



Foreword

A few years ago a first-time visitor to the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum suggested that a Tom Phardel/Sharon Que exhibition would be stunning in the galleries. Not long after that an artist whose work was in a show at the Museum presented the same idea about a Phardel/Que exhibition in the Museum's temporary galleries. It was those enthusiastic recommendations that led me to look close at the work of these two well healed Michigan artists.

Using clay as his primary medium of expression, Tom Phardel has been creating and exhibiting his work and teaching contemporary ceramics for more than three decades. He has exhibited his work in every region of the contiguous United States, from Portland to Tampa and from Santa Fe to Philadelphia. A consummate professional, Phardel's work exhibits extremely well, with its large scale and its dramatic, architectural expression.

Writing about his work Phardel says, "My sculpture has always been inspired from my immediate environment. My primary interest lies in the physical processes of making sculpture and the transformation that takes place both visually as well as psychologically when disparate materials are placed together. I want to make work that you want to be with as well as look at."

Sharon Que (born Querciagrossa) works as a sculptor and a violin and viola maker/restorer. Her sculpture is integrally linked to her passion for music and the objects that can create musical expression with the ability to achieve transcendence. There is a significant relationship between Que's violin work and her sculpture, each informing the other.

Writing about her approach to visual art and its relationship to the viewer Que says, "I think about the distance that is traveled from observing an image, to that image becoming an integration of the thinking and actions of our real life. Many of my sculptures I describe as a machine that transforms something. Like the multiple states that water can have, not all is visible. Growth and movement are implied, while I try to keep opposites in equilibrium. What I am aiming for doesn't have a sound or image. It is a silent illumination."

While visiting Phardel and Que's Ann Arbor studios last summer I was keenly aware of how seriously they take their work as artists and how deep their minds travel to places and objects of inspiration. They are both intellectually and emotionally charged as they think about the forms and shapes, the content and personal expression of their work, and its affect on the viewer.

The Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum is proud to launch this major exhibition by Tom Phardel and Sharon Que, whose work shown together makes a great impact while sacrificing nothing to their independent articulation.

Acknowledgements

A grant from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment for the Arts made the *Tom Phardel and Sharon Que, A Three Dimensional Perspective* exhibition possible. I want to thank these dedicated agencies for recognizing the value and importance of the arts in our lives and for supporting museums that exhibit the work of our gifted artists. I also want to acknowledge our elected officials in Lansing and Washington who support these two agencies with an annual budget allocation, the result of which is a healthy cultural environment for Michigan residents and visitors.

While most of Phardel's work was created for this exhibition, five collectors loaned work from their private collections and I thank them for their generosity: James Dozier, Myron and Joyce Laban, Tim and Marilyn Mast, Kaiser Sudan, and Kay Yourist.

I want to thank Andrea Ondish for her tenacity and skill in getting the catalog designed and to the printer on time, and the entire Museum staff for assisting in the installation of the exhibition.

Marilyn L. Wheaton,
Museum Director

Tom Phardel and Sharon Que, A Three Dimensional Perspective

February 4, 2012 to May 26, 2012
Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum



Marshall M. Fredericks
SCULPTURE MUSEUM



SAGINAW VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY

7400 Bay Road
University Center, Michigan 48710
989.964.7125
www.marshallfredericks.org

Tom Phardel

An unending search for form informs Tom Phardel's artistic journey. For him, the search for simple universal forms began at Eastern Michigan University where he discovered clay. After graduating with a BFA, he enrolled in graduate school at The University of Michigan and his focus on form deepened. In 1988, after earning a MFA and several teaching jobs, Phardel began his twenty-four year career as Ceramic Chair at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit. Although he teaches ceramics, Phardel works in a range of materials in the first floor of the Ann Arbor studio he shares with his wife and fellow artist, Sharon Que. This exhibition reveals the results of that search, the ongoing subtraction of form in ceramics, metal and glass.

A raised, elongated oval appears across his work, sometimes doubled. In a shape he refers to as a bi-lobe form, two such openings lead to largely un-seeable interior space, serving as the central focus of his painted metal piece *Red Bindu*. An opening, a portal, it's an archetype Phardel returns to again and again. The opening void is seen in the *Inner Core*, forms he views as heroic icons. Created from steel and precisely assembled, pieces hover on the wall, frozen and floating in space. He created the first piece in this series some fifteen years ago. He returns to the form periodically for new explorations. They reveal another of Phardel's preoccupations, the treatment of surface. For him, the welding, painting, sanding, patinating, and burnishing of the surface are techniques to achieve surface ambiguity that imply wear and age. Enamel paint evokes a worn surface covered in milk paint, and the underlying material becomes mysterious...perhaps it is wood, or maybe ceramic? Thus a multi-part, lightweight metal shape achieves the illusion of visual weight, drawing the inquisitive viewer near.

Phardel cites travel as having the greatest impact on his work. "Seeing artisans making objects that represent perhaps a thousand years of tradition fascinates and inspires me. Their techniques show both a long chain of continuous creative tradition and small evolutions of change over time; such a contrast to society's obsession with the new. In my work, it's very important there is an underlying sense of time," he says.

From his trip to Israel, a revelatory first experience with the ancient, to travels in Egypt, Thailand, Japan and India, these experiences are seen in his ceramic forms, visual reveries on landscapes, visits to temples and sacred spaces. Often tightly enclosed, even constricted, within a circular surrounding wall, Phardel places oval openings within a mountain-like form. The viewer's eye is able to journey through these spaces, whether entering from above, exploring the encompassing walls, or peering through a portal to a gilded surface, but interior space is only partially revealed. Again, the surface treatment is important, implying history and even use, with crackled glazes layered over lunar like surfaces. In creating these surfaces, "I see my ceramic work as a partnership with the kiln," remarks Phardel. After hand building the often double-walled clay form, the process of firing brings the inevitable element of surprise.

Whether acid etched, or sandblasted and slumped, glass is used for its translucency. Combined with patinated steel platforms, he creates both intimate wall-mounted stages and large-scale pieces like *Temple Totem* that invite the observer to come closer, exploring beyond the first frontal but distorted glance. Phardel comments, "I want that first view to inspire the curiosity that leads to a side view." Behind his glass "doors" are explorations in color and shapes, whose ambiguity, after drawing the viewer in, generate individual impressions and interpretations.

As a teacher, he often encourages students to look around them for inspiration. Bricks he spotted that had been demolished and were going to a dumpster, presented him with one of those creative opportunities. In *The Wall*, a shattered kiln brick, dripping with glassy globs, is offered on a granite slab, incised with channels for water. The separated brick surfaces are highlighted with gilding and the careful presentation allows us to glimpse the quiet beauty in the everyday, even the used and discarded, so often overlooked. What's next for Phardel in this ongoing journey? He smiles, "I'm going to continue the search."

Josephine Shea,
Curator, Edsel and Eleanor Ford House



Inner Glow, resin, steel, foam, 7" x 11" x 8", 2008

In my art I try to distill universal forms and experiences to their core essence: Portals exposing hidden interior spaces; surfaces that have acquired a visual language of usage and time; ephemeral translucent elements that transmit only the essential outlines of form and color. These elements tell the human story—a yearning to understand the unknown. In much of my ceramic work, I reference distilled abstract landscape narratives, the vessel rims serve as a frame to house the interior imagery. Like a classical musician, I play the score over and over and try to put subtle changes and nuances within the series until I get it “right,” to have the form, color and surface all working together in a delicate balance.

Lately, in my metal work, I’ve added the element of pure saturated color—red and blue. Again, my aim is to strip the form down to its core and allow the color to be the dominate force adding the emotional narrative in support of the form and line.

This exhibition spans many years and serves as an over view of my thoughts and process. I hope the pure love of making objects comes through clearly, as well as the need to communicate deeper experiential thoughts within a simple framework. I want to make work you want to be with and look at.

Tom Phardel,
January 2012



Blue Eyes, patinated steel, 28" x 30" x 8", 2011



Blue Eyes side view



Inner Core, patinated steel, 102" x 16" x 20", 1999



Inner Core front view



Open Core, patinated steel, 106" x 15" x 16", 2005

Open Core front view



Zig-Zag Totem, 96" x 12" x 16", 2011



Zig-Zag Totem front view



Red Bindu, patinated steel,
32" x 18" x 9", 2009



Temple Totem, adobe clay, glass, steel,
55" x 14" x 24", 2005



Spirit, steel, acid etched kiln formed glass, paint, 16" x 12" x 9", 2008



Spirit side view



The Couple, ceramic, acid etched formed glass, steel, 16" x 24" x 10", 2008



The Wall, ceramic, glass, steel, gold leaf, 20" x 16" x 8", 2010



Plateau Vessel, ceramic,
7" x 10" x 23", 2010



Detail of *Plateau Vessel*



Double Mountain Vessel, ceramic, 8" x 9" diameter, 2011



Details of Double Mountain Vessel



Twin Peaks, ceramic, 9" x 22" diameter, 2011



Detail of Twin Peaks

TOM PHARDEL

Education

M.F.A., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1977

B.F.A., Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan, 1972

Academic Appointments

Chairperson, Ceramics Department, College for Creative Studies, Detroit, Michigan, 1988-present

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1987

Pewabic Pottery, Detroit, Michigan, 1982-1986

Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan, 1981, 1987-1988

Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, 1978-1980

Selected Exhibitions and Awards

2011 *Tom Phardel and Steve Heinemann, Santa Fe Clay Exhibit*, Santa Fe, New Mexico

2011 *Tom Phardel*, Yourist Studio Gallery, Ann Arbor, Michigan

2010 *Closing the Circle*, Pewabic Pottery, Detroit, Michigan

2009 *Tom Phardel*, Lemberg Gallery, Ferndale, Michigan

2008 *Spirit*, Gallery Project, Ann Arbor, Michigan

2008 *Risk Takers and Innovators, a Tribute to John Stephenson*, The Clay Gallery, Ann Arbor, Michigan

2008 *Constructed, Tom Phardel/Sharon Que*, Gallery One, Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, Michigan

2007 *National Clay Invitational*, McNesse Art Gallery, McNesse State University, St. Charles, Louisiana

2006 *Explorations and Navigations*, 40th National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts conference, Portland, Oregon

2003 Purchase Award for Permanent Collection, Dennon Museum Center, Traverse City, Michigan

2003 *Michigan Ceramic Exhibition*, Best of Show, Michigan Potters Association

2000 *Parallel Tracks*, Bobbitt Visual Arts Center, Albion College, Albion, Michigan

2000 *Great Lakes Regional Art Exhibition*, Robbie Carmichael Arts Award, Midland Center for the Arts, Midland, Michigan

1993 *Fourth Annual Michigan Outdoor Sculpture Exhibition*, First Prize, Southfield Civic Center, Southfield, Michigan

1992 *Michigan Ceramics Exhibition*, Best of Show, Pewabic Pottery, Detroit, Michigan

1991 *The Shigoraki Ceramic Cultural Park*, a cultural exchange of ceramic artists between the US and Japan, Shiga Prefecture, Japan

1987 Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, Creative Artist Grant

Major Commissions

1987 The Detroit People Mover, Times Square Station, Detroit, Michigan

1980 Henry Ford Community College, Community Arts Building, Dearborn, Michigan

Museum Collections

The Detroit Institute Of Arts, Detroit, Michigan

Dennon Museum Center, Traverse City, Michigan

Publications

The Spirit of Ceramic Design: Cultivating Creativity with Clay, Robert Piepenburg

Sharon Que

The pursuit of ideas has propelled Sharon Que's work for the past several years – adding and subtracting, meditating and mediating – with the goal of creating art that generates energy and ideas. While intently listening to music that for her creates an atmosphere of infinite space, she works moving between the three work rooms on the second floor of her Ann Arbor studio.

Coming from a family of engineers, she loves drawing mechanically, and precise measurement of forms has always been a passion. Always trying to comprehend the universe, she has an ongoing fascination with the ways we try to measure it. It's not surprising that her favorite tool in this quest is a palm-size divider. This fascination led to a study of mathematical models, structures created to make visible the invisible, to help students grasp concepts and ideas. Historically, these models were carefully housed and presented in often elaborate cases.

Often pieces begin with a drawing on translucent paper – ideal as her work layers images, forms, objects, and meanings. Equally important is the time she spends observing: In travel and nature, where she finds ideas and forms with potential; or as she works in the studio, visually excavating the experiences that spark a combination of forms. She identifies herself as a sculptor and works skillfully with a broad array of media and materials, from the elemental to the artificial. Multiple processes can be used to achieve her desired results. For example, in the investigation of a hexagonal deltahedron form, she lays it out in two dimensions, folds paper to create a crisp model, and then casts it in rubber to create the precise shape she is seeking.

Extensive travel and study have had the greatest impact on her artistic development. The colors, traditions and deeply-rooted religious practice of India have been especially important. Although her background includes a BFA from The University of Michigan in Ceramics and an Associate Degree in Manufacturing Engineering from Macomb County Community College with a journeyman's card in wood model making, she dates the beginning of her career as an artist to 1985 after travel in the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

Que presents complex concepts within meaningfully constructed layers, making abstract ideas tangible. One of her most recent pieces, *Identity of Color*, explores concepts of color within a rectangular wooden box. Precise, incised lines are variously colored with vibrant shades of flocking and gold leaf. She has found flocking, a slightly three-dimensional material, to be an especially satisfying technique to achieve effects in color, and almost every piece incorporates a touch of gold leaf, with its rich reflective light. In *Identity of Color*, a moveable pane of glass speaks to the impact of glazing on color perception. Small drawers open to offer glimpses of saturated color, and precise in its imprecision is the table of colors and corresponding wave lengths inscribed on the side.

Believing that “change and realization happen slowly,” she is willing to repeat a process without instant gratification, patiently seeking the artistic breakthrough. Pieces are created in the work area of the studio, varnished in the space where she makes and repairs violins, and then studied in the open area. This circuit can be repeated numerous times in a varied order, she comments, “I need to be able to put things down, I pay attention to everything.” Although the ideas may be universal, the presentation is understated, requiring the viewer to look closely at her thoughtful titles that offer an entry point to the work. In *From Where I Came*, a rectangular block of acrylic is pierced by a circular metal-rimmed opening. It becomes a view hole, like a modern apartment dweller might use, or a solitary monk in Japan, whose only contact with the world outside their meditative space is framed through a similar circular opening. In Que's piece, the view is to nature, a canvas of birch bark.

Dedicated work in her studio is evidenced by one of the smallest pieces in the exhibit, *Mountain 1*. Now silvered and varnished and placed on a wood platform, the miniature Mt. Fuji-like form has been created over seven years from glue, gradually growing while she takes away small drops of the adhesive to join pieces. Que seeks to grasp the universe and the universal and make it visible, and this exhibition shares the rich results of her investigations.

Josephine Shea,
Curator, Edsel & Eleanor Ford House



The Identity of Color, black walnut, curly redwood, flocking, gold leaf, 14 ¼" x 5 ½" x 5", 2011

I believe art has endurance and a power unequaled. Sometimes you observe or hear something so profound and powerful it resonates deeply in your body and mind. The unexplained alchemy stays with you long after the initial contact. That this happens is amazing because you can own this experience in a personal way without having to actually own what made you feel this way. So as a sculptor I work in my studio to try and replicate aspects of these experiences, re-appropriating what was seen or heard and sometimes felt.

Working at my bench is where I'm most comfortable and I believe in trying to master a skill. With this I intuitively create my art, then often back it up with math or science. As understanding is taking place in the brain, it is the hinting at large structures, the essence of order, that resonates and drives me.

Sharon Que,
January 2012



Ever Expanding, black walnut, gold leaf, egg tempera, 12" x 15" x 8", 2010



Bob-Lo, wood, steel, cast bronze, paint, gold leaf, 32" x 20" x 4", 2012



From Where I Came, acrylic, egg tempera on panel, boxwood, 15" x 12" x 7", 2011



Mountain 1, glue, wood, silver leaf, 3 ¼" x 2" x 1 ¾", 2008



Evolove, slate, flocked bamboo, 12" x 8" x 6 ½", 2010



Pink Diamond, flocked bamboo, wood, 32" x 8" x 7", 2011



Propel, gilded cast rubber, flocked bamboo, aluminum, 21" x 8" x 7", 2011



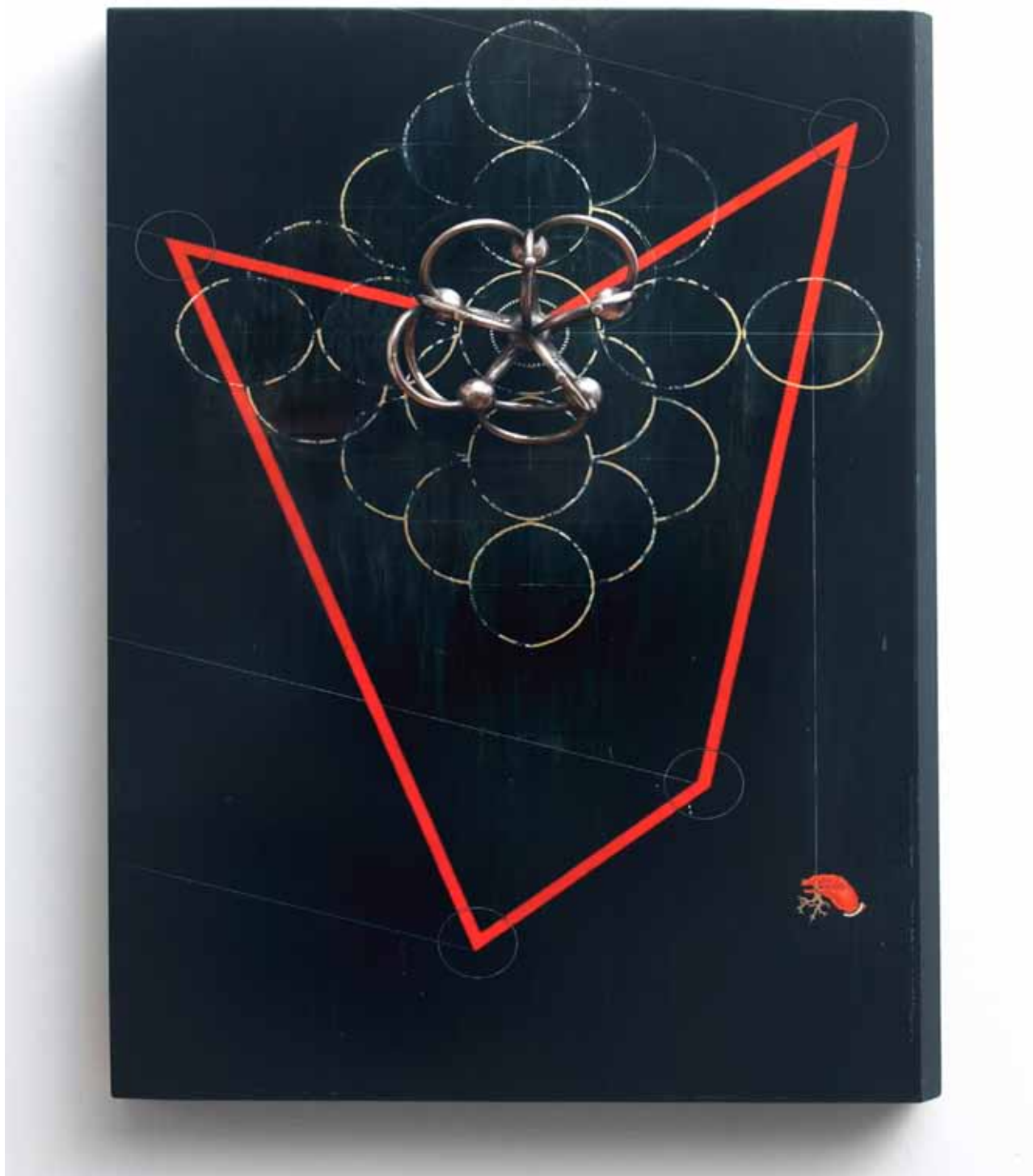
Confession, egg tempera, wood, polyethylene, 11" x 12" x 3", 2007



Aphonia, wood, ceramic, gilded cast rubber, 18" x 29" x 6", 2010



Subset, cast bronze, granite, gold leaf, flocked bamboo, 18" x 12 ½" x 5", 2010



Reconstruction, egg tempera on panel, cast bronze, 31" x 21" x 8", 2007



Telepathy, egg tempera on panel, cast bronze, wood, gold leaf, 61" x 13" x 6 ½", 2007



Invisible Link, wood, polyethylene, cast bronze, 25" x 15 ½" x 4 ½", 2005

SHARON QUE

Education

Violinmaker, 1997

Journeyman, Wood Model Maker, 1988

Associate Degree, Manufacturing Engineering, Macomb County Community College, Warren, Michigan, 1986

B.F.A., Magna Cum Laude, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1982

Selected Exhibitions

2010 *Wanderlust*, Lemberg Gallery, Ferndale, Michigan

2008 *Sculpture Constructed*, Gallery One, Ann Arbor, Michigan

2007 *New Sculpture*, Byron Roche Gallery, Chicago, Illinois

2006 *New Work*, Lemberg Gallery, Ferndale, Michigan

2005 *Automatic Desires*, Museo Italo Americano, San Francisco, California

2003 *Retrofit*, Meadow Brook Gallery, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan

2003 *Immersed*, Byron Roche Gallery, Chicago, Illinois

2001 *Loop*, Lemberg Gallery, Ferndale, Michigan

2000 *Parallel Tracks*, Bobbitt Visual Arts Center, Albion College, Albion, Michigan

2000 *Art Chicago 2000*, Navy Pier, G.R. N’Namdi Gallery, Chicago, Illinois

1999 *Seamless Motion*, G.R. N’Namdi Gallery, Chicago, Illinois

1999 *Concentric Chronology*, Warren Robbins Gallery, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

1996 *Sharon Que: Sculpture*, General Motors Institute Gallery, General Motors Institute, Flint, Michigan

1996 *Every distance is not near*, Alexa Lee Gallery, Ann Arbor, Michigan

1993 *Sculpture*, Willis Gallery, Detroit, Michigan

1993 *Sculpture*, Gallery 414, Ann Arbor, Michigan

1992 *New Sculpture*, Robert Kidd Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan

1991 *Sharon Que: Mixed Media Assemblage*, Sixteen Hands Gallery, Ann Arbor, Michigan

1990 *Assemblages*, Michigan Guild Gallery, Ann Arbor, Michigan

1989 *Sharon Que, Sculpture and Mixed Media Assemblages*, Fine Arts Gallery, Mott Community College, Flint, Michigan

1989 *Sculpture*, Michigan Gallery, Detroit, Michigan

1987 *Sharon Que, Mary Ann Jordan*, Michigan Gallery, Detroit, Michigan

1987 *Assemblages*, Ann Arbor Art Association, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Major Collections

2011 Ford Motor Company, Lincoln Studio, Dearborn, Michigan

2010 Scrollavezza & Zanrè, Parma, Italy

2007 Florida Atlantic University, Chodorkoff Collection, Boca Raton, Florida

2001 The Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan

Public Sculptures

2002 *Resound*, Oakland University, Varner Hall, Rochester, Michigan

Additional works in the exhibition not illustrated in catalog.

Sharon Que

Mutual Breath, marble, cast bronze, 50" x 7" x 4", 2012

Tom Phardel

Ancestor, steel, glass, paint, 28" x 23" x 9", 2008

Mediation Pond, ceramic, 8" x 22" diameter, 2010

Inner Temple Vessel, ceramic, 15" x 14 ½" x 14 ½", 2009

Pod, ceramic, 17" x 14" x 7", 2007

Double Slot, ceramic, 18" diameter, 2008

Golden Plateau, ceramic, 9" x 10" x 17", 2010

Double Core, ceramic, 10" x 22" diameter, 2010

Melt, ceramic, granite, water, steel, 42" x 24" x 15", 2012

Credits

Front and back cover: Tom Phardel and Sharon Que

Temple Totem: Shell Hensleigh

Tom Phardel's artwork: Tim Thayer

Sharon Que's artwork: Sharon Que

Catalog Design: Andrea Ondish



This activity is supported by the MICHIGAN COUNCIL FOR ARTS AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS and the NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

Tom Phardel's Studio

Sharon Que's Studio