

April 6–May 7, 1980
10 a.m.–4 p.m. daily

Presented by Security Pacific Bank
Security Pacific Plaza
333 South Hope Street
Los Angeles

The mixture of opposites is a constant reality; therefore, their peaceful combination is a necessity.
Woods Davy



Woods Davy is one of a growing number of artists who works and lives in downtown Los Angeles. His studio is not far from Security Pacific Plaza and it was there that I first viewed his sculptures, geometric steel forms with two dimensional drawings in tape, crossing gray slab floors. At once I was jarred by natural imagery, a hunk of tree trunk or rock form emerged unexpectedly from the sleek precision of the sculptures. This was a studied reminder of the elements from which sophisticated materials come. The materials of "the city" are that of the natural and the refined. Buildings stand with steel structures to be jarred naturally by people and landscaping. It seemed the placement of this neighbor's work, amidst the architectural precision of Security Pacific Plaza, its rough granite walls, the reflective granite floors and the garden beyond, was congruent with the environment. The thought is that Woods Davy's sculptures will help us look at our surroundings, and then, once more at his art.

Tressa Miller-Freehling
Director of Cultural Events

Catalogue of Work

Carlsbad, 1979

steel, wood, tape
6' 10" x 14' x 1' 9"

Ecuador, 1979

steel, rock, tape
1' 4" x 5' 3" x 3' 6"

Lent by Laura Lee Stearns,
Los Angeles

Kokomo, 1979

steel, wood, tape
4' 6" x 5' 11" x 8"

Macao, 1979

steel, wood, rock, tape
2' 10" x 8' 6" x 1' 5"

Oxaca, 1979

steel, rock, tape
1' 6" x 12' x 9' 3"

Panama, 1976-78

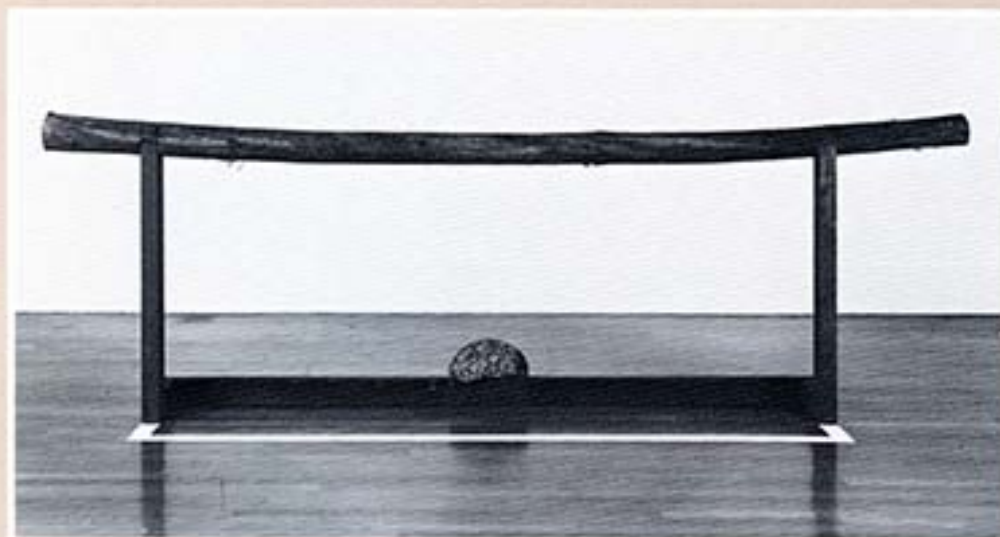
steel, wood
5' 10" x 10' 7" x 14'

Waco, 1979

steel, wood, tape
4' 4" x 1' 4" x 9' 4"



Oxaca



Macao

Cover plate *Panama*

Photography: Ron Pairis

Dimensions are given in
order of height, width,
and depth.

Woods Davy

Born: 1949, Washington, D.C.
Education: University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, M.F.A., 1975. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, B.F.A., 1972.

Selected Awards:

1977-78—C.E.T.A. Title VI Project Grant, ("Art in Public Places").

Selected Exhibitions:

1980

Federal Reserve, Washington, D.C., *Six L.A. Sculptors*, (June)
Protetch—McIntosh Gallery, Washington, D.C., *Six L.A. Sculptors*, (June-Sept.).
Maryland Institute, Baltimore, Group Sculpture exhibition (June)
University of California, Santa Barbara, College of Creative Studies, *Downtown L.A. In Santa Barbara*, (April-May)
William Sawyer Gallery, San Francisco, Solo exhibition.
Stage One Gallery, Orange, California, group exhibition, (September)

1979

Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Downtown exhibition Space, Solo exhibition, LAX 814, Los Angeles.
L.A.C.E. Gallery, Los Angeles, *Six Downtown Sculptors*.
Union Station, Los Angeles, *Art in Public Places*. Solo exhibition.

1978

Mayor's Office, Los Angeles, *Art in Public Places*.

1977

William Sawyer Gallery, San Francisco, *Introductions '77*.

1976

Mid-Continental Plaza Building, Chicago, Illinois, *New Horizons in Art*.
Ball State University, Art Gallery, Muncie, Indiana, *Annual Drawing and Small Sculpture Show*.



Kokomo

Selected References:

Ericson, Laurel, "Downtown L.A. Artists"; NBC News Special, September 26, 1979.
"Gallery Close-Ups," *Visual Dialogue*, Vol. 3 No. 1, Fall, 1977.
Guthrie, Derek, *New Art Examiner*, July 1975.
Hugo, Joan, "Six Downtown Sculptors," *Artweek*, April 21, 1979.
Muchnic, Suzanne, "New York Painter; L.A. Sculptors," *Los Angeles Times*.

Muchnic, Suzanne, "Public Art, Public Problems," *Artweek*, May 5, 1979.

Muchnic, Suzanne, "A Train of Thought at Union Station," *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 1979.

Price-Root, Susan, "Home is Where the Art is," *New West Magazine*, July 3, 1978.

Seidenbaum, Art, "When Artists Go Public," *Los Angeles Times*, February 15, 1978.

Wortz, Melinda, *Art News*, December, 1979.

Measuring the invisible is a task we each perform daily — from rapid lane changes to shooting pool — with varying degrees of accuracy and elegance. Gauging distance, estimating surface, judging volume, calculating velocity, imagining perspectives, are skills we practice casually, filling the space around us with the unseen trajectories, grids and parabolas of an intuitive geometry.

Woods Davy's current work springs from this activity with the elegant assurance of a topological surveyor, suggesting almost palpable wedges of space with the most economical of means, laying out sight-lines of tape and metal that seem to gather the air into measurable volumes.

This skillful gathering-in of space implies the kind of easy familiarity with geometric principles which Michael Baxandall describes as the basis for the education of the artist in the Renaissance. He reminds us that Piero della Francesca was the author of a mathematical treatise intended for use by merchants at a time when there were still no standard weights and measures and a merchant's livelihood depended on skill at estimating volume accurately. This concern was shared by the artist, who sought to render volume and space with precision. These skills, commonly practiced and prized by merchant and artist alike, led to the development of "... certain habits of inference — such as a presumption that the bit you cannot see is a regular continuation of the part you can — not only this, but a factor of energy and interest as well: that is, we will not bother to get this far unless we enjoy the exercise in some way, even if only from the level of exercising skills we value highly."¹ This is the operative presumption here. The ambiguity of the interplay of metal and tape extends each shape well beyond its visible periphery, as shadows do. One is no longer sure where each piece really begins or ends, as though something had been removed or were about to be added. This suggestion of borrowing space increases the interest of the exercise.

The space thus suggested is an architectural space. The defiance of gravity, implicit in all architecture, is expressed here in the placement, on a rim of each structure, of a focus of tension — a stone, a log, a burned stump — extrusions of found natural objects whose mass rests solemnly on the edge, interrupting the linear paths with their weight. In some cases these extrusions become the line, spanning two points, completing the enclosure. Each stone, each piece of wood seems to have come to rest at a precisely chosen fulcrum of kinetic tension, anchoring the imaginary pressures and energies of each spatial diagram in such a way that no other placement appears possible. They are occurrences, having found their way through space, propelled along some unseen tangent of their own until they intersect with the place they are supposed to be, with a kind of

Magrittean logic that leaves little room for doubt. We are tempted to speculate about each shape without its anchor; perhaps it would spring apart, angles snapping suddenly from acute to obtuse; perhaps it is only the weight and location of these stones and logs that make the structures stable. A piece like *Ecuador* states clearly the basic variables of this puzzle: a simple line, part tape, part metal, describes a triangle, then jogs upward and outward to form a bridge across the floor. At the point at which this line moves back toward the floor a piece of granite has inexplicably come to rest. Is the stone forcing the line downward? Or does the line spring up from the floor, bending as it encounters the stone, zig-zagging across the floor to escape it, disappearing into taped illusion? Would the crossed, rectangular arms of *Oxaca* rotate outward somehow without the granite anchor? Do the logs astride the lintels of *Kokomo* and *Carlsbad* keep each in its place or have the lines thrust upward to meet them in space?

The opposition of forces at work in each piece — movement and anchorage, change and permanence — is compelling and exciting. And the precision of placement of mass on a simple geometric construction produces a classic balance. The closed shapes, the borrowed space, the natural surfaces of rusted metal, granite and wood, the contrast of tension and balance, danger and safety, finally produce a sense of control and serenity.

While each piece is a *focus* (i.e., "the envelope of a system of lines, curves, or surfaces") it is also a location, a fixed space, offering shelter. These imaginary wedges and blocks of space are defined by an opening, an entrance into a chambered void, like doorways among ruins. In the complicated spatial evolution of *Panama* is the anchored opening which is stable, safe. In contrast to the dynamics of the angles and lines, the bridge seems peaceful and secure. And in the symmetry of *Macao* we are offered the possibility of simultaneous entrance and exit, of mirrored passage, or finally, of resting poised, like the stone at the base of the torii-like shape, contemplating the space on either side, measuring the invisible.

The success of Davy's work depends, then, on his skill at suggesting this range of possibilities using the simplest materials with clarity, directness and economy. The operative presumptions about spatial relationships are exercised to express attitudes about psychological relationships, creating metaphors of perception on all levels.

Joan Hugo

¹Baxandall, Michael — *Painting and experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*. Oxford, 1972, p. 86 ff.