

Tangents and Waves:

The Art of David Barr and Diane Carr

Photography Credits:

David Barr
Diane Carr
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Thank you!

Marilyn L. Wheaton

Tangents and Waves: The Art of David Barr and Diane Carr

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Barr Tangents and Carr Waves

Come together in poetic ways

Tangent *n.* A line, curve or surface touching but not intersecting another line, curve, or surface

Wave *n.* A curved shape, outline or pattern

Several years ago I took umbrage with an art critic who said an artist should live in and experience New York City for a period of time to be a great artist. While some may become better or more interesting artists once they have lived in New York City, it certainly is not a requirement for being a great artist. While David Barr and Diane Carr have traveled extensively, they have always lived in Michigan and they have created work here that challenges the viewer to think far beyond the sculpture and painting mediums for which their work is well known.

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David Barr and Diane Carr have some commonalities. They were both born in Michigan. Both received Masters degrees from Wayne State University. Their work is poetic; much of it inspired by what they experience in life and observe in nature. Each moved their home and studio from urban Detroit to rural Michigan communities midway in their careers. They have been good friends for more than three decades.

My first introduction to David was in 1980 when I was research assistant at the Archives of American Art and he was working on his *Four Corners Project*, the first of four global projects he has completed. The Archives conducted an oral history interview with David in 1982 in which he speaks about the *Four Corners Project*, the influence of nature on his work, and many other aspects of his life and art.

I have included in this exhibition graphic representations with brief storylines of David's completed global projects—*Four Corners Project*, (Easter Island/ South Africa/Indonesian Irian Jaya/ Greenland), 1976-1985; *SunSweep* (USA/ Canada), 1985; *Arctic Arc* (USA/USSR), 1986-1991; and *Global Gear* (USA/ Belgium), 1996-1998—to give the viewer a depth of understanding about how the artist's mind works relative to the global arena in which we reside. All of

David's works—global projects, sculpture, Structurist reliefs—are integral in that they relate to the condition, real and perceived, of nature, the universe, and the people who inhabit it.

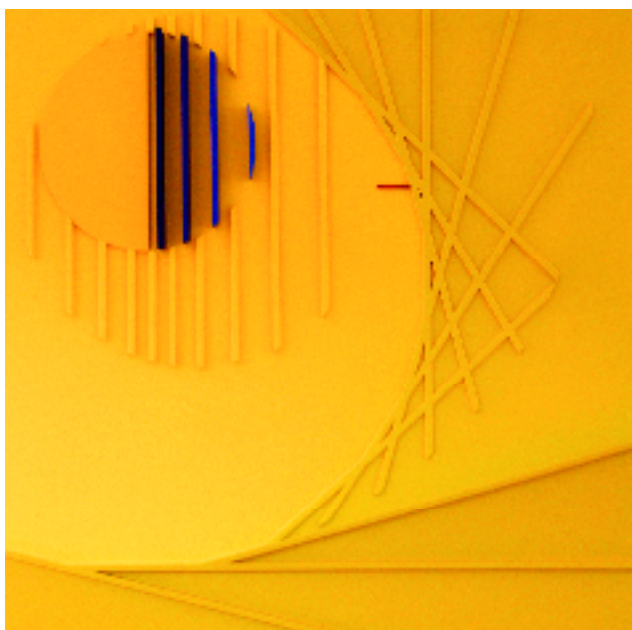
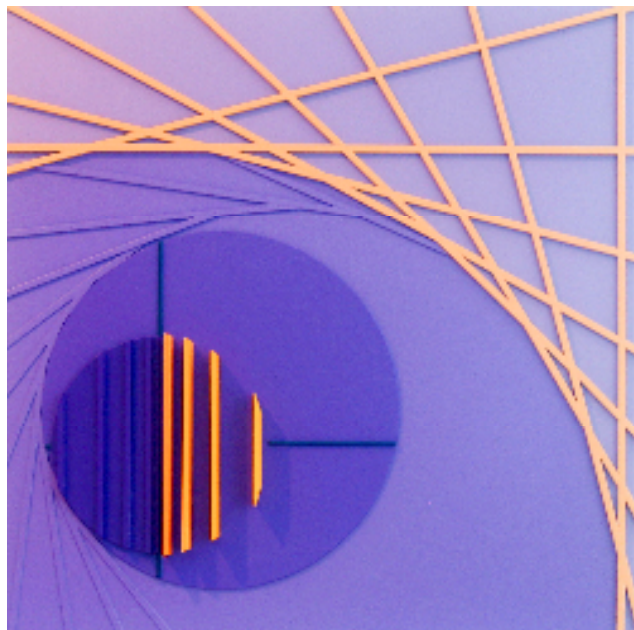
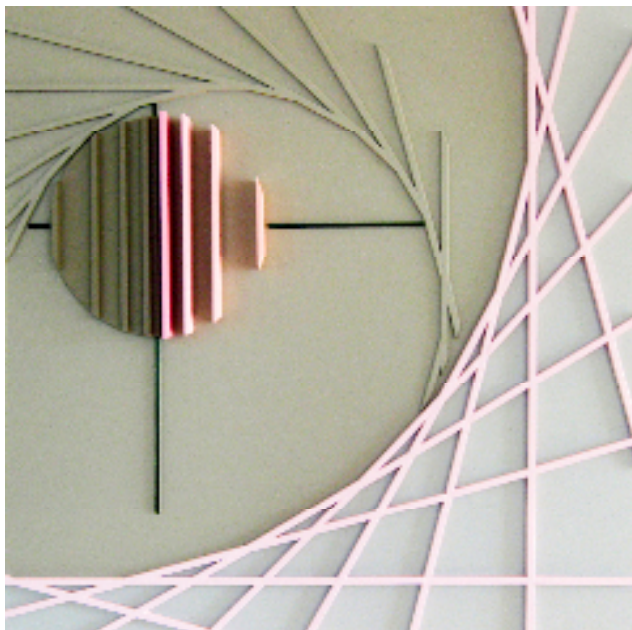
Charles Biederman (1906-2004) is considered by many art historians to be the inventor of "Structurism"—reliefs that have the dimension of sculpture and the color of painting. Jan van der Marck, former chief curator of the Detroit Institute of Arts, in a 1999 David Barr exhibition catalog defined a Structurist relief as "an orthogonal arrangement of bars and crossbars of varying thickness and color mounted on a rectangular, monochromatic background at eye level where it catches and reflects light."¹

Similar to Biederman, whose "unique artistic contribution grew out of a half-century-long study of nature's structural processes,"² David has spent a half-century studying nature's growth, decay and regeneration process, and creating works of art that reflect his observations and experiences.

"When I look at nature, if I look at a flower or a tree or anything else, I see a color and I see a form and they are revealed to me through light and space and time. And those elements are present in everything I do: the actualities of those elements. In the actual relief work I think what I'm interested in are all those concepts of growth, decay and regeneration," David said during the 1982 Archives of American Art interview.³

David corresponded with Biederman in 1964 and a year later he saw Biederman's work for the first time at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. In the Archives' interview David said, "It was just a moving, wonderful experience and I have great admiration for him. I could see for the first time the use of color and his attitude about nature being realized in a really powerful way."⁴

"While my work has been a continual commitment to the Structurist imperative," Barr wrote in 1979, "the focus and manifestations have increased from philosophy to biology to geology and now to astronomy."⁵ (Continued on page 10)



David Barr

(Left top)

Structurist Relief No. 352, 2008
Painted masonite and wood
24" x 24" x 3"

(Right)

Structurist Relief No. 353, 2008
Painted masonite and wood
24" x 24" x 3"

(Left bottom)

Structurist Relief No. 349, 2008
Painted masonite and wood
24" x 24" x 3"

Tangents

1973

Man often perceives events as disordered, even chaotic, whereas it is his limited sense of "order" projected onto that event. Lightning rips the branches from a tree, for example, and while many may mistakenly perceive the energy conversion as destructive, nature simply transforms the branch into sustenance for insects, shade for mushrooms, nesting material for birds, and fertilizer. The chain of energetic function is continuous.

My Structurist Reliefs attempt to synthesize nature's growth/decay/regeneration process via a poetic visual vocabulary that is distinctly man/machine, yet is harmonious with natural creations. I have composed progression/regression systems using the structural combine of color/form/light/space/time and then "destroyed" a portion of that system. The result is not a random redistribution, but as in nature, a continuum from which new force fields are simultaneously regenerated to penetrate the prime space/time rhythms.

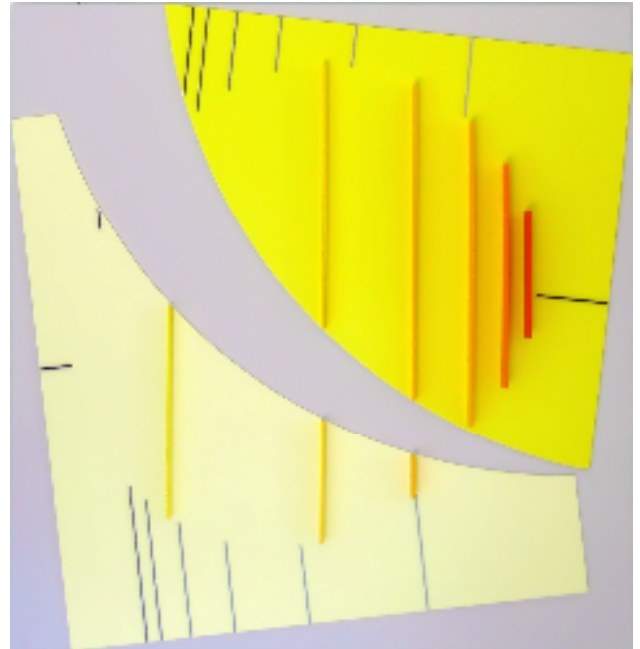
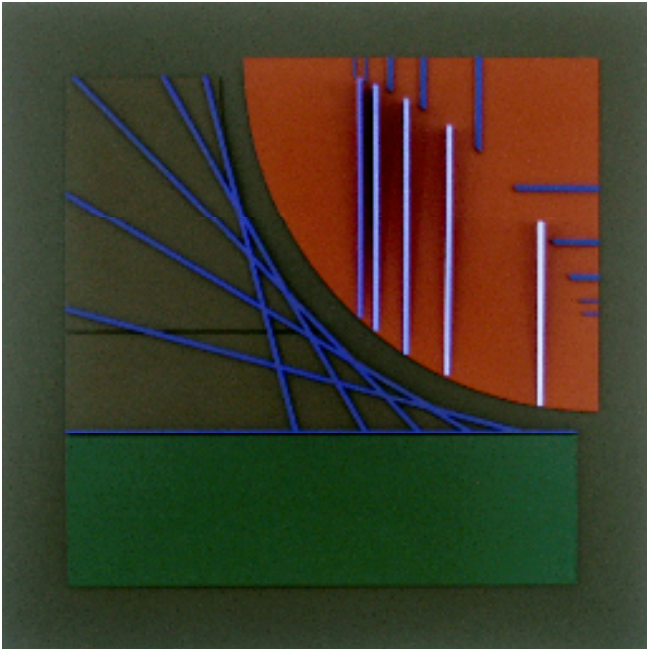
1987

The "realities" that propel our natural universe are now understood to be essentially invisible. As an artist, I choose to explore those invisible realities intellectually, emotionally, and intuitively...as a sensor, a conduit, and a transformer of those experiences into a new, visible expression. In order to translate the organizing processes of nature, I have developed a constructive visual vocabulary of color/form/light/space/time, a metaphor for the shifting relationships that comprise "reality."

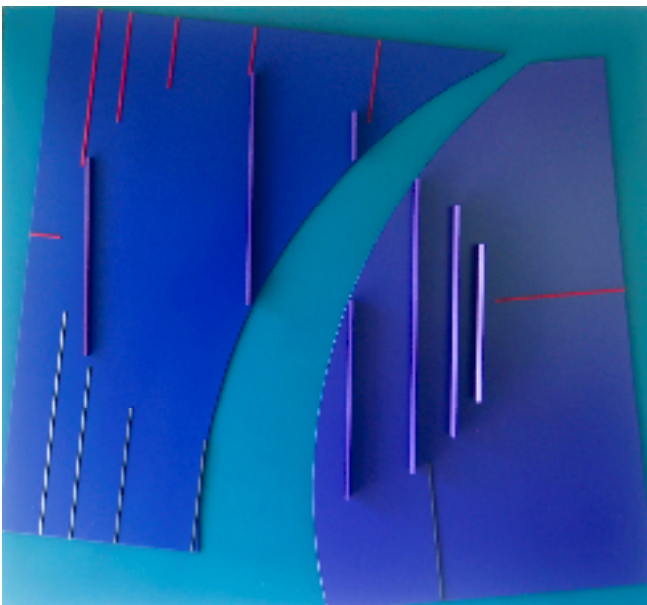
2008

I created a number of Structurist Reliefs that I call the *Tangent Series* in 2007 and 2008. These are color/form explorations related to some of my sculpture pieces of recent years, like *Equation I* and *Equation II*, *Fifteen Degrees of Filigree*, and monumental sculptures I installed in Columbus, Ohio and Warren, Michigan. They are derived from a geometric and systematic convergence of straight lines that tangentially define an arc...either *generating* the arc or being *determined by* the arc. Inasmuch as fifteen degrees is the span of global time zones (three hundred and sixty degrees divided by twenty-four equals fifteen). I am attracted to that self-imposed design constraint.

David Barr



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David Barr

(Left top)

Structurist Relief No. 346, 2007
Painted masonite and wood
34" x 34" x 3 1/2"

(Right)

Structurist Relief No. 312, 1992
Painted masonite and wood
43 3/4" x 42" x 4"

(Left bottom)

Structurist Relief No. 339, 1998
Painted masonite and steel
37" x 43 1/2" x 4"

David Barr

Education

Bachelor of Fine Arts, 1962, and Master of Fine Arts, 1965, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI

Professional Experience

Professor of Art, Macomb Community College, Warren, MI, 1965-2002

Founder and Artistic Director, Michigan Legacy Art Park, Thompsonville, MI, 1995-present

One-Man Exhibitions

Midland Center for the Arts, Midland, MI, 2002

Krasl Art Center, St. Joseph, MI, 2001

Dennos Museum Center, Traverse City, MI,
1999-2000

Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, MI,
1993

Donald Morris Gallery, Birmingham, MI, 1992,
1989, 1987, 1984, 1981, 1979, 1976, 1973

Swords into Plowshares Gallery, Detroit, MI, 1990

Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, IL, 1986, 1975

Momentum Gallery, Minneapolis, MN, 1986

Mott College, Flint, MI, 1984

Meadowbrook Art Gallery, Oakland
University, Rochester, MI, 1982

Kent State University, Kent, OH, 1979

San Jose Museum of Art, CA, 1978

Marianne Friedland Gallery, Toronto,
Ontario, Canada, 1975

University of Pittsburg, PA, 1975

Art Research Center, Kansas City, MO, 1974

Donald Morris Gallery, Detroit, MI, 1973

Kazimir Gallery, Chicago, IL, 1972, 1971,
1969, 1968

Evanston Art Center, Evanston, IL, 1969

Hanamura Gallery, Detroit, MI, 1965

Public Commissions

"Men-an-Tol", 900 Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL

"Dawn", Warren Civic Center, Warren, MI

"Vault", Columbus Community College, Columbus, OH

"Sonata II", Schoolcraft College, Livonia, MI

"Transcending", Hart Plaza, Detroit, MI

"Galileo", Town Hall, Pisa, Italy

"Synergy", Dennos Museum Center, Traverse City, MI

"Revolution I", Chrysler World Headquarters, Auburn Hills, MI

"Revolution II", Chrysler European Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium

"Source", Detroit Zoo Wildlife Interpretive Center, Royal Oak, MI

"Soaring", Bishop International Airport, Flint, MI

"Blue Arc", Hoffman Corporation, Appleton, WI

"Polaris Ring", State of Michigan Historical Museum, Lansing

"Strata", Lakeview Square, Battle Creek, MI

"Sunset Cube", Meadowbrook Festival Grounds, Oakland University, Rochester, MI

"Five Structurist Reliefs", Renaissance Center, Detroit, MI

"Crystal Transformation", Macomb Community College, Warren, MI

"Structurist Transformation", Fairlane Town Center, Dearborn, MI

Selected Collections

AT & T, Chicago, IL

Atlantic-Richfield Company, Los Angeles, CA

Chrysler Corporation World Headquarters,
Auburn Hills, MI

Dennos Museum Center, Traverse City, MI

Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI

First Federal Savings, Detroit, MI

Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, MI

Fort Lauderdale Museum, FL

Krasl Art Center, St. Joseph, MI

Marathon Engineers /Architects/Planners,
Inc., Appleton, WI

McCrary Corporation, New York, NY

Michigan Bell Telephone Co., Detroit, MI

National Bank of Detroit, Detroit, MI

Oakland University, Rochester, MI

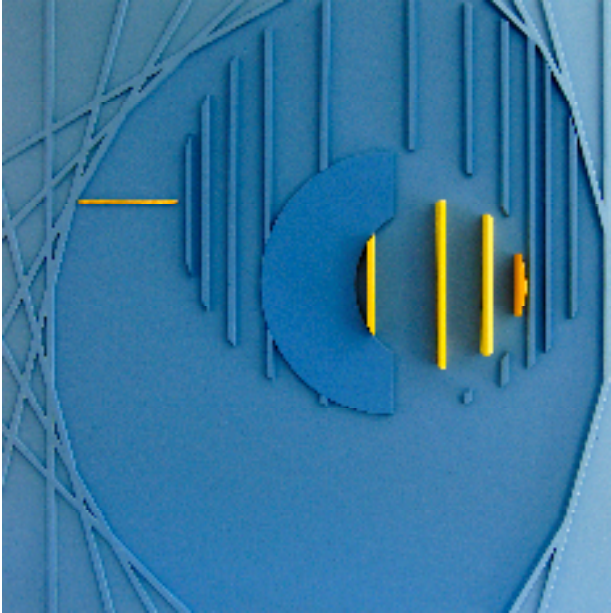
Owens Corning Corporation, Toledo, OH

Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR

St. Joseph Hospital, Ann Arbor, MI

Tel Aviv Museum, Israel

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI



David Barr

(Left top)

Structurist Relief No. 350, 2008

Painted masonite and wood

24" x 24" x 3"

(Right)

Equation I, 2005

Granite and stainless steel

48" x 36" x 44"

(Left bottom)

Fifteen Degrees of Filigree, 2007-2008

Painted Steel

34" x 32" x 34"



David Barr
Sonata, 1999
Painted steel
16' x 6'

**Diane Carr**

Skystone, 1988-1991

Painted steel

18' x 7' x 6'

Skystone was commissioned in 1988 by the former Commission for Art in Public Places for the Michigan Department of Transportation. The sculpture was installed in 1991 at the New Buffalo Welcome Center.

Skystone is represented in the exhibition by a series of photographs that were taken by the artist shortly after it was installed.

David's Structurist reliefs are deep, harmoniously colored paint on masonite with small wood vertical and horizontal bars "derived from a geometric and systematic convergence of straight lines that tangentially define an arc," according to Barr.

Walking around David and Beth Barr's four-acre self-created sculpture park that they call home in Novi, Michigan is comparable to visiting any one of the dozens of sculpture parks that have come into existence in locations around the world over the last few decades. David's sculptures in this exhibit, all of which are usually situated on his property where they appear to emerge out of the ground like radiant symbols of a geological site, are related to his recent Structurist reliefs in symbolic ways, which he refers to in his artist statement in this catalog.

When I met Diane Carr in 1981, she was co-managing the Detroit Artists Market and I was writing the 50-year history of the Market. She already had exhibited in three one-person shows and several group shows. Diane's work then and now is lyrical, rhythmic, meditative and magnificently beautiful. Her "spiral gestures," as she refers to them, represent a new body of work created within the last two years.

Diane lives and works within a few hundred feet of a picturesque inland lake. Daily she is surrounded by forest and water and all of the animate creatures and organisms that inhabit those natural environments. She is an avid and enthusiastic kayaker and spends considerable time in the water where, in my imagination, her visualization becomes her palette.

When I visited Diane's studio in Honor, Michigan several months ago, I was stunned at first glance and amazed at the line of "waves," brilliantly colored bands of painted aluminum molded together and shaped in exquisite designs hanging on the studio wall. The effect of light and shadows displayed on a well-lit white background gave the impression that there was a colorful three-dimensional sculpture hanging in front of a one-dimensional monotone image.

My first inclination was to walk up to the wall and look horizontally through the forms of twisted and shaped metal, at which point I realized that the interior side of the aluminum bands were painted a different brilliant color. Diane mixes sand from the beach with the paint to give it a textural look, a grainy sensation. Looking at Diane's "waves" you will imagine objects you have seen in nature—sea creatures, forest greens and ferns, wild flowers, insects—and understand the power of her art.

The appearance of these large ethereal shapes is deceiving. They seem to be fragile because the metal bands move easily when touched, but in reality they are strong and robust, like waves in the water, like the animate and organic entities they represent. You will want to get physically close to these pieces to see the inside and the outside from every angle. When you do that, a meditative sense will envelop you and cause you to ask, 'how did she do that?'

There haven't been many opportunities to see Diane's work over the last two decades. This exhibit brings to the viewer an opportunity to get to know the depth and breadth of an artist who sees beauty and meaning in the everyday things and transposes her images of them into stunning "spiral gestures."

The Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum is honored to have these two great, accomplished artists exhibiting together for the first time.

Marilyn L. Wheaton

Director, Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum

¹ Jan van der Marck, "Of Nature, Art and Man, David Barr," Denno Museum Center exhibition catalog, (Dec. 5, 1999-March 5, 2000) 8.

² <<http://www.CharlesBiederman.net>

³ David Barr interviews, 1982 Dec. 28-1983 Jan. 25 <<http://www.aaa.si.edu>

⁴ David Barr interviews, 1982 Dec. 28-1983 Jan. 25 <<http://www.aaa.si.edu>

⁵ Jan van der Marck, "Of Nature, Art and Man, David Barr," Denno Museum Center exhibition catalog, (Dec. 5, 1999-March 5, 2000) 14.



Diane Carr

(Left top)

Groundwater, 2007

Aluminum, acrylics, sand

24" x 22" x 10"

(Right)

Artesian, 2006

Aluminum, acrylics, sand

24" x 18" x 13"

(Left bottom)

Imago, 2006

Aluminum, acrylics, sand

27" x 27" x 11"

Waves

2008

My metal sculptures wave and dance across the wall like a gestural drawing. They curve and spiral, casting glowing shadows which often appear as solid as the metal.

Each piece begins as a geometric rhythm that is altered and softened by the cutting and forming processes that reflect my hand, the tools, and the nature of the metal and paint. No maquettes or drawings -- I just start cutting. I step into the unknown looking for something that I could never have imagined. I want to be surprised.

For me, creation happens in the working process. This is how I described it in my art journal: "The work has a mind of its own. I cut an orderly pattern of metal strips. It looks lovely and peaceful lying flat on the floor. When I begin to sculpturally form it by rolling and clipping strips, it turns into a tangle, a snarl. Hours and days go by as I play and wrestle with it -- clipping, unclipping, reclipping. The piece morphs, gravity plays a role and I need a miracle. Suddenly there it is -- a form that resonates with me. I fall in love! I commit and make a permanent fastening. Order turns into Chaos turns into Harmony. This process is a cause for celebration because I have found a way to be spontaneous with metal and to subvert control."

I'm after a quality of light, movement and sparkling color that vibrates with life. I use washes of paint and sprinkled sand, which disperses the paint to create a speckled, flickering luminescence like water or stone.

It feels like I am creating my own flora and fauna. As the metal becomes sculptural, it waves into spirals, the motions of birth and growth. Movement congeals into form. References to nature are in my art because both follow physical laws of dynamic systems. The work is not representational nor does it have hidden meanings. Each piece is its own self and everyone will find their own references.

I spend a lot of time kayaking in oceans, the Great Lakes and quiet inland lakes. I become mesmerized by light reflections, refractions, rainbow splashes and changing colors of sky, water and land. Waves create amazing land forms and water creatures. It's a dazzle of pure beauty! My art is a vessel for all of this pulsating life.

Diane Carr



Diane Carr

(Left top)

Tailwind, 2007

Aluminum, acrylics, sand
35" x 35" x 13"

(Right)

Jester, 2008

Aluminum, acrylics, sand
32" x 19" x 8"

(Left bottom)

Spiral Gesture, 2008

Aluminum, acrylics, sand
41" x 36" x 13"

Diane Carr*Education*

Bachelor of Arts, 1967, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
 Master of Fine Arts, 1976, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI

Professional Experience

Art Instructor, Macomb Community College, 1983-1990, and Wayne State University,
 1990, 1986
 Painting Coordinator, Ox Bow Summer Workshop, Saugatuck, MI, 1978

Selected Exhibitions

Dennos Museum Center, Traverse City, MI, 2006, 1996
 Wayne State University, Detroit, MI, 2002, 1990, 1986,
 College for Creative Studies, Center Galleries, Detroit, 1994
 Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI, 1993, 1987
 Feigenson/Preston Gallery, Birmingham, MI, 1992, 1988
 Detroit Focus Gallery, Detroit, MI, 1989, 1981
 Detroit Artists Market, Detroit, MI, 2007, 1989, 1983, 1982, 1977
 Mott Community College, Flint, MI, 1988
 Feigenson Gallery, Detroit, MI, 1987, 1986, 1985
 Michigan Council for the Arts Gallery, Detroit, MI, 1987
 The Art Center, Mount Clemens, MI, 1986
 Spaces Gallery, Cleveland, OH, 1985
 Detroit Focus Gallery, Detroit, MI, 1985
 Meadowbrook Art Gallery, Oakland University, Rochester, MI, 1983
 Artcite Gallery, Windsor, Ontario, Canada, 1982
 Willis Gallery, Detroit, MI, 1982, 1981
 Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, 1981
 Park West Gallery, Southfield, MI, 1981
 Birmingham Unitarian Church, Birmingham, MI, 1981
 Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI, 1979, 1977
 Wesleyan University, Bloomfield, IL, 1979
 Feigenson-Rosenstein Gallery, Detroit, MI, 1978
 Traveling Exhibition, Taubman Company Traveling Exhibition, Detroit, MI, 1978
 Gallery 7, Detroit, MI, 1977
 University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada, 1976

Public Commissions

"Skystone", New Buffalo Welcome Center, MI
 "Sky Crystals", One23 Restaurant, Grosse Pointe, MI

Selected Collections

Karmanos Cancer Center, Detroit, MI
 Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI
 Dennos Museum Center, Traverse City, MI
 Southwestern Michigan College, Dowagiac, MI



Diane Carr

(Left top)

Orchid, 2008

Aluminum, acrylics, sand

21" x 17" x 11"

(Right)

Chenega, 2008

Aluminum, acrylics, sand

50" x 39" x 14"

(Left bottom)

Fiddlehead, 2007

Aluminum, acrylics, sand

41" x 20" x 10"

Additional works in exhibition not illustrated in catalog

David Barr

Equation II, 2006
Painted steel and granite
24" x 24" x 24"

Tangent Column, 2007
Painted steel and stainless steel
16" x 16" x 18 ½"

Tangent Column II, 2007
Painted steel and stainless steel
16" x 16" x 18 ½"

Structurist Relief No. 341, 1999
Painted masonite and steel
34" x 34" x 3"

Structurist Relief No. 347, 2008
Painted masonite and wood
34" x 34" x 3"

Structurist Relief No. 354, 2008
Painted masonite and wood
24" x 24" x 3"

Gossamer (8), 2008
Steel and copper
16" x 16" x 1"

Four Corners World View, 1981
Lithograph
19 ½" x 23 ⅞"

SunSweep, 1985
Lithograph
33 ¼" x 29"

Arctic Arc, 1991
Silkscreen
33 ¼" x 27 ½"

Global Gear, 1996-1998
Revolution I (Photograph)
Painted steel, slabs of stone, 34' x 7'
Installed in Auburn Hills, Michigan, 1996

Revolution II (Photograph)
Painted steel, slabs of stone, 34' x 7'
Installed in Brussels, Belgium, 1998

Diane Carr

Mother Wave, 2006
Aluminum, acrylics, sand
30" x 30" x 9"

Orb Weaver, 2007
Aluminum, acrylics, sand
19" x 19" x 10"

Aerial, 2006
Aluminum, acrylics, sand
22" x 21" x 6"

Dovetail, 2006
Aluminum, acrylics, sand
24" x 24" x 9"

Emerging, 2006
Aluminum, acrylics, sand
24" x 18" x 9"

Crowning Glory, 2008
Aluminum, acrylics, sand
31" x 15" x 10"

Take Heart, 2006
Aluminum, acrylics, sand
28" x 22" x 10"

Gorgonias, 2007
Aluminum, acrylics, sand
56" x 56" x 11"

Firewood, 2008
Aluminum, acrylics, sand
26" x 14" x 10"

Spirobranch, 2008
Aluminum, acrylics, sand
19" x 21" x 11"

Seedling, 2006
Aluminum, acrylics, sand
18" x 24" x 7"

Cosmos, 2008
Aluminum, acrylics, sand
Assemblage of "spiral gestures"



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