

Gateway Arch: Harbinger Of New, Huge Sculpture?

Is the Gateway Arch a harbinger of the new trend to monumental sculpture?

Thomas Hoving, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art thinks so. He cites both the Arch and the new Picasso sculpture in Chicago's Civic Center as evidence of the trend toward environmental sculpture. St. Louis has regarded the Saarinen work as architecture but architecture and sculpture in some instances coincide. Tony Smith who is the big new name in sculpture today, until recently was regarded as an architect. Now his huge work in Washington and Philadelphia is dominating the sculptural scene.

Director Hoving, who used to run New York parks for Mayor Lindsay, is quoted by Time Magazine as saying, "We're slowly coming back to sculpture as something to be interested in. Its part of conversational environment. As more cities solve their problems they will want to make things look better with sculpture."

In line with this, New York now is having an environmental outdoor month-long sculpture show spread around various selected sites all over the city.

The new sculpture is becoming too big for the museum. The City Art Museum employees wrestled all day to construct Mark di Suverno's 22-foot high Elohim Adoni (the Lord God in Hebrew) outside the museum near the auditorium entrance, too big to go inside. The Shanghai-born artist then went riding on it, stressing involvement in sculpture — also a new turn.

In "7 for 67" Ernest Trova, St. Louis artist, is showing new work in his "Falling Man" series, a theme he has been using exclusively since 1963 — ironic interpretations of

man's loss of usefulness in his gadget-dominated world. His "Study Falling Man (double gold racing cars)" has falling man as the chassis of the machine, a small work easily overlooked, but the most satisfying in ironic humor in the show.

The well-written "7 for 67" catalogue points out "the automobile, wrist watch, radio, elevator and vacuum cleaner are among the inventions Trova uses in his work. All are aspects of our life which are so commonplace that we seldom stop to think how they have transformed us, how dependent we are on technological aids and how literally they have become parts of our bodies. Trova symbolizes this transformation by his figure of man who is featureless (anonymous) armless (powerless to provide for himself): sexless (unable to enjoy and be creative) flaccid and slumping (neglected of his body). His man is a passive armature for mechanical organs."

In Kansas City's Nelson Gallery, another St. Louisan, Boyd Mefferd, 26, is one of three exhibitors in "Light," an electronic exhibit — neon, plexiglas, formica constructions.

He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Mefferd and attended Thomas Jefferson School here. He studied architecture at Brown University and painting at Rhode Island School of Design. He is a protege of Nancy Singer, St. Louis artist, art collector and director of exhibitions.

Mefferd works in electronics in the most literal sense of the term. He prefers to use polished metal near light. He wishes that future art "not be a substitute for painting, but something more attuned to our time conscious, more electrical, a real means, a new intensity."—C. K. B.