

# 3 Sculptures & a Town



Isaac Resnikoff

This small book was assembled in part as a “*record of creative work*,” in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Art, in the sculpture specialization at the University of California, Los Angeles.

It is filed with the University Library to that end.

Photographs in the book are taken from a thesis exhibition at UCLA’s New Wight Gallery. As such, and in addition to the sculptures with which this book is concerned, they may also contain artworks by Michael Dopp, Erica Love & Camilo Ontiveros.

# 3 Sculptures & a Town

Isaac Resnikoff, 2009

# Making a Town



Here we are, making a town. It can be anything we want it to be, we just have to decide. All we have to do is make up our minds and we can get this right.

We can have Llano Del Rio if we want to, but better, and longer lasting. We can make Paris or a moon base or just a row of houses all in a line. A place for only rich people or just poor people or lotus eaters or free-love hippies or Babylon 5 space aliens or animals who can talk.





Or something better or worse than all of these but we'll have decide what we want to do. We'll have to make some choices.

# Untitled (Palm Tree)

*from across the room*

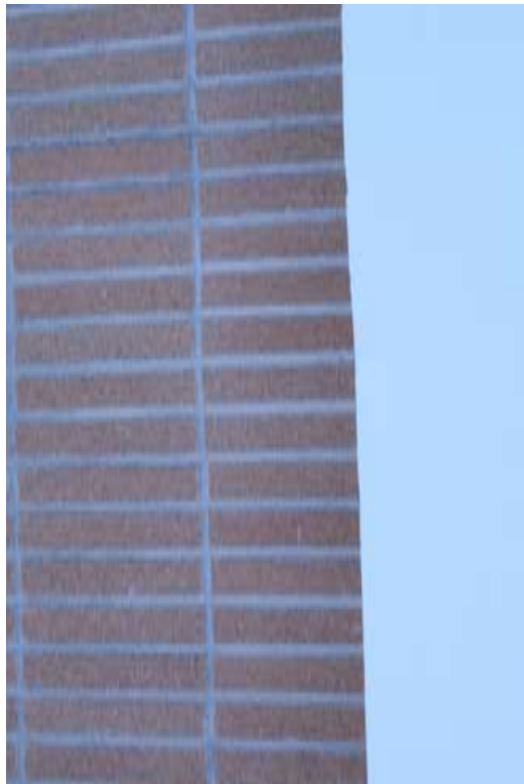


The Palm Tree is bolted to the floor.



The bolt is an axle, and the room is rotating.







(Actually this isn't unique to the Palm Tree. Every column points straight at the center of the earth and the planet can spin on most of them. We know this from spy movies set in Washington DC, from the helicopters circling the Washington Monument. We know this from lighthouses.)

# Untitled (Jersey Barrier)

*from across the room*

The first time you see it you are looking (from a distance and an angle) at its face. It is twenty feet long and this length stretches backwards at a 45 degree slant to your looking.

At this distance it is possible that for a second you ignore it, since the thing it pretends to be is so ubiquitous.





In this moment, before you  
recognize the thing but after  
you've noticed it, the work  
is still a skeleton; it is an  
organization of space and mass  
but not yet of meaning.

For now we can say:



*It makes two places (this side*



*that side) out of the space.*

*It requires a choice of the viewer.*

*It can not move.*

# Untitled (Palm Tree)

*closer, recognized*

There is a place for every sculpture where the sculpture and the thing it depicts are in tension. Before and After (Closer or Further Away) it will behave more like an artwork than like a word, but here it is both.

This applies to abstract forms as well as representations. And actually, of these three sculptures, the palm tree is the least recognizable as the thing it depicts. The thing you see here is the scale and movement of the surrounding space.

In effect the Palm Tree makes the room bigger, it amplifies your movements in relation to it so that every step becomes ten and the room rushes past you as you move.

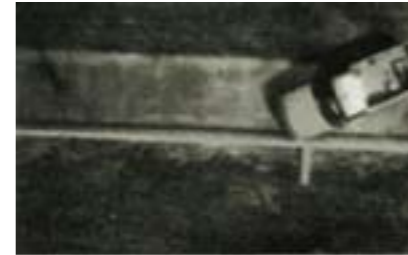


# Untitled (Jersey Barrier)

*closer, recognized*



A Jersey Barrier isn't a wall – it doesn't arrest your motion by absorbing your force. Instead it redirects you, “convinces” you to turn back to the road. As a model of authority it is diversionary – more subtle than a block of concrete seems.





And it is appropriate that something so mischievous should seem so mundane, that it should be familiar to us from construction sites and highway medians even as it is deployed to prevent car bombings at federal buildings and in Iraq. It seems in character that its control be exerted in a manner to which we have become accustomed.

# Other People

*from across the room*



Now here is a crowd of people, flattened into a freestanding two-sided bas relief.

Actually the mass of the crowd isn't flattened so much as it oscillates between flat and full: it is a bellows that forces the air out of the crowd and takes it in again.

When we come across them  
first, from the other room,  
they have their backs to us  
and we wonder what they are  
looking at.





When we come around to the other side we see that they are looking at us.

And there is a choice in this relationship, a literal taking of sides.



# Other People

*closer, recognized*



Of all of the meanings of this crowd of people, though, the one I'm the least interested in is the specific cause for which they've assembled. It doesn't matter to the piece, nor is it addressed.



To be precise, the viewer may bring her own memories and associations to the work – she can “color in” the crowd in some sense. But this isn't information provided by the work.

Rather, *Other People* is concerned with the political, emotional and physical relationship of an individual (the viewer) to a crowd of others. The viewer is implicated by the structure of the work and his movement around the piece is consistently significant to its meaning, so that whatever purpose the crowd has, the viewer moves consciously in and out of alignment with it.



Viewing the work becomes activated as a moral decision.




In the end, though, no matter where we stand, all we know is that they aren't us.



# Other People

*close enough to touch*



And the closer we get to them,  
the more they fall apart.

# Untitled (Jersey Barrier)

*close enough to touch*



The *Jersey Barrier* is twenty feet long.

It is divided into five blocks, each of which is made of 33 sections.

Only later (after the sections were assembled, laminated together to form blocks, and placed next to one another to form the whole) were large blocks of alder carved to resemble the “losses” that a Jersey barrier acquires through its use. These pieces were then inserted into the assembled Barrier, and cut flush.













The effect of the inserted “losses” in the *Jersey Barrier* is to allow the piece to contain more time than it otherwise could have. If the *Barrier* had somehow been carved from a single tree it would have gone right away from a big block of wood to a broken old Jersey Barrier. It would never have been new.

But built as it is, transparently assembled and only then altered, the *Barrier* can hold these two times within it: it can be both new and old, both before and after.



The edge where the dumber, older and geometric form of the whole meets the quicker, more photographic insertions is a literal division between past and present, between a force and its opposite. This edge is the point where a specific person and moment (artist?/viewer?/drunk driver?/insurgent?/skateboarder?) intersects a physically inevitable authority.

In a sense these deliberately inserted wounds switch the piece over, from effector to effected, from authority to subject. And the viewer can switch places, too.



# Untitled (Palm Tree)

*close enough to touch*

And it's weird, but the graceful Palm seems more immune to this kind of intersection. The Palm Tree's space is big and fast and open, but what are we to it?

The North Pole doesn't care who got there first.

# Making a Town

Here we are, making a town.  
It can be anything we want it  
to be, we just have to decide.  
All we have to do is make up  
our minds and we can get this  
right.

We can have New Llano, LA if  
we want to, but bigger, and for  
longer. We can make Milan or  
Cape Canaveral or just a row of  
houses all in a line. A place for  
only rich people or just poor  
people or argonauts or sex  
cults and waring space aliens  
and animals who can talk.



Or something better or worse  
than all of these but we'll have  
decide what we want to do.

It's a hot day, the first day of  
summer, and I have burrs in  
my socks but if we take our  
time I think that we can get  
this right. We'll just need to  
make a few choices.





