



Michael Dunbar Sculptures

July 13 – October 13, 2013

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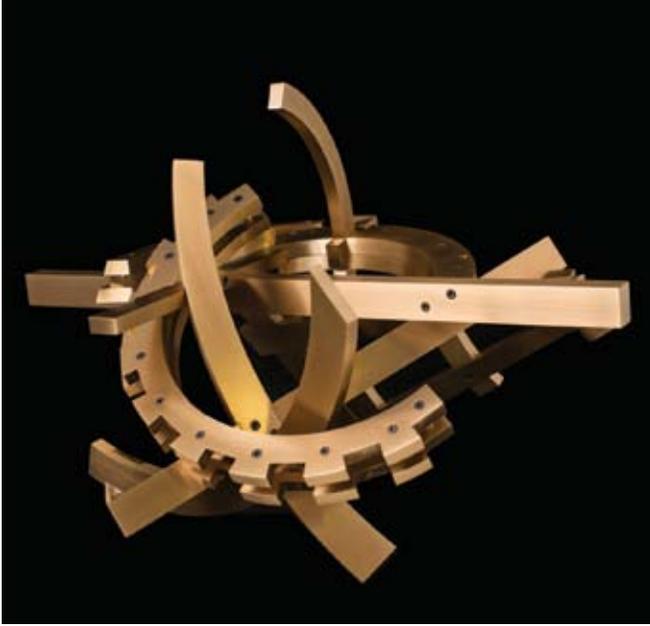


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Throughout history, sculptors have solidified their reputations by their large works created for public settings. From Phidias in Ancient Greece to Donatello and Michelangelo during the Renaissance and forward through Bernini, Canova, and Rodin, and continuing with artists in the last half century: sculptors have made their most enduring marks on history by creating big artworks for important settings.

Likewise, Illinois artist Michael Dunbar has established an impeccable reputation by placing industrial yet stately sculptures in public settings across the eastern half of the country. For over 35 years, dozens of his large-scale steel and bronze sculptures have been collected and commissioned to enrich the environment and inspire all who view them. In August 2013, the Sioux City Art Center is proud to become the site of *Touched by the Sun*. This beautiful bronze sculpture expands the mark Dunbar has made on the physical and cultural landscape of America by becoming the first of his monumental works to be permanently installed west of the Mississippi River.

Touched by the Sun is part of an ongoing series of works that Dunbar calls *Relics from the Future*. Born in 1947 and having spent most of his life in the Midwest, Dunbar became interested in engineering, machines, and tools at an early age. Those interests can still be found in his work. His curiosity about instruments and mechanics led to an appreciation for the beauty that exists at the intersection of design and function. Just as he has remained fascinated by the designs and technologies of both physical and scientific explorations of the past, he has conceived the sculptures



Fig. 3

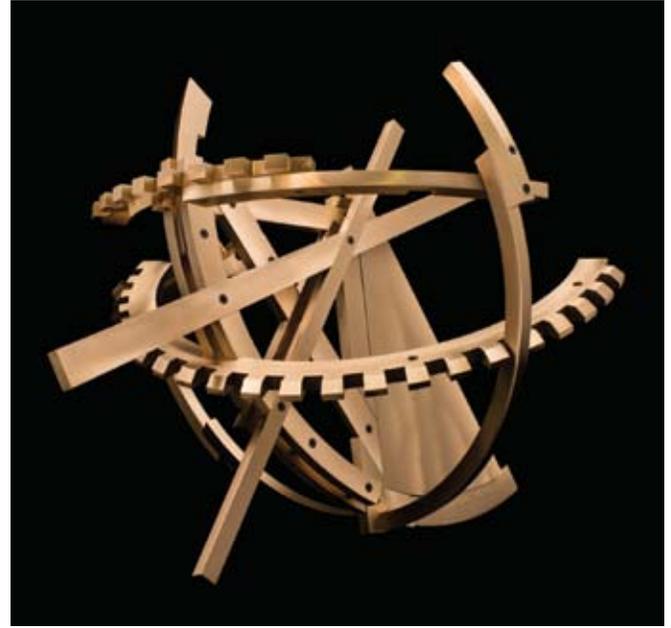


Fig. 4

in this series “to create references to the remnants of future mechanical instruments as if looking back on those objects one hundred years later.”

In anticipation of the installation of *Touched by the Sun* and to give visitors an opportunity to see as much of Michael Dunbar’s work as possible, the Art Center is pleased to present an exhibition of his “Machinist Studies.” He has been creating these small-scale sculptures for many years, even as his outdoor work has become increasingly popular. Though much smaller in size than his outdoor works, the Machinist Studies are designed and constructed with the same attention to detail found in Dunbar’s large works. Some of these works, such as *Touched by the Sun*, have been created as maquettes, to-scale models that have been used to create larger works. Others have been created as great sculptures in a smaller size. Still, behind the creation of all the Machinist Studies lies, Dunbar says, “the idea that they are ‘ALL’ going to be built to a larger scale at some time.”

The Machinist Studies allow us to do a number of things we cannot do when faced with one of Dunbar’s large works. We can see the sculptures easily from all possible angles. We can marvel, as viewers from around the country have done, at the creative lines and forms of his sculptures, while sensing the adventurous spirit that has inspired their designs. We can admire the beauty of his sculptures on a scale and in an environment that accentuates Dunbar’s fascination with mechanical devices. His Machinist Studies stir our imaginations by drawing references to tools of exploration: nautical instruments, satellites, and other pieces of scientific

cover

Touched by the Sun, 2012

cast and machined bronze, 14 H x 14 W x 12 D inches
Sioux City Art Center Permanent Collection
Purchased with funds from the M. A. Martin Everist
Foundation, with additional support provided by the
Gilchrist Foundation and Heffernan Fund

This “Machinist Study” is the model for the
14 H x 14 W x 12 D feet, *Touched by the Sun*.

Fig. 1 *Cassiopeia*, 2009, cast and machined bronze
12 x 15 x 16 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 2 *Orbits of Isaac*, 2010, cast and machined bronze
19 x 20 x 25 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 3 *Astrocaster*, 2006, cast and machined bronze
15 x 14 x 19 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 4 *Trinity*, 2011, cast and machined bronze
14 x 14 x 14 inches, Courtesy of the artist



Fig. 5

equipment—all carefully crafted with the precision of fine timepieces.

What is also interesting about the Machinist Studies is that they are designed for indoor settings. This means that the sculptures remain largely in their original condition, whether painted steel or bronze. The outdoor works, meanwhile, slowly change over time as they experience the variations of weather in a typical year. The bright, polished bronze of the outdoor *Touched by the Sun* will give way to a greater variety of colors and finishes as it is touched annually not only by the sizzling summer sun but the frigid snows of Sioux City winters as well. It will age in a way that reflects the ideas behind Dunbar's *Relics from the Future* series. All the while, the Machinist Study *Touched by the Sun* will retain its sheen, increasing the sense that these sculptures are measuring and transcending time.

The titles of these beautiful, geometric sculptures also connect us to some of Dunbar's inspirations.

- *Buck's Embarkation* and *Arthur's Odyssey* reflect Dunbar's interest in futurist thinking, inspired in part by the broad thinking of Buckminster Fuller's architectural designs and the imaginative writings of Sir Arthur C. Clarke. Their investigations led to new ideas about how time and space can be connected through lines and geometric designs. The sculptures' strong vertical forms hint at the upward advancements in creative thinking that Fuller and Clarke made.
- Sculptures such as *Chi-Cyclotron* and *Orbits of Isaac* echo Dunbar's fascination with motion. From sources

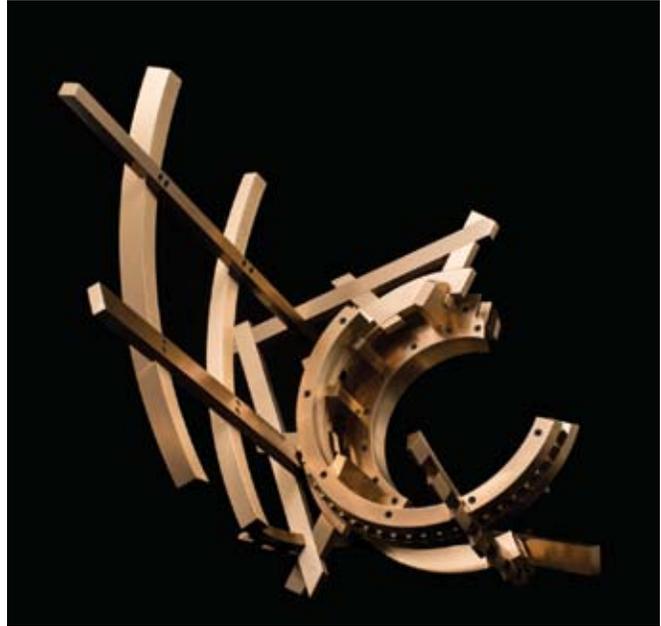


Fig. 6

ranging from Sir Isaac Newton's 17th-century scientific studies on the effect of gravity to control our solar system's movement, to the 20th-century invention of the cyclotron, a device which can accelerate particles in a spiral pattern, circular forms that suggest motion play an important role in Dunbar's work. These works are defined by especially prominent curves.

- *Astrocaster*, *Cassiopeia*, and *Telecaster* connect Dunbar's work to the exploration of the stars and the instruments used to study them. For all of recorded history, humans have used the stars to navigate across land and sea. More recently, we have looked more deeply across the universe to continue our discovery of new stars. These works are inspired both by the instruments used to watch the stars as well as the action of moving across the planet and through outer space.

The form of the Art Center's *Touched by the Sun* is connected to all of these ideas that lie behind Dunbar's work. In addition, it connects directly to both the Art Center's iconic glass atrium and Sioux City's history of industry. The nearly enclosed circles at the top and bottom imply that the sculpture has been in action and could at any time begin to work once again. The meticulous quality of Dunbar's interlocking elements, joints, and connectors is a perfect reflection of the efforts of all Sioux Cityans to work together to keep our sense of community strong.

The title of the sculpture comes from the title of a 1994 song written by Carly Simon. The connection is more than one



Fig. 7

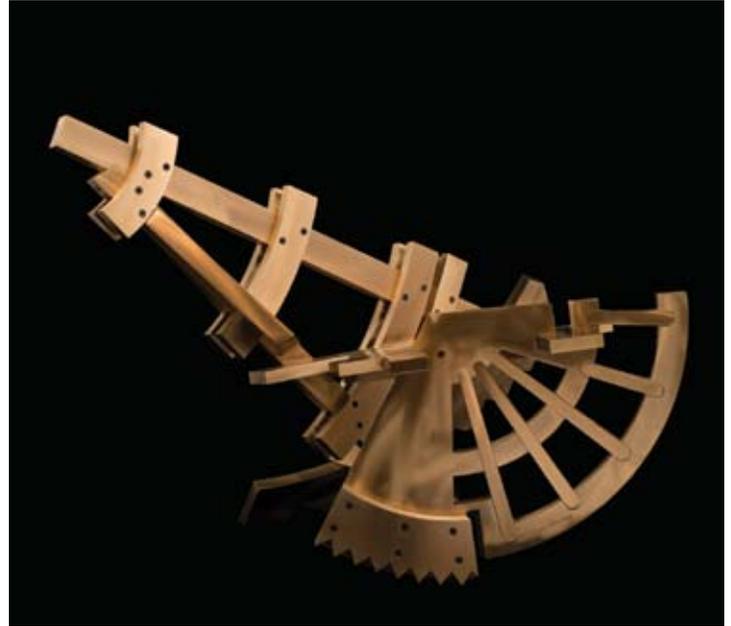


Fig. 8

artist borrowing an interesting phrase from another; Simon's lyrics are a perfect description of Dunbar's motivations to create. She wrote about the desire to reach past "the safe side of the street" in order to "be brave and reach for the top of the sky." Such bravery is found in the "soldiers and seafarers, artists and dreamers" who push our shared experiences into the previously unknown. Our future will bring unexpected challenges and wonderful accomplishments. For Michael Dunbar, these two things go hand in hand, with creative ideas always leading the way to a better future. Sioux City, like the ideals behind *Touched by the Sun*, will continue to move forward through innovation and fortitude as we, in Carly Simon's words, "reach for the top of the sky."

This is the eighth in a series of major exhibitions underwritten by the Blockbuster Partners. The purchase of the *Touched by the Sun* Machinist Study has been underwritten by the M. A. Martin Everist Foundation, with additional support from the Gilchrist Foundation, Heffernan Fund, and City of Sioux City.

The Sioux City Art Center is grateful to the M. A. Martin Everist Foundation for serving as the principal underwriter of the outdoor sculpture, *Touched by the Sun*, along with additional generous contributions from the Gilchrist Foundation, Heffernan Fund, and City of Sioux City. A catalogue celebrating the arrival of *Touched by the Sun* will be available after its installation in August.

Fig. 5 *Tuscarora*, 2004, cast and machined bronze
11 x 12 x 18 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 6 *Telecaster*, 2009, cast and machined bronze
18 x 16 x 20 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 7 *Twenty-one Twenty*, 2011, cast and machined bronze
16 x 16 x 14 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 8 *Escanaba*, 2008, cast and machined bronze
15 x 14 x 21 inches, Courtesy of the artist



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12

Fig. 9 *Black Chi*, 2011, black painted steel
17 x 16 x 17 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 10 *Escanaba*, 2008, black painted steel
15 x 14 x 21 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 11 *Maria Maria*, 2010, black painted steel
18 x 17 x 21 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 12 *Buck's Embarkation*, 2010, cast and machined bronze
24 x 12.5 x 12.5 inches, Courtesy of the artist

back cover

Fig. 13 *72nd Degree Jack*, 2011, cast and machined bronze
15 x 14 x 21 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 14 *Chi-Cyclotron*, 2010, cast and machined bronze
20.5 x 11.5 x 15 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 15 *Bel Canto*, 2009, cast and machined bronze
14 x 15 x 15 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 16 *Capricorn One*, 2010, cast and machined bronze
18 x 10 x 17 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Photography credits:
Doug Burg: cover, 1-8, 12-16
Curt Neitzke: 9-11

Exhibition Checklist:

Arthur's Odyssey, 2009
black painted steel
22 x 18 x 18 inches

Astrocaster, 2006
cast and machined bronze
15 x 14 x 19 inches
(Fig. 3)

Bel Canto, 2009
cast and machined bronze
14 x 15 x 15 inches
(Fig. 15)

Black Chi, 2011
black painted steel
17 x 16 x 17 inches
(Fig. 9)

Buck's Embarkation, 2010
cast and machined bronze
24 x 12.5 x 12.5 inches
(Fig. 12)

Capricorn One, 2010
cast and machined bronze
18 x 10 x 17 inches
(Fig. 16)

Cassiopeia, 2009
cast and machined bronze
12 x 15 x 16 inches
(Fig. 1)

Chi-Cyclotron, 2010
cast and machined bronze
20.5 x 11.5 x 15 inches
(Fig. 14)

Entity/Twelve, 2011
cast and machined bronze
22 x 15 x 19 inches

Escanaba, 2008
cast and machined bronze
15 x 14 x 21 inches
(Fig. 8)

Escanaba, 2008
black painted steel
15 x 14 x 21 inches
(Fig. 10)

Maria Maria, 2010
black painted steel
18 x 17 x 21 inches
(Fig. 11)

Orbits of Isaac, 2010
cast and machined bronze
19 x 20 x 25 inches
(Fig. 2)

Telecaster, 2009
cast and machined bronze
18 x 16 x 20 inches
(Fig. 6)

Touched by the Sun, 2012
cast and machined bronze
14 H x 14 W x 12 D inches
Sioux City Art Center Permanent Collection
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Foundation, with additional support provided by the Gilchrist
Foundation, Heffernan Fund, and City of Sioux City
(cover)

Trinity, 2011
cast and machined bronze
14 x 14 x 14 inches
(Fig. 4)

Tuscarora, 2004
cast and machined bronze
11 x 12 x 18 inches
(Fig. 5)

Twenty-one Twenty, 2011
cast and machined bronze
16 x 16 x 14 inches
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72nd Degree Jack, 2011
cast and machined bronze
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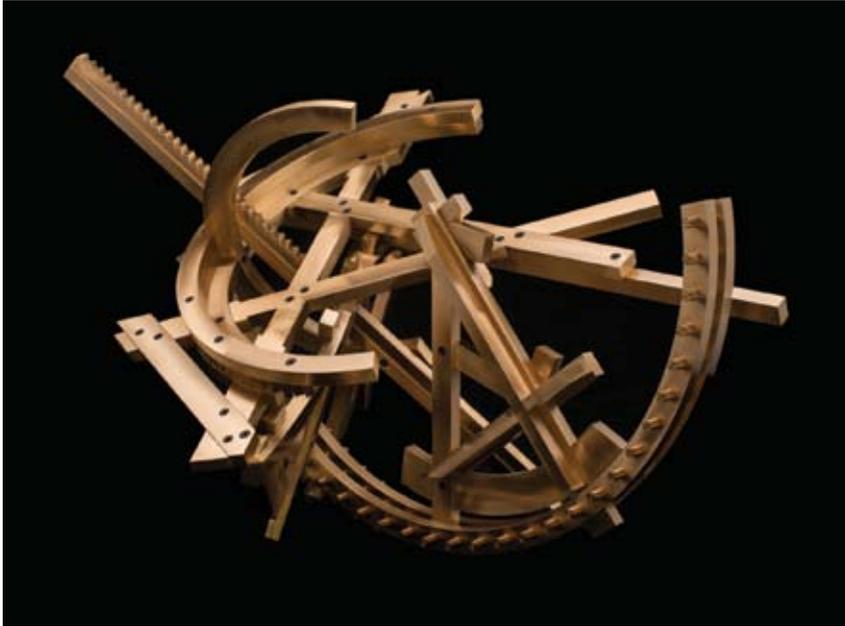


Fig. 13



Fig. 14

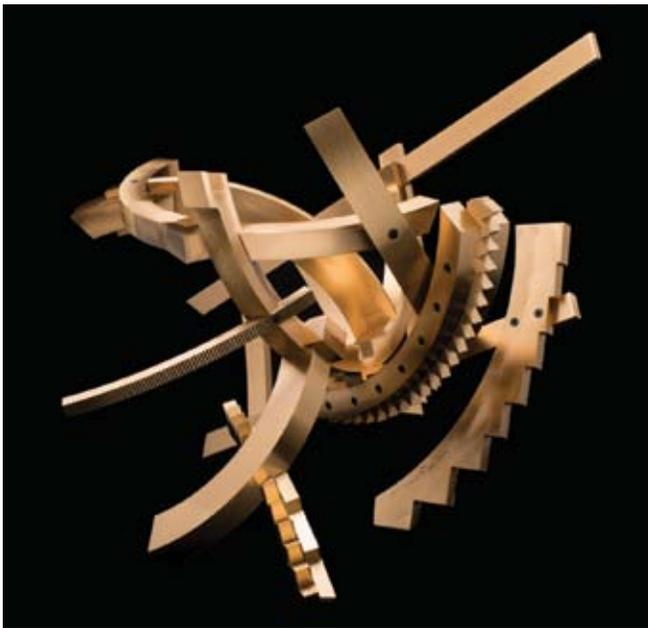


Fig. 15



Fig. 16

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