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Shawn Patrick Landis
Takashi Murakami
Cai Guo-Qiang

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Dalya Luttwak, *Roots: The Hidden Half (California Thistle—A Weed)*, 2007. Steel, work shown in "Architecture/Sculpture."

This video departs from the others in a few key ways: it commands beauty; it blurs abstraction and representation because of the delivery speed (in only a few images is the lamp recognizable); and it essentially re-creates its deconstructed subject, with its pulsing rhythm echoing that of pumping blood. As with Ferguson's earlier experiments, once he assembles the apparatus and determines the process, the machine takes over, with no possibility of the nuance found in traditional carving.

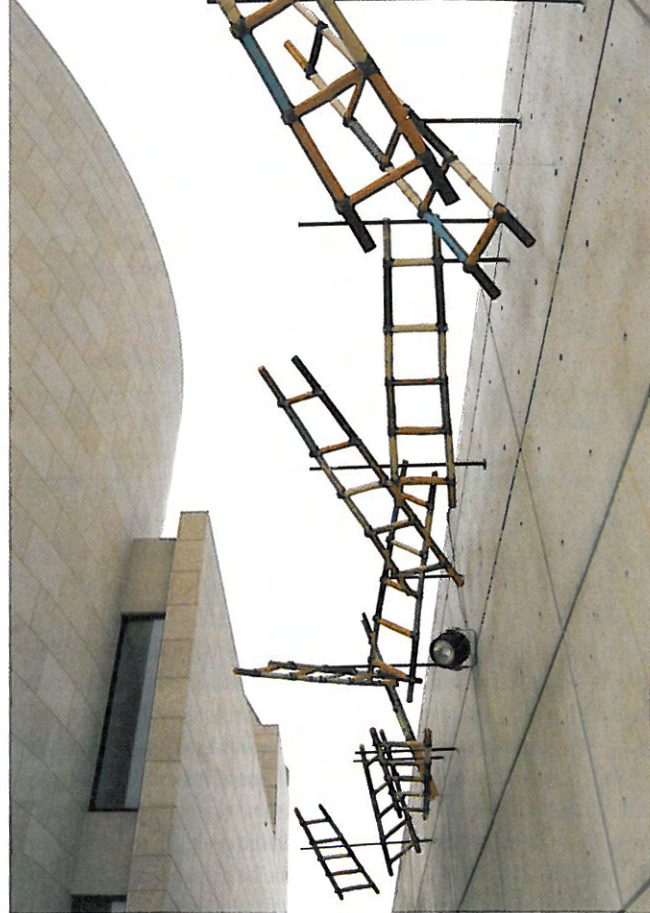
Ferguson's endeavors begin by exploring the relation between human and object on a physical level and end up in a permeable zone where the two seem to exchange roles. While weighing similarities and differences, we are reminded of the obvious: objects will never gain the self-awareness that we possess. In this regard, the most telling paradox of his work is an appreciation of our own death.

—Sarah Tanguy

WASHINGTON, DC
"Architecture/Sculpture"
 Katzen Arts Center, American University Museum

The Washington Sculptor's Group is a consortium of Washington, DC-based artists who coordinate member exhibitions at various venues around the metropolitan area. The group's best shows are those that question longstanding definitions surrounding sculpture. For instance, the 11 works featured in "Architecture/Sculpture," curated by John Beardsley, questioned the need to separate the built environment and three-dimensional artworks into discrete categories. The most successful pieces drew attention to the shared vocabulary of architecture and sculpture, exploited the overlap of form and function in both categories, and drew attention to how architecture and sculpture can each enhance the experiential nature of the other.

"Architecture/Sculpture" was set in the Sylvia Berlin Katzen Sculpture



Alonzo Davis, *Sky Ladders*, 2006. Pine and mixed media, work shown in "Architecture/Sculpture."

Garden, a subterranean, roughly horseshoe-shaped space. The outer perimeter is square (it also functions as the retaining wall for the earth behind it), and the inner perimeter, formed by the eastern wall of the museum, is curved. Viewers can enter this space from both ends of the horseshoe, taking the subterranean exit from the museum or descending a steep flight of stairs from street level. The sculptures installed at the entrances aptly captured the experience of entering the space while playing with art historical notions of form and function.

Alonzo Davis's *Sky Ladders*, which was unexpectedly positioned at the street-level entrance to the stairs, consisted of 11 handmade ladders attached to metal rods projecting from the retaining wall. The rods were all installed at the same horizontal level, just below the street, but the ladders themselves rose and fell, pointing in every direction. As

experienced, *Sky Ladders* gave the sensation of tumbling, gravity-defying commotion. As the viewer moved along its length, trying to get a closer look, the stairs seemed to join in the fun: following the horizontal installation also meant descending the stairs, a path that took one further from the ladders. Davis took two jabs at traditional form/function relationships—not only in his obviously functionless ladders, but also in the ways that his installation rendered the surrounding architecture equally useless. Stairs, as it turns out, make lousy viewing platforms.

Dalya Luttwak's works were more literal, but they also questioned notions of form and function. Two pieces from her series "Roots: The Hidden Half" were installed on the wall outside the museum entrance to the sculpture garden. Exiting the museum felt like stepping into a canyon, with Luttwak's steel "weeds" crawling up the wall. ▼

Installed as art (and appropriately labeled), they were flat against the viewing surface, placed at eye level, and extended upward. At the same time, however, the subject matter reminded viewers that this “gallery wall” simultaneously holds back thousands of pounds of rocks, soil, and clay. The roots also drew attention to the fact that the creation of architectural space means removing natural materials and reiterated the familiar trope of art conquering death. Luttwak’s work was particularly interesting here because it revealed where the worlds of architecture and the plastic arts (quite literally) coincide.

Barbara Josephs Liotta’s *Terrace Descent* also examined the shared vocabulary of sculpture and architecture. Over a corner facing the stairs, Liotta used cord to suspend chunks of black marble and granite from a series of parallel metal rods. As the rods receded into the corner, the marble and granite pieces likewise seemed to recede, resulting in an inverted “marble staircase.” Like Davis’s piece, Liotta’s work removed all sense of functionality. And like Luttwak, Liotta called up notions of quarries and earth movers.

But Liotta’s work also exploited the architecture of the space by incorporating motion. As the wind swept down the stairs, *Terrace Descent* shifted and twisted, despite its apparent weight. The work combined the kinetic experience of sculpture with the environmental experience of the space itself.

Martha Jackson Jarvis and Bo Simeon also presented works that tightly conversed with the sculpture garden. Other works were less successful: they either referred to architecture too generally or reflected the materials, forms, and colors of the sculpture garden in a flat, obvi-

ous way. Nevertheless, “Architecture/Sculpture” raised some intriguing questions about the compulsion to distinguish these art forms when, in fact, they can share many characteristics.

—Claire Huschle

CHICAGO

Bernard Williams

Thomas McCormick Gallery

With its colorfully festooned vernacular signage advertising beer, booze, snacks, and other services, Pete and Jack’s Food and Liquor isn’t significantly different from other locally owned corner stores in predominantly African-American neighborhoods in Chicago, areas often lacking chain supermarkets. What elevates Pete and Jack’s above the ordinary, however, is that it inspired painter and sculptor Bernard Williams—whose West-Side studio is a couple of blocks away—to create *Liquor Store*, an installation of cut-out and black-painted plywood, constructed with the help of an architect friend’s digital renderings. The walk-in sculpture re-imagines such stores—as ubiquitous in some neighborhoods as storefront churches—as spiritual

spaces, latticed with stained glass-like images and inscriptions: “Dmitri Gin or Vodka,” “\$3.00 Magnum,” “Cold Cuts Milk,” “One Stop.” The installation is crowned with a mosque-like dome, referring to the Arab-Americans who manage many of these inner-city stores, “magnetic places where people collect and connect on corners,” according to Williams.

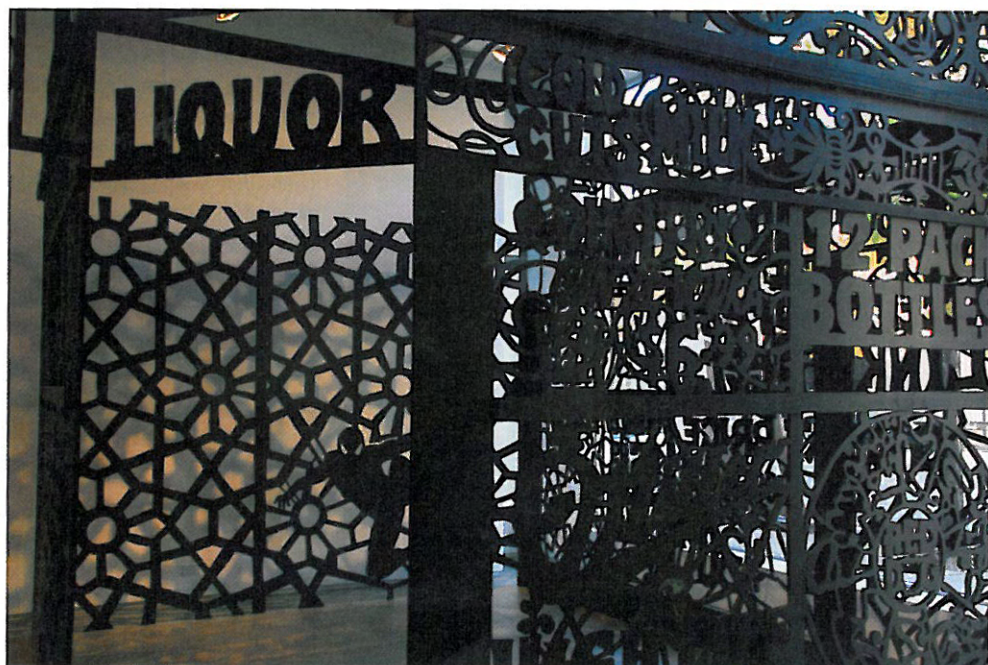
Liquor Store, the centerpiece of Williams’s recent exhibition, “Food and Liquor,” continues his three-dimensional exploration of urban forms and sources, a “cultural mixing and overlapping” of the high and low, as he calls it. Made primarily with a jigsaw and painted birch plywood, the 26 featured pieces—nine freestanding or wall mounted and 17 small enough to fit on shelves, some with neon, metal, or fabric (all but one from 2007)—refer to architecture, ornamentation, pop culture (like comics), handmade signage, and street art, including Islamic graffiti, which can be found in Chicago.

That Williams, who’s African American, derives energy from the streets is no accident: he made his mark locally as a community mural-

ist and nationally as a painter of what he calls “culture charts,” canvases consisting of horizontal bands of hieroglyph-like images, symbols, and designs (along with texts) derived from the diverse cultures that have inhabited North America—a visual re-imagining of American history that stresses the non-linear, intertwined stories of Native, African, Latin, and European peoples.

In the early 2000s, Williams’s flat imagery evolved into freestanding objects, black pictographic silhouettes, made from layers of differently curved and contoured plywood joined together to resemble “sculpture drawings.” Several years ago, in a technical and aesthetic tour de force, he exhibited a series of abstracted wood cutouts based on the “ornamental systems” of Louis Sullivan, investigating the Chicago architect’s contradiction between utilitarianism (“form follows function”) and his lush, nature-inspired embellishments.

While the biomorphic, Sullivan influence is evident in floor pieces such as *C.P.S. #7* and *Puff #2* and several of the small shelf pieces,



Bernard Williams, *Liquor Store*, 2007. Painted wood, detail of installation.