro-architecture, then it can represent the building of teachers [the original purpose of Western] and the liberal arts. Or, because it is monumental, does it refer to a type of education of the past? Or, is it a sign of the times that we should give more attention to a type of education in a highly specialized world?

### **Walking directions**

Turn around and follow the path back through the tunnel under the road. Just as you emerge from the tunnel, turn left and climb up the grassy hill to the tree-like sculpture by Magdalena Abakanowicz.

### **Magdalena Abakanowicz**

Having served as a professor at an Academy of Fine Arts in Poland, Abakanowicz lectured at Western during her first visit where her deeply rooted respect for nature was evident. Abakanowicz in the early sixties had begun to earn an international reputation as a sculptor working with fibers, creating, for example, room size environments. In the late seventies, when Richard Serra and Nancy Holt were working at Western, Abakanowicz was working on her famous environment for the 1980 Venice Biennale. This was 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 ’93 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 our campus, the artist made two proposals: one, to continue her interest in “embryology” by working with the sandstone boulders excavated from the “ridge,” the site of the new Biology building; or, two, to create a bronze piece from her series, *Hand-like Trees*.

Without sufficient funds, the Outdoor Sculpture Collection Advisory Board faced a difficult choice. In the end, Abakanowicz chose the south end of campus as a site for *Manus*. Although the work was part of her *Hand-like Trees* series, she revealed her interest in linking the natural setting of the area, including the trees of Sehome Hill, with the human activity of campus. The 15-foot high sculpture in a unique piece made directly from the artist’s model on a one-to-one scale at the Venturi Art Foundry in Bologna, Italy.

**Abakanowicz said:**

“The idea of *Hand-like Tree* sculpture explores the similarity between different creations of nature. I see muscles and veins in the body of a tree, a spine, sometimes only visible while looking into a disintegrating or perished trunk. Its bark - wrinkled skin - each square inch differs from the other - the mystery of the organic world on our planet.

Nature does not pretend to make art, we do. What is the meaning of man’s sensitivity in comparison with nature’s wisdom?”

[SC-L] Now walk around the sculpture and look at the side facing the Wade King Student Recreational Center. From that view **she said**: “I once saw hands stretched vertically, voting, protesting, manifesting. They were similar to branches moved by the wind. I saw trees with branches stretched in a pompous movement - still and frozen, but dramatic like hands.”

**Walking directions**

Now walk towards toward the Wade King Student Recreation Center. There you will find James FitzGerald’s sculptural fountain, *Rain Forest*. This sculpture was first installed in front of the south library entrance and Haggard Hall. When Haggard Hall became part of the library, FitzGerald’s sculpture was put into storage until it could be located at the new student center.

## **James FitzGerald**

James FitzGerald's first sculptural commission had been in 1945. This was a concrete relief design for the eastern entrance of the tunnel for the Mercer Island floating bridge in Seattle. Seventeen years later when interviewed by King-FM Radio in Seattle, he spoke about the limitations existing in the Northwest for sculpture. Keep in mind that FitzGerald was speaking in 1962.

### **FitzGerald said:**

“...Well, this is a kind of a strange community, I think, for sculpture, because first of all it's kind of a gray atmosphere, in that there's not too much sunlight to bring out sculptures, so I believe, that it's a community where you would make kewpie dolls atop the piano, or something --little tiny things but strong statements in sculpture -- so far haven't been made. I believe it's just part of it that the whole place isn't aware of the possibilities of sculpture. In this town, it's only commissioned sculpture that you see, really, I believe, produced. There's a few things that are smaller things from the studios...well, I don't know.”

“...It would be so easy to do that I can see it myself: Like if you had like a “sculpture northwest” or something, if you had a vacant lot with an old crummy building, you fenced it in, why, and sculptors brought their things into it you could see that many sculptors start making larger things and set them up out there one after the other and the first thing you know, the scale would be ... there would be sculpture, you know. And it wouldn't be these little, dinky things,. but the artists keep working in their studios because it's the only place they can show them, and the chance they can sell them --but if you could just get an area where you could show them, I'm sure that you'd find a whole Renaissance of sculpture going on.”

[SC-L] In 1962 when FitzGerald was speaking, he had already finished his sculpture for Western. Installed in 1960, *Rain Forest* by FitzGerald was Western's first outdoor public work. Little did FitzGerald know that soon Western would be a major place in the Northwest where large-scale outdoor sculpture could be seen. Now deceased, FitzGerald continued to exhibit his work on a national basis, and received commissions during the sixties as far away as Princeton University. His work is widely recognized in the Northwest and can be seen in public areas, such as the courtyard of the Seattle Center

Playhouse, inside the Seattle Public Library, and IBM Plaza, and down at the Seattle Waterfront Park.

Similar to other FitzGerald sculptures, *Rain Forest* refers to the natural resources of the Northwest. With its thrust in the air and bark-like pattern in bronze, the vertical structure could be a tree or stand of trees. The horizontal element could be a fallen tree. The soft trickle of the water echoes the light rain pattern persistent in the Northwest. Within the bronze work of the horizontal structure are screens with calligraphic patterns reminiscent of the Far East. Characteristic of Northwest artists of FitzGerald's generation of the forties and fifties, many evoked in their work the close connection between our region, China and Japan.

### **Walking directions**

Now we will follow the sidewalk back to Parks Hall where students learn global business skills. As you approach the southern face of Parks Hall, keep left, and watch for a small grove of trees opposite the end of the building. In the grove is Ulrich Rückriem's granite sculpture.

### **Ulrich Rückriem**

Rückriem's Normandy granite work is one of several recent gifts from Virginia and Bagley Wright of Seattle. The work reminds us of the history of sculpture itself: a divine amulet in one's hand to an upright megalith; an architectural niche holding an image or a figure attached to a column; in modern times, simplified shapes embodying these traditions. However, there are ruptures in Rückriem's evocation of time because he has bored into and changed the surfaces of the natural stone. Sitting like a sentinel in the grove of trees, the work references both geological and cultural time.

### **Walking directions**

We are now at the end of the southern tour. Continue through Haskell Plaza and back towards the Western Gallery.

## **Conclusion**

If this is your first visit to campus, you may find the Outdoor Sculpture Collection quite challenging. We do hope that you will visit Western again, and experience this art in a learning environment. Across the plazas and lawns we daily live with these works, and gradually learn how art can reach out to aspects of our physical and intellectual being. Through this sculpture collection the University has set standards for quality education as well as fostered an atmosphere of risk taking and discovery.