SONGS IN STEEL AND OTHER DREAMS

THE SCULPTURE OF CAROLINE LEE

Essays by

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USA

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Director's Foreword

It is self-evident that art museums are about art. But perhaps what is not always transparent is that art museums are also about connections and relationships. Any story about any piece of art in the collections of the Muskegon Museum of Art always involves not only the quality and nature of the work but also how it was acquired, how the work relates to other works in the collection, and how the artist might connect to other artists, to place, or to the institution itself.

Caroline Lee, and the remarkable work that we are so proud to bring home to Michigan for *Songs in Steel and Other Dreams*, is connected to us. Jane Connell first saw a sculpture by Caroline Lee in James Magee's house in El Paso as we were preparing for our exhibition of works by Jim's alter ego, Annabel Livermore. Jim, who also is an important sculptor working in metal and originally from Michigan, introduced Jane Connell to Caroline. (He also shared that it was Caroline who taught him how to weld.)

We love these ties that bind, these threads that run through the works that we have in our collection and the artists that we showcase. It is these connections that add depth and richness to the stories of the art that we share with our community. Thank you, James Magee, for connecting us to Caroline Lee.

Thank you, Caroline, for your enthusiastic decision to work with us on this exhibition. We are grateful for the opportunity to share your remarkable sculptures with the region that you love so much. We are also grateful to your family and friends for their willingness to lend the artworks that we know they treasure.

Original exhibitions take a tremendous amount of planning, coordinating, organizing, and sometimes hand wringing, to make them happen. Add in the international connections, and everything is taken up more than a few notches. We are deeply appreciative of the opportunity to work side by side with Mary Esther Lee on this project. Without you, Mary Esther, this exhibition would not have been possible. Your patience, your determination, and your graciousness are what brought *Songs in Steel and Other Dreams* to fruition.

SPX is the Centennial Partner of the Muskegon Museum of Art, and is the exclusive underwriter of this exhibition. Thank you, SPX, for your continuing support of us and of this community.

Thank you Sheila Grant, of CreativeLine, for your inspired and simply beautiful design of this catalogue. What a delight it has been to work with you on this project. We also extend our deepest gratitude to Caroline Lee's family for underwriting this catalogue.

We are honored to present *Songs in Steel and Other Dreams: The Sculpture of Caroline Lee* as a part of our 100th Year Anniversary.

Judith A. Hayner
Executive Director
Muskegon Museum of Art

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Detail: *Flower of the Volcano* (*Fleur du Volcan*)
Clermont Ferrand, France

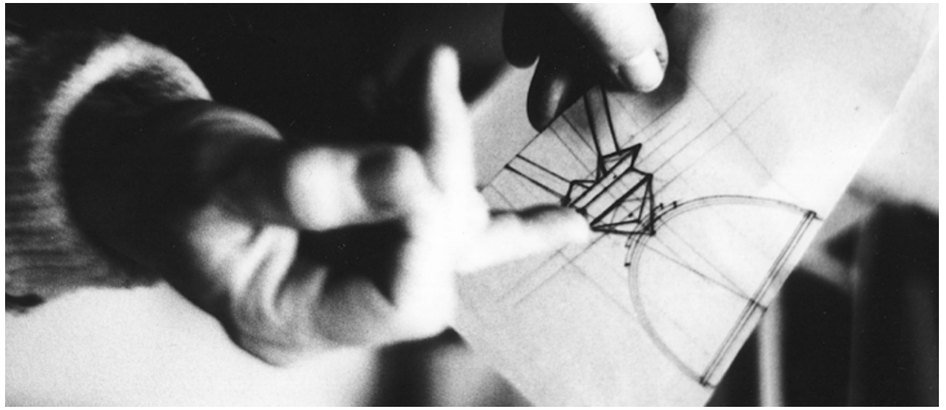
Curator's Introduction

It was by a most unexpected convergence of West Michigan connections that I was introduced to Caroline Lee in 2009, in the unlikely locale of El Paso, Texas. I had journeyed there to the home of sculptor James Magee to immerse myself in the complex, visionary worlds of the Fremont, Michigan native and particularly of his alter ego, the painter Annabel Livermore, who also traces her origins to Newaygo County, north of Muskegon, and about whom the Muskegon Museum of Art was organizing an exhibition (*Remembering Newaygo County: The Symbolist Paintings of Annabel Livermore*, 2010).

As Jim escorted me through his home, I was attracted to a prominently displayed, machine-tooled aluminum object whose flat and conical elements, configured in tongue-in-groove fittings, evoked playful attitudes of thrust and lift. Caroline Lee, a Chicago-born sculptor living in Paris with whom Jim had apprenticed in the early 1970s, had created this work (*S 1-11*, page 30). Of further interest, Caroline had summered since childhood at a family retreat along the shores of Lake Michigan, near Holland. Jim spontaneously dialed up his devoted friend in Paris and handed me the phone, whereupon Caroline and I conversed at length. At that moment, *Songs in Steel and Other Dreams: The Sculpture of Caroline Lee* was set in motion.

Caroline Lee's affection for West Michigan is deep, abiding, and lifelong, no matter the distance that often separates her from what she calls the true dwelling place of her soul—"the home inside me," she says, "the only home I have." Caroline's Michigan experience is her sanctuary of creative refuge and refreshment. The expansive skies over a vast lake nurtured her desire to soar above the common life, to fly upon the winds of joyful freedom and release, to hone an adventuresome spirit and willing curiosity. Is it any wonder that Caroline Lee photographs her sculptures viewed aloft against a dark blue firmament? We delight in her work, abundant with dynamic movement, rising and arching postures, aggressive and inquisitive stances.

From the wellspring of her Michigan sojourns, the artist revisits many a summer's dream. Innumerable recollections arise in the voices of family histories and events; in the chorus of horses' hooves and birds' wings; in the refrain of water, wind, and dune. These resounding impressions of place are fertile for rejuvenation and physical manifestation. Sculpture is the visible conveyance of memory for Caroline Lee. Her songs in steel commence when memory meets metal.



The forces of the artist's internal vision become anthems in steel, aluminum, or bronze, orchestrated in the machine-tooled, casting, or welding technique that suits her subject to greatest effect. A percussive undercurrent is provided in the pulsing, rhythmic activity of the foundry or studio—the hum, scrape, zing, and clatter of cutting, hammering, filing, and polishing—as the composer/creator shapes in metal a sculptural melody deeply imprinted in her heart and mind. "…the final and fragmentary creative act, so often broached and turned over by the innermost dream," says Caroline Lee, " is finally accomplished."

E. Jane Conell
Director of Collecitons and Exhibitions / Senior Curator
Muskegon Museum of Art

The artist working on an untitled pen and ink drawing on paper

Michigan

CAROLINE LEE

Physically, I was born in Chicago, but my soul came to be in Michigan. It came alive in the untamed grass fields of the dunes, and among the rising voices of the maple trees in the winds of a storm. I found it printed on the beach by the hooves of Honey Boy, our one-eyed, piebald wonder from Zeeland. It was in the blue stains on my hands after blueberry picking from the bushes planted in the cold winds of early spring with my Uncle Edward and Aunt Merva. I heard it in the early morning in the sweet sounds of the wings of the hummingbird as it sipped among the trumpets of the vine growing by the screen of our sleeping porch.

Imprints of joy on a young mind already convinced of its love of "the place" where we spent three months of each of our years. In this place—on the shore of Lake Michigan north of Holland—we made fudge and played Monopoly on cool, rainy September days. We built tree houses and I, for one, honed my sense of construction on them. One of them even had two rooms and creaked when the wind blew hard, it being in the tall trees at the top of the bluff by the lake. It made me know that I was part of the tree that held it. A tiny but necessary mercantile sense was born in our expeditions with our wagon as we hauled it from house to house trying to sell the big sweet, green apples or the gnarled, striped ones from the old Duchess tree for two or three cents a pound. Those were the days!

In this place we played, without counting, in the old 1903 Marmon dump-truck, stored in the barn by my grandfather so many years ago. It was a long time before I understood that the detached car body with its fenders sitting on supports on the other side of the barn actually fitted into the dump-truck part, which made it into a family vehicle for Sundays and family outings. Its horn actually sounded "ooga ooga," and its tires were neatly stacked in the basement of the house. However, it didn't need that reality, for it was better than any merry-go-round to us. It traveled our minds, and that was what we were seeking.

My grandfather told us of the sandy roads, and of the horse, Gordon Walker, they kept and who took them from the boat from Chicago to "the place," and then to town during the long summers well before the time of the Marmon. We used some of those remaining sandy roads to go to and return from Ventura school, about a mile and a half away from home. Our school in Chicago did not begin until October, so in September we went, with the greatest delight, to a wonderful one-room schoolhouse, with its school bell to make us hurry in the mornings. We brought lunch in "lunch pails," and we played mightily with all the others from first to eighth grades at lunchtime, occasionally getting into water fights via the old hand pump. Then, as we walked home—everybody walked home then—we faced what we thought of as a scary adventure. On the road, we had to pass by a billy goat, who had been known to knock people down, or so we believed. The pasture where he and his lady friends held sway was not fenced. Even though Mr. Billy was chained, we did not know how long that chain actually was. As all children, we did love to scare ourselves. We took good advantage of the opportunity he gave us with his horns curved powerfully around his head. We thrilled with the daily passing by and our success in defying the dangerous beast.

Then there were the long, joyous years of our horses: Sandy, Honey Boy, and Sally Carter, with other horses visiting here and there. They lived in the old barn in the summer, and wintered in the good farm of Mr. Nabber near Zeeland for fees earned energetically by babysitting and assorted odd jobs. Our horses brought us the deepest joys, racing down the beach, and better yet, swimming with us on their backs in Lake Michigan. But incomparable was the softness of lying in the grass, under the moonlight, among Honey Boy's legs, held by a sense of the universe imparted by the stars above. Our equine friends allowed us to participate in all the local horse shows, and in the Holland Junior Horse Club, which met on the idyllic grounds of the Nyland farm, where the glorious palomino Golden Lady reigned over us with her big brown eyes.

Michigan is the place where my mother's careful choice of bushels of peaches, our gathering of blackberries despite their thorns, and, earlier, of the sweet wild strawberries, provided a rich harvest to supply our winter's need for those lush days, as well as the comfort of those delicious fruits.

In the cool of the spring we would come to the Holland Tulip Festival, wearing the costumes—winged white lace caps, striped flannel skirts, and the black aprons with their embroidery—and wooden shoes that my father had brought back from a trip in 1938 to the Netherlands. We thrilled to the Klompen Dancers as they moved in groups down 8th Street, stopping to dance the gay dances prepared so carefully for that day. I smiled as I watched one young girl carry her shoes between dances. I could well imagine how hard it was to master wearing them naturally and comfortably. On our shopping trips to town, we always looked in the window to see if the old man was at his bench making yet another pair of the traditional shoes.

My schooling in Chicago was one long wait to return to my true life on the shores of Lake Michigan. There, the sense of beauty became a primary motor, and the belief that I would be able to do anything I set out to do became a real part of me. The vehicle for that soul had been formed by wind, waves, sandy soil, and hoof beats. On this foundation have friendships been built, and knowledge of the way of life of West Michigan been accumulated, until now it has formed a home inside me that travels with me always. Even though I am a wanderer from Paris, my heart returns to Michigan to be re-nourished, to survive, to persevere.

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Honey Boy in the grass fields,1956

From the Invisible into Sculpture

CAROLINE LEE

To place something where there was nothing, by means of the darkness of the mask that places the sculptor at the heart of the universe, is the exquisite pleasure and the imperative necessity that haunt my life. It is at the very heart of darkness, the beginning of time, quite precisely when two things—two pieces of iron—join up that the transcription comes to light. Forgetfulness behind the mask is absolute peace. The all-powerful presence of the arc welder's flame—simultaneously dangerous and well meaning—becomes the means whereby the final and fragmentary creative act, so often broached and turned over by the innermost dream, is finally accomplished.

Fragmentary—Every action piles up, originally guided by an instinctive choice. The gesture's integrity is protected by joyfulness, mask, and the flame. The daytime eye is too cruel to confront playful birthings. The link of soldered fragments becomes a chain between the anchor and the frail buoy, translating the heap of compressed and lifeless impressions by means of a visible construction. The work embodies a skin and bones with which to confront the daytime eye, lucid, otherwise prisoner of its vision filled with the most haphazard realities. Faced with historical and eventful livelihood, sensitivity had hidden and with it, the capacity to ordain the plethoric avalanche of impressions imposed by our existence.

And when there are sufficient fragments, added one to the other, feverishly, eyes half-closed, a sidelong glance enlightens what needs to be expressed. From that moment on, with its elusive serenity, the roles are inverted, because the daytime eye is fixed on that mirage object; it falters for an instant and the gestures slow down. Like a horse facing his first rider, the eye glimpses its constraints. It tries to understand, to capture.

Finally convinced by the reality of this barely sketched existence, and enticed by the urgent need to make it legible and its own, it orients all its willpower towards what has become an obvious task.

By its existence, it imposes shapes implied between the two of them, the anchor and the buoy. Intuition will harken to the cold eye of judgment, and the conjunction of the two will construct the work. That eye, introduced into that happenstance's becoming, can neither censor nor reject, but shall be obliged to adapt its critical faculty inside the formal terms whose bases already exist. Combined in that total effort, its reward will be to observe that the sculpture is finished!

I see myself as a transformer, carrying out a transformation of a current coming from without, then subjecting it to my own energies coming from within. In the beginning, I concentrated exclusively on organizing my inner currents without including any deliberate reflection. That this procedure led to a contact with the "other" was a fortuitous happenstance rather than a deliberate objective. Certainly, nothing can prevent the continuity of that verbal protective veil, a common occurrence during the past few years.

As a result of that physical engagement with material, there emerges sculpture. By representing the organization of thousands of lived-through impressions, it provides a way to those who seek it out. Accepted, it will provoke, through tangents and ricochets, a process of maturing and a freeing up of false restraints, essential to acquiring a mastery over inner life. That is the relationship, the function I am aiming for, that I seek to fulfill in my life as a sculptor.

« The artist working on *The Great White Lady,* 2005

» The artist working on the structure of the gong collection for *La Ville Parjure* at Le Théâtre du Soleil, Paris, 1994

The Music of Metal

LYDIA HARAMBOURG

Caroline Lee's world is that of metal.

This choice places her among those sculptors who, after 1945, turned to industrial tools, becoming blacksmiths or metal workers in order to access their creative language. In any vocation, the determination of the means is the predominant part of creativity.

Caroline Lee arrived in Paris from Chicago in 1958 with a Fulbright grant for painting, but carrying a hammer and a clamp in her luggage, for her destiny had already made itself clear. "I knew I would attack metal sculpture," she notes. Meeting César, the major metal sculptor in Paris at the time, strengthened her inner conviction that the world of metals was the basis of contemporary sculptural expression. It decisively reinforced her intention to abandon the use of classical sculptural materials.

Through César, she found a small studio in the Susse foundry in Arceuil, on the outskirts of Paris. César had introduced her to André Susse when he took her there to show her the workings of a bronze foundry. Later, when the Susse foundry decided to purchase an arc welder, she benefited from the welding lessons accompanying the purchase. All around Paris, small industries were willing to answer questions, demonstrate the capabilities of their machines, and respond to the curious sculptor who came to them filled with a will to learn from those who had achieved mastery of the techniques that she needed. This was an irreplaceable environment for learning that enabled her to acquire the technical foundation for her work. She was ready to fulfill her childhood conviction: "You can do but one thing in life, and do it well." The purchase of her own arc welder gave her full access to bringing her ideas forth from the limbo of mere intention. She could at last launch herself, "grab hold of the world."

Sculpture is also a question of encounters, of the transmission of knowledge in the same spirit as that of trade companionships. Her complicit cooperation with her husband Knez, also a sculptor, was strengthened by her training in the "lost styrofoam" method taught to her by Walter Couffini, the discoverer in France of this new technique. James Metcalf, the sculptor and friend whose studio was next to Constantin Brancusi's, introduced her to hammering brass. But it was with Jean Westermeyer, who became her assistant, from whom Caroline learned in depth the skills necessary for forming and assembling metal. He taught her hammering with tools whose secrets were revealed to her through their working together. The very gesture, the face to face engagement with the material, strengthened the skills needed for experimentation and inspiration. "Through the physical sensation, the tool is a means of knowledge. When you are working together, the sound of the hammer held by one provides information to the other," she says. Westermeyer introduced her to the lengthening or the condensing of metal (as in *The Great White Lady*, page 47, and *The Shoulder*, page 48). This prolific exchange enabled her to give body to the role played by metal in our society. She notes that a whole vocabulary emerges from our daily contact with ordinary, useful objects—from irons to bridges—and is preparatory to sculpture itself. These raw objects cannot be of a spiritual nature, but they stimulate the creation of forms which implement the expression of "useless but vital things," the true domain of sculpture.

In the small foundry they set up in their Malakoff studio, Caroline, Knez, and Westermeyer carried out her first architectural commission. Caroline established a creative process that enabled her to accept commissions without yet knowing how they would be carried out. By giving herself the means to resolve new technical problems, she was able to explore and develop the new forms made possible by them (*Double Wing*, page 25).

Her first sculptures already showed an accomplished degree of mastery. She favored the themes of flight, symbol of the liberating movement to which the artist aspires. The tools guided her work. One notices how from the onset they ordered the sequences of her assemblages of steel bars, the acetylene torch giving them their organic unity (*The Gargoyle*, page 26; *The Swan*, page 23). The fine steel bars were succeeded by the use of ever larger bars and tubes (*The Flower of Evil*, page 24; *Sailing to Byzantium*, page 42), combining copper and steel (*Baby Bird*, page 28), and working surfaces over with hammering. The artisan-like castings of this period, carried out circa 1965 in the Malakoff studio, were in bronze until she adopted aluminum for all casts and mechanical assemblages (Maquette for *The Mastery of Evil*, page 35).

In hammered and welded steel and covered in an oven-baked varnish, *Dogman*, dated 1965 (page 27), represents a turning point. It is a kind of robot whose harsh lines correspond to the hardness of life, to the brutality of mankind. Nothing in its finish is allowed to reflect the pleasure involved in carrying out the piece. Its aggressive image bears no hint of sentimentality. Her search for smooth and perfect forms (*Angel In Hell*, page 33; *Femme Victoire*, page 32; and *Homage to Martin Luther King: Eyes on the Prize*, page 44) led her to eliminate welding as an expressive means and brought her to a T-shaped dovetailed assemblage system. This method had the advantage of achieving the clearly defined and unambiguous forms she sought. These pieces were easily dismantled and manipulated (*Thoughts*, page 34). *S 1-11* (page 30) was completely transformable thanks to its sliding component parts.

With the machine tools seen as the extension of the hand, she went one step further. She integrated the machine's properties with her sculptural language by experimenting with the potential offered by the milling machine, the ribbon saw, and the lathe (*Projectile*, page 31; *Imprisoned Bird*, page 29). She became intensely aware of the dialogue we carry on in our daily lives with objects that are close to works of art, their intrinsic beauty lying in their technological, industrial forms—be it a car or an airplane.

Caroline Lee finally possessed her own language. The hand, whose intervention is less that of creation than of execution, was supplanted by mental inventiveness, which became the exalting force of her creativity. As the hand became subservient to mental pre-figuration, realization of the sculpture was entirely entrusted to the machine, diverted from its usual work to be placed in the service of the imaginary.

Her new relationship with metal was celebrated in Paris at the *Salon de Mai*, in the *Salon de La Jeune Sculpture*, and with her first architectural commissions. In 1971, her first solo exhibition at Darthea Speyer's Paris gallery showed how machine

tools had allowed her to explore aluminum's visual volubility. The reversible and sliding shapes in the small aluminum sculptures leave a minimum amount of play but allow the image to exist as she intended. The works in stainless steel possess aerodynamic shapes linked to the concepts of speed, power, aggressivity, and poetic license. *Reves et Forces*, now permanently installed in Argenteuil near Paris, is the assemblage of unexpected segments, thrown into space in a precarious balance between two parts, held together with screws and threaded bars. The telescoping, interlocking parts, like those of *Hommage á Freud*, imply a permeability without altering the overall form. The priority was given to the metal itself, to its reflections, the contrasts between smooth and grainy surfaces, to the sharp edges of the forms, the precision of the planes, and finally, to the visual singularities of the sculpture.

The materialization of the work by the machine did not lead to conceptual art. In 1969, together with her friend the sculptor Henry Comby, Caroline spent two weeks working in Annecy in Michel Tissot-Dupont's factory that specialized in automated machine-tools where she acquired hands-on experience with a milling machine and a lathe. This enabled her to design her pieces specifically for these machines. Along with precise mechanical drawings of each element, she entrusted the styrofoam models to the factory workers for execution. Sculpturally, she was involved in carrying out structures that were not far from the old archetypes but were now simplified and pared down. The milling machines, the lathe, and the ribbon saws made possible the dovetailing of the forms. The crossbars and the scraps of "duralumin" (AU4G) were transformed into *Projectile* (page 31) and *Imprisoned Bird* (page 29), with its angular, feathery forms. They were thereby transposed into a male or female abbreviation. *Femme Victoire* (page 32) is an illustration of the artist's theme concerning sexuality with the consummate conclusion of these underlying forces being "the couple." Made up of personages taken from a fantastical world, *Couple IV* presents an assemblage of machined elements, held together by self-blocking interlockings. Their eroticism is dominated by thought which is a vision symbolically expressed through the bipolarity of certain parts, symmetrical and yet of a strangely virile mimetism, complex and ambiguous in its perception. It can be read as an aesthetic commitment wherein the artist's proposals are answers to the questions she asks of herself.

A monumental mindset is inherent in Caroline Lee's sculpture. This is obviously so in the large pieces like the fountain in Sarcelles, a commission she and Knez won in competition. Her monumentality is accompanied by a very personal multidirectional energy. Here, she shapes flight to express a brutal dynamism, characteristic of other commissions for which the models already embody intense force. The cutting, indeed threatening, edges of the *Monument to the Resistance* (page 41) in Montreuil-sous-Bois in 1981 transformed the surrounding space into a metaphor for the imaginary. Elsewhere, forms with arabesque cut-outs are elegantly part of the mechanical dialogue that the artist intends as an analogy to physiological and psychological interplay.

With *Don Quixote's Bird* (page 45), the suggested thrust calls forth an imbalance, the fall into emptiness. Yet the sculpture holds fast and sets up a genuine dialogue with its space and the idea of risk beyond normal constraints of mind or body. It is because the sculpture's inspiration comes from the symbol of Don Quixote, the only possibility for assembling and organizing the forms. Each large form thrusting out into space is compensated by smaller, similar forms with opposing tensions. The movement regains its equilibrium even as it stabilizes the thrust of the main element. For Caroline Lee, a work of art must favor reflection by means of evasion. So it is for the three monumental works carried out for the School of Medicine and Pharmacy in Clermont-Ferrand. The models for *The Mastery of Evil* (page 35), *The Inhabitant of the Volcano* (page 37) and *Flower of the Volcano* (page 38) anticipate this fundamental gesture of the sculptor. Nothing is left to chance. The artist was involved in every part of the undertaking: the hammering, the welding, the surface treatment, always searching to preserve the balance between the work and the constraints of its environment. She used exclusively stainless steel because of its unique relationship with light, but also because it avoided problems of oxydation.

Her recent sculptures continue a head-on struggle with stainless steel from which she clearly expects the incarnation of what she describes as "an intimacy with becoming." Thus *The Nymph* (page 46), *The Great White Lady* (page 47), and *The Shoulder* (page 48) set up an ever stronger relationship with the sculptor's inner life, which is composed of quantities of lived-through impressions. Each element corresponds to an act, a multiplicity of fragments, until the reality of what had been glimpsed emerges.

Caroline Lee sees herself as a *transformer*, capturing the outer currents of the world and then merging them with her personal energies. Following her many public commissions, she says that she is continuing "to travel through the dark, interior seas, in order to serve perceptions conceived with a more conscious intelligence, directed with appetite towards the outside world."

She claims the social role of the sculptor, but she steadfastly expects sculpture to express the invisible. This mystery is that of an intense and incisive intuition, inseparable from skills—and she shows it in each new sculpture—that are indissociable from the materialization of a thought. Maturity now makes freedom from fake restraints possible. The mastery of her inner life provides a universal dimension to Caroline's life as a sculptor.

The artist wroking on a harp for Le Théâtre du Soleil at la Cartoucherie, Bois de Vincennes, Paris, circa 1985

La Musique du Métal

LYDIA HARAMBOURG

Ce choix la situe parmi les sculpteurs qui après 1945 ont fait appel à l'outillage de caractère industriel mis à leur disposition en les faisant devenir à leur tour forgerons ou bien métallurgistes pour accéder à leur langage. Dans toute vocation, la détermination est partie prenante de la création. Pour Caroline Lee qui arrive de Chicago à Paris en 1958, munie de la bourse Fulbright obtenue en peinture, mais avec un marteau et un serre-joint dans ses bagages, le destin avait parlé. « Je savais que j'allais attaquer la sculpture en métal » confie t-elle. La rencontre de César, outre la forte impression que le sculpteur exerce sur la débutante, à renforcer son intime conviction que le monde des métaux était la base d'une expression contemporaine et l'a fait renoncer définitivement aux matériaux de la sculpture classique. Grâce à César, elle trouve un petit atelier. Il l'a conduite chez son fondeur André Susse à Arcueil. Par l'intermédiaire de ce dernier, elle se rend à la Société Carboxique Française, anciennement Oxhydrique Française, à Malakoff, où elle parfait ses acquis techniques. Il n'y a rien à d'autre à faire que se lancer, « de prendre le monde à bras le corps » animée d'une envie d'apprendre auprès de ceux qui possèdent un métier. Dans la banlieue parisienne, des petites industries offrent aux sculpteurs la possibilité de s'initier aux techniques de la soudure. Un apprentissage irremplaçable qui lui fait acquérir les bases avec la certitude qui l'anime depuis qu'elle est petite fille, « qu'il faut faire bien une chose et le faire bien ». L'été, la vallée de Chevreuse lui offre un atelier à ciel ouvert non loin de celui de son confrère le sculpteur d'origine grecque, Philolaos. L'achat d'un premier poste à souder l'a fait accéder à son œuvre qui sort des limbes.

La sculpture est aussi une affaire de rencontres, de transmissions des savoirs dans la continuité de l'esprit du compagnonnage. Sa collaboration complice avec son mari, le sculpteur Knez d'origine yougoslave, est épaulée par sa formation aux techniques du « polystyrène perdu » que lui enseigne le fondeur Walter Couffini, complétée par un stage chez le sculpteur James Metcalf, un ami dont l'atelier impasse Ronsin est voisin de celui de Brancusi. Mais c'est avec Jean Westermeyer qui l'assiste, que Caroline découvre la chaudronnerie en profondeur. Il lui apprend le martelage avec des outils dont il lui révèle les secrets. Le geste, le face à face avec la matière forge un métier qui exige expérimentation et inspiration. « Au travers de la sensation physique, l'outil est un vecteur de connaissance. Lorsqu'on travaille à deux, le son du marteau tenu par l'un renseigne l'autre » dit-elle. Westermeyer la corrige, l'initie à l'allongement du métal et à sa retreinte. Un échange fécond qui lui permet de donner corps au rôle joué par le métal dans notre société. Elle observe que tout un vocabulaire préparatoire à la sculpture accompagne notre quotidien, dont le sculpteur reconnaît le potentiel qui ne peut pas être d'ordre spirituel tandis que la sculpture l'implique en ce qu'elle s'identifie à « des choses inutiles mais vitales ». Dans la petite fonderie qu'ils installent dans l'atelier de Malakoff, Caroline, Knez et Westermeyer réalisent une première commande pour la société J. Arthur & Tiffen. Caroline met en place un processus de création qui consiste à accepter une commande sans savoir comment elle va la réaliser, mais en se donnant les moyens de résoudre les problèmes tout en apprenant comment faire.

Ses premières sculptures montrent un métier accompli. Elle privilégie le thème de l'envol, symbole du mouvement de libération auquel aspire l'artiste. L'outil guide son travail. On observe comment à ses débuts, il ordonne les séquences. Aux premiers assemblages au chalumeau de fils de métal d'allure organique (*La Gargouille*, page 26; *Le Cygne*, page 23), aux fontes artisanales exécutées vers 1965 dans l'atelier de Malakoff *(Double Wing*, page 25) ont succédé des tubes de plus en plus gros (*Fleur du Mal*, page 24; *Sailing to Byzantium*, page 42), mêlant le cuivre et l'acier (*Baby Bird*, page 28), dont elle travaille les surfaces par martelage ou *repoussage* jusqu'à l'adoption, plus tard, de l'aluminium (maquette for *La Maitrise du Mal*, page 35).

Dogman (page 27) un acier martelé, soudé, recouvert d'un vernis cuit au four représente un tournant. Une sorte de robot aux lignes dures qui correspondent à la dureté de la vie et à la brutalité de l'homme. Rien dans sa finition ne doit rappeler le plaisir pris à réaliser la pièce. Son image agressive ne porte aucune trace de sentimentalité. Sa quête de formes lisses et parfaites (*Ange en* Enfer, page 33; *Femme Victoire*, page 32; *Homage to Martin Luther King: Eyes on the Prize*, page 44) lui fait éliminer la soudure et recourir à un système d'assemblage à queue d'aronde avec des gorges en T qui a l'avantage de présenter des pièces facilement démontables, voire transformables (*Les Pensées*, page 34; *S 1–11*, page 30), grâce à la possibilité de faire coulisser les éléments.

Avec les machines-outils perçues comme le prolongement de la main, elle franchit une nouvelle étape. Elle annexe les propriétés de la machine à son langage sculptural en expérimentant le potentiel offert par le fraiseur, la scie à ruban, le tour (*Projectile*, page 31; *L'Oiseau Emprisonné*, page 29). Elle prend conscience du dialogue que nous entretenons au quotidien avec les objets dont la beauté intrinsèque des formes technologiques et industrielles d'un avion, d'une carrosserie de voiture, rejoint celle d'une œuvre d'art.

Caroline Lee entre en possession de son langage. La main, dont l'intervention est moins de création que d'exécution, est supplantée par l'idée, par l'inventivité mentale devenue la part exaltante de la création. Dès lors qu'elle devient subalterne à la préfiguration mentale, la réalisation est entièrement confiée à la machine, détournée de sa fonction usuelle, pour être mise au service de l'imaginaire.

Ses noces nouvelles avec le métal sont célébrées au salon de Mai, à la Jeune Sculpture de Denys Chevalier, et avec ses premières réalisations pour des architectes. En 1971, sa première exposition chez Darthea Speyer, dans la galerie ouverte par sa compatriote rue Jacques Callot à Paris, montre comment l'usinage lui a permis d'explorer la volubilité plastique de l'aluminium. La forme aérodynamique liée à l'idée de vitesse peut aussi dispenser celle de puissance, d'agressivité, d'évasion poétique : *Rêve et Forces* (sculpture reprise ultérieurement avec la commande pour le CES J.J. Rousseau à Argenteuil 1975), est un assemblage de segments aux ramifications imprévues, projetés dans l'espace dans un porte-à-faux de deux parties maintenues par des écrous. Ces emboîtements télescopiques comme ceux *L'Hommage à Freud*, impliquent une permutabilité sans que la forme générale en soit altérée. Priorité est laissée au métal, à ses reflets, aux arêtes tranchantes ainsi qu'aux singularités plastiques de sa sculpture : l'exactitude au millimètre des plans, les oppositions entre surfaces lisses et grenues, enfin des assemblages de formes modifiables par la manipulation manuelle. Tout est

démontable grâce à un système de chevilles et de glissières pour une sculpture amovible, aux formes réversibles et coulissantes surtout pour les petites sculptures en aluminium qui laisse un minimum de jeu.

La concrétisation matérielle de l'œuvre par la machine ne mène à aucun moment à l'art conceptuel. En 1969, en compagnie de son ami, le sculpteur Henry Comby, Caroline travaille pendant deux semaines dans l'usine de Michel Tissot-Dupont à Annecy, spécialisée dans les machines-outils automatisées. Elle réalise elle-même ses plans d'exécution et confie aux ouvriers de l'usine ses modèles en polystyrène, et contribuent à la réalisation de ses structures qui ne s'écartent pas des anciens archétypes, désormais plus épurés et plus simplifiés. Les fraiseuses et les tours, les scies à ruban et queues-d'aronde métamorphosent les barres et les chutes de « duralu » (l'alliage AU 4 G) en *Projectile* (page 31); en *L'Oiseau Emprisonné* (page 29)*;* dont les formes, anguleuses, empennées, façonnées au tour, sont transposées dans une abréviation mâle ou féminine : *Femme Victoire (*page 32); illustrations de sa thématique dominée par le couple. Constitué de personnages sortis d'un univers fantastique *le Couple IV* présente un assemblage constitué de pièces usinées par la machine recourant à des emboîtements auto bloquants. Leur érotisme est dompté par la pensée qui nous en donne une vision symboliquement exprimée par la bipolarité de certaines pièces de machines, symétriques, d'un style au mimétisme étrangement viril et cependant complexe et ambigu dans sa perception. Cela vaut comme engagement esthétique dans lequel les propositions de l'artiste sont autant de réponses aux problèmes qu'elle se pose.

L'esprit monumental est inhérent à la sculpture de Caroline Lee. Evidente dans ses grandes sculptures, comme cette fontaine à Sarcelles, dont elle obtient la commande à la suite d'un concours organisé par la Caisse des Dépôts, gagné avec Knez. Sa monumentalité se double d'un élan très personnel parce multidirectionnel. Ici l'envolée des formes exprime un dynamisme brutal qui caractérise d'autres commandes pour lesquelles les maquettes contiennent déjà le mouvement voulu. Les formes acérées, voire menaçantes, du *Monument à la Résistance* à Montreuil-sous-Bois (page 41) transforment tout l'espace environnant en une métaphore de l'imaginaire. Ailleurs, les formes aux découpes en arabesque sont empreintes d'une élégance dans un jeu mécanique dont l'artiste attend qu'il soit analogue au jeu physiologique. Avec *L'Oiseau de Don Quichotte* (page 45), l'élan suggéré convoque un déséquilibre de l'œuvre prête à basculer dans le vide.

Mais la sculpture *tient* dans l'espace avec lequel s'installe un vrai dialogue. C'est que son inspiration recourt au symbole, une proposition comme la seule possible pour assembler et organiser les formes. Chaque grande forme lancée en surplomb dans l'espace est compensée par des petites formes similaires aux tensions opposées. Le mouvement retrouve un équilibre tout en stabilisant la poussée de l'élément principal. Pour Caroline Lee, une œuvre d'art doit favoriser la réflexion par l'évasion. Ainsi en est-il des trois monuments réalisés pour la Faculté de Médecine et de Pharmacie de Clermont-Ferrand. Les maquettes respectives pour *La Maîtrise du Mal* (page 35), *L'Habitant du Volcan* (page 37), et *Fleur du Volcan* (page 38) anticipent le geste fondamental du sculpteur. Rien n'est laissé au hasard et l'artiste intervient tout au long de l'entreprise, du martelage, soudage, traitement de surface mue par une recherche d'équilibre entre l'œuvre et l'environnement qui porte ses propres contraintes. Elle exploite uniquement l'inox afin d'éviter toute oxydation, et pour sa relation toute particulière avec la lumière.

Ses sculptures récentes poursuivent un corps à corps avec la matière dont elle attend l'incarnation, ce qu'elle traduit par « une intimité avec le devenir ». Ainsi *La Nymphe* (page 46), *La Dame Blanche* (page 47), et *L'Épaule* (page 48),

installent-elles une relation d'autant plus forte avec la vie intérieure de la sculpture que celle-ci se construit d'une quantité d'impressions vécues. Chaque élément correspond à un acte dont la multiplicité correspond à autant de fragments jusqu'à l'émergence de la réalité de ce qui a été entrevu.

Caroline Lee se perçoit comme un *transformateur,* captatrice du courant extérieur qu'elle associe à ses énergies personnelles. A la suite de ses nombreuses commandes publiques dans le cadre du 1%, elle dit continuer « le voyage à travers les mers obscures intérieures pour servir des perceptions conçues par une intelligence plus consciente, dirigée avec appétit vers l'extérieur ».

Elle revendique le rôle social du sculpteur, mais attend de la sculpture qu'elle exprime l'invisible. Ce mystère est celui d'une intuition vive et incisive, inséparable d'un métier dont elle démontre avec chaque nouvelle sculpture qu'il est indissociable de la réalisation d'une pensée. La maturation permet la libération des fausses contraintes tandis que la maîtrise de la vie intérieure donne une dimension universelle à sa vie de sculpteur.

The artist putting the final touches on a commissioned piece in her Malakoff studio in Paris, 1952

Color Plates

As a result of that physical engagement with material, there emerges sculpture. By representing the organization of thousands of lived through impressions, it provides a way to those who seek it out. Accepted, it will provoke, through tangents and ricochets, a process of maturing and a freeing up of false restraints, essential to acquire a mastery over inner life. That is the relationship, the function I am aiming for, that I seek to fulfill in my life as a sculptor.

Caroline Lee

1. *The Swan* (*Le Cygne*), 1959
   Welded steel
   29 x 6 x 9 ½ inches
   Collection of Ted Lee

2. *Flower of Evil* (*La Fleur du Mal*), 1963
Welded, formed steel tubes
36 ¼ x 34 ¼ x 14 ⅞
Collection of Evelyn M. Lee

3. *Double Wing*, 1964
Bronze and steel
34 ¾ x 23 ⅜ x 19 ⅞ inches
(includes base)
Collection of Mary Esther Lee

4. *The Gargoyle* (*La Gargouille*), 1965
Welded steel bars
61 x 38 ½ x 28 ¼ inches
Collection of Hon. Nancy Lee Johnson

5. *Dogman*, 1965
Welded, hammered steel
77 ⅞ x 35 ¼ x 23 ½ inches
Collection of the artist

Dogman was a turning point. He marked my desire to be deliberate, intentional rather than primarily intuitive, in the creation of the forms needed to say what I wanted to say.

Caroline Lee

6. *Baby Bird,* 1967
Copper and geode
12 x 4 ½ x 5 ⅛ inches (includes base)
Collection of Mary Esther Lee

7. *Imprisoned Bird* (*L'Oiseau Emprisonné*), 1970
Machined aluminum
21 ¾ x 23 ⅝ x 12 ⅜ inches
Collection of Hon. Nancy Lee Johnson

8. *S 1-11*, 1970–71
Machined aluminum
22 ⅜ x 10 ¾ x 7 ¼ inches
Collection of James R. Magee

9. *Projectile*, 1971
Machined aluminum
24 x 14 ½ x 12 ½ inches
Collection of the Muskegon Museum of Art: Gift of the artist in honor of the 100th Anniversary of the Muskegon Museum of Art, 2011.5

For me...it was a question of expression based on [a machine's ability to invent something]—a song of the equivalence between the soul and the useful whose beauty might be deemed equal.

Caroline Lee

10. *Femme Victoire,* 1971
Cast aluminum
20 x 14 ¼ x 8 ¼ inches
Collection of Myrna Knepler

11. *Angel in Hell* (*Ange en Enfer*), 1971
Cast aluminum
11 x 13 ⅜ x 6 ¾ inches
Collection of Myrna Knepler

12. *Thoughts* (*Les Pensées*), 1972
Machined aluminum
17 ¾ x 13 x 6 ⅜ inches
Collection of the artist

13. Maquette for *The Mastery of Evil* (*La Maitrise du Mal*), 1977
Cast aluminum on stainless steel base
24 ⅜ x 10 ¼ x 7 ¾ inches
Collection of the artist

CLERMONT FERRAND AND *THE MASTERY OF EVIL*

The Mastery of Evil (*La Maitrise du Mal*)
Height: 18 feet
Clermont Ferrand, France

The Mastery of Evil is the result of my reflections on medicine and pharmacology as I worked on the model of the sculpture that was to stand on the grounds of The School of Medicine and Pharmacy at Clermont Ferrand, the principal city in the region of the Auvergne located in the center of France. The key word became "mal," which in France denotes illness, pain, and evil, fitting into the world of medicine as well as that of the layman. The dominating figure of the sculpture, with its swords directed downwards in opposition to the elements rising from around its base, came to be an angel—medicine—mastering the threats addressed to it: illness and in the spiritual sense, evil.

There was another important influence on this work. The area around Clermont Ferrand is one of ancient, long extinct volcanoes. One can still sense the rims of the craters of this long ago volcanic activity. The region is known for its black, volcanic stone. I wanted very much to use this stone for the bases of the sculptures and for the spikes threatening the angel. However, the cost of cutting the stone was prohibitive, so I chose white cast concrete as a solution. The idea of the volcanic underpinnings of Clermont Ferrand was echoed, finally, in the setting of *The Flower of the Volcano*. The base rises out of a cone shaped hollow, recalling the caldera of a volcano. It is planted with ivy, dressing its imagined volcanic origins in the cloak of time gone by. *The Inhabitant of the Volcano* is the third sculpture completing the work for the schools of medicine and pharmacy of Clermont Ferrand.

Caroline Lee

The Inhabitant of the Volcano (*L'Habitant du Volcan*)
Height: 6 feet
Clermont Ferrand, France

14. Maquette for *The Inhabitant of the Volcano* (*L'Habitant du Volcan*), 1978
Bronze on stainless steel base
8 ½ x 8 x 5 inches (includes base)
Collection of Rebecca Davidson

Part of a series of sculputures installed on the grounds of The School of Medicine and Pharmacy at Clermont Ferrand

Flower of the Volcano (Fleur du Volcan)
Height: 13 ½ feet
Clermont Ferrand, France

15. Maquette for *Flower of the Volcano* (*Fleur du Volcan*), 1978
Bronze on stainless steel base
16 x 5 x 11 ¾ inches (includes base)
Collection of Rebecca Davidson

16. *Eagle of the Rising Star,* 1980
Stainless steel
38 ⅞ x 32 ¼ x 28 ⅜ inches
Collection of the John Marshall Law School, Chicago:
Gift of the artist

The notion of movement and flight were essential to me. A simple wing spread was not sufficient to express the dynamic I associate neither with my country nor with the eagle. So I found this situation – one of taking off and landing at the same time – able to express the sense of movement and power in an attitude of farseeing decision-making, backed by the powerful legs and claws – "the ways and means."

Caroline Lee

17. Maquette for *Monument to the Resistance* (*Monument à la Résistance*), 1981
Cast aluminum
37 ⅜ x 13 ¾ x 29 inches (includes base)
Collection of the artist

The *Monument to the Resistance* embodies a rising up, a thrusting out and forward of that unconquerable spirit. In searching to express this, I took the hexagon as a basic notion to work from because France frequently refers to herself as a hexagon: evening newscasters would begin, "In the hexagon this evening…" It was a common popular notion, and I felt it could be recognized by all and allow the whole work to be read through it. The top figure of the monument is essentially a female figure. In France the Republic is always represented as a woman, as France's gift to America, the Statue of Liberty, is also a strong commanding woman. As I worked on this flying, winged figure, I realized that the very top form was the hat of "Maryanne," a familiar figure of the French Revolution. Rather than a conscious effort on my part, this form demonstrates how one's unconsciously gathered knowledge merges with the creative process. A notion of contemporary space vehicles pervades the gray opening forms, allowing this female powerhouse, with her aggressive triangular "spade" before her, to spring forth and forward. Many forms in the middle of the sculpture represent this intense defense of the values of the Republic held above and valiantly surviving.

It was the intention from the beginning of this project that members of the Resistance of Montreuil choose a commemorative line for the base of the monument. It is inscribed on the black granite slab from which the monument seems to rise. The line is from Paul Valery, one of France's most important postwar poets:

If the echo of their voices fades, we will perish.

Caroline Lee

Monument to the Resistance (*Monument à la Résistance*)
Height: 37 ½ feet
Montreuil-sous-Bois, France

18. *Sailing to Byzantium*, 1981–82
Stainless steel
12 ½ x 11 x 8 ⅜ inches
Collection of Hon. Nancy Lee Johnson

19. *Catch Me*, 1987
Bronze
11 ⅛ x 10 ½ x 6 ⅜ inches
Collection of John and Barbara Lee

Her series of horses, made up of very fine steel bars, then cast in bronze, have the unmistakable Caroline Lee touch of joyfulness and optimism, of flying forwards while solidly fixed to the reality of a heavy pedestal.

Ann Cremin
"In the Name of Liberty," 2003

20. *Homage to Martin Luther King: Eyes on the Prize*, 1987
Nickel plated steel
20 ¾ x 15 ½ x 7 inches
Collection of the artist

21. *Don Quixote's Bird* (*L'Oiseau de Don Quichotte*), 1988
Steel and stainless steel
19 x 13 x 12 inches
Collection of Evelyn M. Lee

22. *The Nymph* (*La Nymphe*), 1991
Steel
28 ½ x 20 ¼ x 23 ½ inches
Collection of Lindsay Johnson and John Suddarth

23. *The Great White Lady* (*La Dame Blanche*), 2006
Stainless steel
14 ¾ x 22 ½ x 16 ½ inches
Collection of the artist

24. *The Shoulder* (*L'Épaule*), 2006–7
Stainless steel
15 ¾ x 20 ¼ x 44 ¼ inches
Collection of the artist

Color Plates

Her adventurousness has led her to try her hand at many forms and materials, but her work is always instantly recognizably her own. There has been a gradual change over time, from rounded, organic, life affirming forms towards spikier, edgier, thrusting, almost aggressive shapes. Working with various people leads to new forms and a different approach: the images eventually appear as an almost collective work, embodying the experience that went into fashioning them.

Hers is an intensely physical art form, where the body and mind must be totally engaged for the results to be credible and long lasting. With her works embedded as firmly in our subconscious as they are in the soil or the surrounding waters, Caroline Lee is a life-affirming artist, who has reached total control over everything she turns her hand and her mind to.

Ann Cremin

Caroline Lee: From Chicago To Paris

DOMINIQUE DALEMONT

Although recently challenged by London and New York, Paris has a longstanding tradition of attracting foreign artists, as early as 1905 for Ossip Zadkine or 1910 for Marc Chagall, among the most famous.

Caroline Lee is no exception. It was her longstanding interest in the French Revolution followed by the birth of the Republic in the nineteenth century, a violent history whose origins she describes as a kind of "cleansing through fire," that initially sparked her love for France.

In 1958, she was awarded a Fulbright grant to pursue her artistic career in Paris as a sculptor. Indeed, although she was studying painting at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, it was the challenge of sculpture that continuously and secretly attracted her. As early as 1952, she had admired the works of Rodin exhibited in San Francisco at the Legion of Honor fine arts museum. Later, she avidly followed the Art Institute tours conducted by Roberto Matta, a Chilean Surrealist artist living in Paris. And she was influenced by Alan Frumkin, a gallery owner committed to being helpful to the students of the Art Institute. In his gallery, she discovered the works of Alberto Giacometti and Germaine Richier.

As a young artist, Caroline Lee also spent time in the studio of Richard Hunt, a native Chicagoan and a particularly gifted sculptor whose work she greatly admired and whose tools fascinated her. An outstanding student, Caroline Lee was able to spend several weeks not attending painting classes but instead hidden away in the Art Institute's maintenance work shop, where she could transpose into steel models she initially conceived in balsa wood.

Flower of Evil (*La Fleur du Mal*), 1963
Checklist no. 2

One encounter was to be especially determining in the course of her artistic and personal life. It was her contact with painter Edgar Pillet, then a visiting professor at the School of the Art Institute, that introduced Caroline Lee to the French mentality and culture. Later, Pillet also introduced her to the famous sculptor César in Paris.

Caroline Lee's Parisian artistic adventure is inseparable from the many people she met upon her arrival: artists and small factory owners disposed to working with her. Thanks to her dynamic socializing and poignantly intense interest, she was welcomed into several factories and studios where she was able to learn different techniques and eventually acquire second hand equipment and materials. She began to weld, established her first foundry, and discovered polystyrene (styrofoam).

In 1962, she met Yugoslavian artist Knez (1923–1992). He became her husband and, through their collaboration and profound artistic intimacy, his own work evolved from painting to sculpture. In 1989, after she returned from a two-year stay in Chicago, Knez made space for her in his studio a few miles outside of Paris, the same studio she occupies today in Le Perreux sur Marne.

Caroline Lee has occupied studios on the outskirts south, west, and east of Paris. While historically, the heart of Paris's artistic life had always been the Montparnasse neighborhood, lack of space, rising living expenses, and real estate speculation gradually pushed artists outside of Paris, especially sculptors who generally need more space than painters do.

Among all the salons that compose the vitality of Parisian artistic life, the *Salon de la Jeune Sculpture* (1948–1978) occupied several different prestigious locations like the Rodin Museum, the Orangerie in the Tuileries Gardens, and the National Museum of Modern Art inside the Palais de Tokyo. During its thirty-year existence, this salon, organized by the highly regarded and well-liked critic Denys Chevalier, exposed the works of over a thousand sculptors of all nationalities, including Lee, on many occasions.

Caroline Lee's work is strong and singular. More than other artists, she has made herself known for her breathtaking stylistic diversity, from the purest geometrical abstraction (*Angel in Hell, page 33)* to the acrobatic combinations of organic, anthropomorphic, zoomorphic or even natural elements (*Homage to Martin Luther King: Eyes on the Prize*, page 44, among many others).

The combined virtues of rigidity and plasticity afforded by steel enable Lee to assemble, at the proper distance, a number of figurative elements by combining them with geometrical tubular shapes. With one leg, one arm, a foot, a hand, one or several heads, she composes seemingly weightless bouquets of very personal and inspired themes, like *Homage to James Joyce*, the baroque coils of *Flower of Evil* (page 24), and *Don Quixote's Bird* (page 45).

In so doing, Caroline Lee's work inscribes itself in line with the surrealist tradition. In 1919, Max Ernst described his collages as "the fortuitous encounter of two distant realities onto a non-suited plane"—as in "not conforming to common usage." This profession of faith could well describe Lee's work.

I don't think one can speak of "progression," per se, regarding Caroline Lee's career. Her work demonstrates a constant effervescence, an enduring quest for new techniques, and new themes for reflection. One can grasp in her work the constant back and forth between dreamlike allusive figuration and the sharpest, uncluttered abstraction.

And yet, there is still a very striking break in Lee's work, marked by great technological audacity for the time. In 1966, her friend the photographer Augustin Dumage introduced her to Michel Tissot-Dupont who had a studio and small factory in Annecy. This led Caroline Lee to make her sculptures, or have them made, using machine tools (band saws, milling cutters, lathes, etc.). Her "machine tool" pieces were conceived in space, directly carved in blocks of polystyrene, cut with hacksaw blades or a hot wire, and polished using high-speed grinders. Next, extremely precise and scaled execution drawings were entrusted to the factory, with indications for each piece, specifying the tool to use and the desired finish. *The Androgene* was the first piece of a long and remarkable series.

It is important to underline that women sculptors using stainless steel were rare at this time. As early as 1962 (for the *Pergolese* project), Caroline Lee selected stainless steel as her medium for its inalterability in the face of poor weather conditions. In the past few decades, I have met and studied the works of 102 metal sculptors living in France: 16 were women, 4 used stainless steel, among whom 3 had large scale works manufactured by others. Caroline Lee is still the only sculptor who tackles stainless steel on a monumental scale by herself.

In 1981, Caroline Lee won a competition for the *Monument to the Resistance* (page 41), commissioned by the town of Montreuil-sous-Bois, a working class community to the east of Paris. Although it might seem odd for an American sculptor to win a commission of such national historical importance as the French Resistance, there was in fact no legal obstacle to her winning. France is populated with talented artists of foreign origins, especially Paris. Differentiating between a French national and a foreign artist living in France was therefore inconceivable. Furthermore, Caroline Lee slipped into her application a photo of her father as a young man wearing the French army uniform while a volunteer ambulance driver during World War 1, before the United States joined in 1917.

Her more recent rounded forms, like *The Great White Lady* (page 47) and *The Shoulder* (page 48) borrow their organic shapes, often checkered like shells, armors, or breastplates, from turtles, snails, and seashells. These sculptures are in line with a famous piece by Italian futurist Umberto Boccioni: *Dinamismo di un Cavallo in Corsa* (1914–1915). This is the early period of modernism using "direct" metal, as opposed to melted metal, as did Julio Gonzales, Pablo Gargallo, Pablo Picasso or Alexander Calder, Antoine Pevsner, and Naum Gabo. During those same prolific times, Marcel Duchamp was inventing ready-mades.

Similar to Constantin Brancusi, whose work she always found inspiring, Caroline Lee asserts and demonstrates through her work that "each millimeter of the sculpture must be alive. Each part of the work speaks of the whole."

"Even before leaving Chicago more than 50 years ago," Caroline recalls, "I knew I would be happy in France." That she would not deny today!

Caroline Lee: de Chicago à Paris

DOMINIQUE DALEMONT

Dès l'époque où le peintre Marc Chagall (en 1910) et le sculpteur Ossip Zadkine (en 1905) se fixèrent à Paris, pour ne prendre que deux exemples célèbres, notre capitale des arts, détrônée plus tard par Londres et New York, accueillait déjà par tradition nombre d'artistes étrangers.

Dans cette lignée, Caroline Lee ne fait pas exception. Elle est venue en France par amour de notre pays. Sa terre d'élection fut la France, raconte-t-elle, du fait de l'intérêt que la jeune femme avait porté à travers ses lectures à l'histoire de la Révolution française et à tous les épisodes de la naissance de la République dans le courant du XIXème siècle. Une histoire violente qu'elle décrit à l'origine comme une sorte de « nettoyage par le feu ».

Avant même d'obtenir la bourse Fulbright pour venir en France à l'automne 1958, Caroline Lee avait déjà décidé secrètement d'emprunter le chemin de la sculpture, pour développer son talent. Aller au terme du cursus en peinture à l'Ecole de l'Art Institute représentait cependant un « challenge », face aux difficultés rencontrées dans cette discipline. A l'époque, elle avait admiré les œuvres d'Auguste Rodin, à l'occasion d'une exposition au Musée de la Légion d'honneur à Sans Francisco en 1952. Elle avait suivi avec passion les visites à travers l'Art Institute, guidées par le peintre et sculpteur chilien Roberto Matta (un autre Surréaliste installé à Paris), en séjour à Chicago. Elle avait découvert Alberto Giacometti et Germaine Richier dans la galerie d'Alan Frumkin, dévoué en permanence aux élèves de l'Ecole d'art. Elle fréquentait le premier atelier de Richard Hunt, jeune sculpteur de la même génération, lui aussi natif de Chicago, particulièrement doué et précoce. Elle était émerveillée par ses premières œuvres, fascinée par son outillage. Excellente élève dès la première année, elle avait pu consacrer plusieurs semaines – sans aller au cours de peinture – à transposer dans l'acier, un projet de sculpture d'abord réalisé en bois de balsa. Accueillie pour ce faire par le service d'entretien du musée. Marquée par sa rencontre avec Edgard Pillet (1913-1997), « visiting professor » à Chicago, Caroline découvrait la mentalité française et commençait à aimer la France à son contact, avant de faire le voyage. C'est Pillet qui l'introduira auprès du célèbre sculpteur César dès son arrivée à Paris.

L'aventure artistique parisienne de Caroline Lee est indissociable des nombreuses rencontres qu'elle fit à son arrivée, auprès d'artistes et de petits industriels disposés à coopérer avec elle. Grâce à son dynamisme et à son entregent, elle fut accueillie dans plusieurs usines et ateliers. Elle put y apprendre telle et telle techniques, et par la suite acquérir du matériel d'occasion, commencer à souder, installer une première fonderie, découvrir le polystyrène, etc.

En 1962, elle rencontre le peintre Knez (1923–1992), d'origine yougoslave, qui deviendra son mari, et qui évoluera lui-même de la peinture vers la sculpture en travaillant avec sa compagne. En 1989, tandis qu'elle rentre d'un séjour de deux ans aux Etats-Unis, Knez lui fait de la place dans son atelier du Perreux, à quelques kilomètres à l'Est de Paris, atelier qu'elle occupe toujours aujourd'hui. Caroline s'est établie successivement à l'Ouest, puis au Sud, et enfin à l'Est de Paris. Peu à peu chassés de Montparnasse, cœur historique de la ville et surtout de la vie artistique, à cause du manque de place, de la cherté de la vie, et de la spéculation immobilière, c'est vers la proche ceinture que devaient fuir les sculpteurs, pour y trouver des ateliers spacieux et financièrement accessibles.

Entre tous, le principal lieu de rencontres et d'expressions croisées fut le Salon de la jeune sculpture à Paris, qui s'est tenu annuellement de 1948 à 1978, dans différents lieux prestigieux, tels le Musée Rodin, l'Orangerie des Tuileries, ou le Musée national d'art moderne au Palais de Tokyo. Organisé par Denys Chevalier, critique réputé et proche des artistes, il a vu passer plus de mille sculpteurs de toutes nationalités en trente ans. Caroline Lee y participa à de multiples reprises.

L'œuvre de Caroline Lee est forte et singulière. Plus que d'autres, l'artiste s'est illustrée par une incroyable diversité stylistique, entre l'abstraction géométrique la plus pure (*Ange en Enfer,* page 33) et ces combinaisons acrobatiques d'éléments organiques, anthropomorphes, zoomorphes, ou végétaux (*Homage to Martin Luther King*, page 44, parmi tant d'autres).

Grâce aux propriétés de l'acier, à la fois sa rigidité et sa plasticité, le sculpteur réunit à bonne distance par assemblage des éléments de figuration, reliés par des formes tubulaires plus géométriques. Avec une jambe, un bras, un pied, une main, une ou plusieurs têtes, évitant toute lourdeur, elle compose comme des bouquets, sur des thèmes très personnels et inspirés, tels que cet *L'Hommage à James Joyce* – l'écrivain irlandais (1977). Ses torsades sont baroques (*La Fleur du Mal*, page 24; *L'Oiseau de Don Quichotte*, page 45).

Ce faisant, Caroline Lee s'inscrit dans la veine des surréalistes. En 1919, Max Ernst, à propos de ses collages, parlait de « la rencontre fortuite de deux réalités distantes sur un plan non convenant »—traduisez : « non conforme aux usages ». Cette profession de foi pourrait convenir à Caroline.

Je ne crois pas que l'on puisse parler de « progression » dans l'œuvre de Caroline Lee. Il y a chez elle une effervescence constante, elle est à la recherche de nouvelles techniques, de nouveaux thèmes de réflexion. L'on observe chez elle de constants allers et retours entre la figuration la plus onirique et l'abstraction la plus épurée.

Il y eut tout de même un point de nette rupture dans son travail, marquée par une grande audace technologique pour l'époque, lorsque Caroline Lee décida de fabriquer ou de faire fabriquer ses sculptures avec des machines-outils (scie à ruban, fraise, tour, etc.) dans les ateliers de Michel Tissot-Dupont à Annecy. Elle avait rencontré l'industriel quelque temps plus tôt en 1966, chez son ami parisien, le photographe Augustin Dumage. Ces sculptures furent conçues dans l'espace, directement taillées dans des blocs de polystyrène, coupés avec des lames de scie à métaux ou un fil chauffant, puis lissés avec des meuleuses à grande vitesse. Des dessins d'exécution extrêmement précis et cotés étaient ensuite confiés à l'usine, avec des indications, pour chaque face, sur l'outil à utiliser et le rendu de surface souhaité. *L'Androgène* (1969) fut la première pièce d'une longue série remarquable.

Rares étaient les femmes sculpteurs à l'époque, qui ont comme elle adopté l'acier inoxydable dès 1962 (pour *Pergolèse*), comme matériau principal, pour son inaltérabilité face aux intempéries. Parmi les cent deux sculpteurs que j'ai moi-même rencontrés ou étudiés, ayant travaillé le métal en France durant les dernières décennies, seize étaient des femmes, quatre employaient l'acier inoxydable, parmi lesquelles trois faisaient réaliser le travail à grande échelle par d'autres, et une seule, Caroline Lee, travaillait elle-même l'Inox.

En 1981, Caroline Lee a remporté le concours pour la réalisation du *Monument à la Résistance* (page 41), commandé par la ville de Montreuil-sous-Bois, une ville ouvrière de la banlieue Est de Paris (sculpture monumentale en acier inoxydable de 12,5 mètres de hauteur, réalisée dans un espace couvert de 200m2 de la zone industrielle MOZINOR). Si étonnant que cela paraisse sur un thème d'une aussi grande importance historique pour le pays, il n'y avait pas d'obstacle particulier à ce qu'un étranger ou une étrangère soit lauréat(e). La population des artistes talentueux exerçant en France, et particulièrement à Paris, était très cosmopolite et bien intégrée depuis longtemps. Aucune ségrégation n'était imaginable. De plus, pour concourir, Caroline avait glissé dans son dossier une photographie de son père revêtu de l'uniforme de l'armée française, dans laquelle il avait servi comme chauffeur ambulancier et volontaire durant la Première guerre mondiale, avant que les Américains n'entrent en guerre en 1917.

Ses formes arrondies les plus récentes (*La Dame Blanche*, page 47, *L'Épaule*, page 48, etc.), très organiques, souvent en damier, telles des carapaces ou des cuirasses, empruntent aux tortues, aux escargots, aux coquillages. Elles s'inscrivent dans la lignée d'une sculpture très célèbre due au Futuriste italien Umberto Boccioni (1882–1916) : *Dinamismo di un cavallo in corsa*… (1914–15). C'est l'époque des débuts du modernisme avec le métal « direct » , – par opposition au métal de fonderie – comme moyen d'expression, chez Gonzalès, Gargallo et Picasso, Espagnols installés à Paris, puis de Calder, Pevsner et Gabo…. A la même époque, Marcel Duchamp inventait ses ready-made.

Derrière Constantin Brancusi qui l'inspire, Caroline Lee affirme en pratiquant : « chaque millimètre de la sculpture doit être vivant. Chaque partie de l'ouvrage parle de tout le reste ».

« Avant même de quitter Chicago il y a plus de cinquante ans », raconte Caroline Lee sans renier son pays d'origine bien entendu, « je savais que je serais heureuse en France ». Ce qu'elle ne dément pas aujourd'hui !

Monument to the Resistance (*Monument à la Résistance*)
Montreuil-sous-Bois, France

Exhibition Checklist

Detail: *The Shoulder* (*L'Épaule*), 2006–7, Checklist no. 24

SCULPTURE

1. *The Swan* (*Le Cygne*), 1959
   Welded steel
   29 x 6 x 29 ½ inches
   Collection of Ted Lee

2. *Flower of Evil* (*La Fleur du Mal*), 1963
   Welded, formed steel tubes
   36 ¼ x 34 ¼ x 14 ⅞
   Collection of Evelyn M. Lee

3. *Double Wing*, 1964
   Bronze and steel
   34 ¾ x 23 ⅝ x 19 ⅞ inches (includes base)
   Collection of Mary Esther Lee

4. *The Gargoyle* (*La Gargouille*), 1965
   Welded steel bars
   61 x 38 ½ x 28 ¼ inches
   Collection of Hon. Nancy Lee Johnson

5. *Dogman*, 1965
   Welded, hammered steel
   77 ⅞ x 35 ¼ x 23 ½ inches
   Collection of the artist

6. *Baby Bird*, 1967
   Copper and geode
   12 x 4 ½ x 5 ⅛ inches (includes base)
   Collection of Mary Esther Lee

7. *Imprisoned Bird* (*L'Oiseau Emprisonné*), 1970
   Machined aluminum
   21 ¾ x 23 ⅝ x 12 ⅜ inches
   Collection of Hon. Nancy Lee Johnson

8. *S 1-11*, 1970–71
   Machined aluminum
   22 ⅜ x 10 ¾ x 7 ¼ inches
   Collection of James R. Magee

9. *Projectile*, 1971
   Machined aluminum
   24 x 14 ½ x 12 ½ inches
   Collection of the Muskegon Museum of Art: Gift of the artist in honor of the 100th Anniversary of the Muskegon Museum of Art, 2011.5

10. *Femme Victoire*, 1971
    Cast aluminum
    20 x 14 ¼ x 8 ¼ inches
    Collection of Myrna Knepler

11. *Angel in Hell* (*Ange en Enfer*), 1971
    Cast aluminum
    11 x 13 ⅜ x 6 ¾ inches
    Collection of Myrna Knepler

12. *Thoughts* (*Les Pensées*), 1972
    Machined aluminum
    17 ¾ x 13 x 6 ⅜ inches
    Collection of the artist

13. Maquette for *The Mastery of Evil* (*La Maitrise du Mal*), 1977
    Cast aluminum on stainless steel base
    24 ⅜ x 10 ¼ x 7 ¾ inches
    Collection of the artist

14. Maquette for *The Inhabitant of the Volcano* (*L'Habitant du Volcan*), 1978
    Bronze on stainless steel base
    8 ½ x 8 x 5 inches (includes base)
    Collection of Rebecca Davidson

15. Maquette for *Flower of the Volcano* (*Fleur du Volcan*), 1978
    Bronze on stainless steel base
    16 x 5 x 11 ¾ inches (includes base)
    Collection of Rebecca Davidson

16. *Eagle of the Rising Star*, 1980
    Stainless steel
    38 ⅞ x 32 ¼ x 28 ⅝ inches
    Collection of the John Marshall Law School, Chicago: Gift of the artist

17. Maquette for *Monument to the Resistance* (*Monument à la Résistance*), 1981
    Cast aluminum
    36 ⅜ x 13 ¾ x 29 inches (includes base)
    Collection of the artist

18. *Sailing to Byzantium*, 1981–82
    Stainless steel
    12 ½ x 11 x 8 ⅜ inches
    Collection of Hon. Nancy Lee Johnson

19. *Catch Me*, 1987
    Bronze
    11 ⅛ x 10 ½ x 6 ⅜ inches
    Collection of John and Barbara Lee

20. *Homage to Martin Luther King: Eyes on the Prize*, 1987
    Nickel plated steel
    20 ¾ x 15 ½ x 7 inches
    Collection of the artist

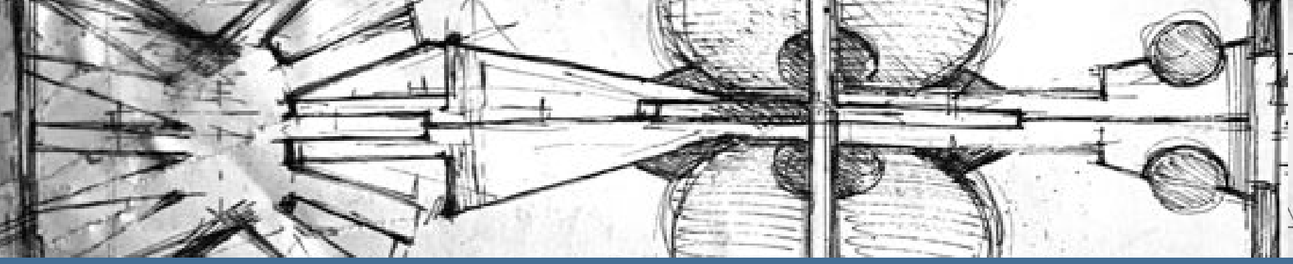
21. *Don Quixote's Bird* (*L'Oiseau de Don Quichotte*), 1988
    Steel and stainless steel
    19 x 13 x 12 inches
    Collection of Evelyn M. Lee

22. *The Nymph* (*La Nymphe*), 1991
    Steel
    28 ½ x 20 ¼ x 23 ½ inches
    Collection of Lindsay Johnson and John Suddarth

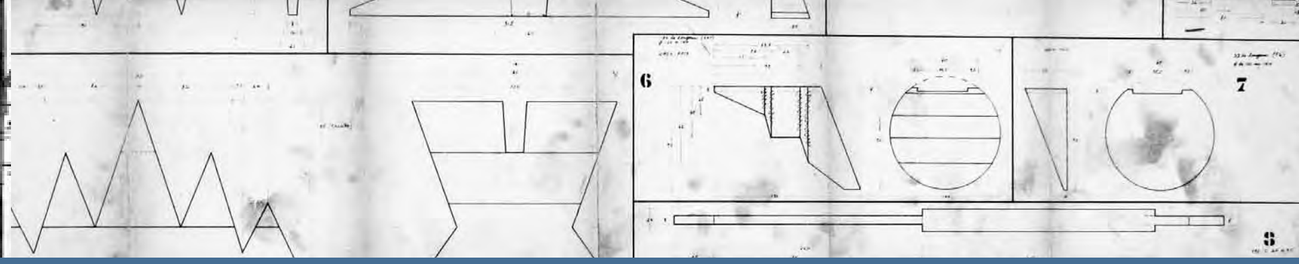
23. *The Great White Lady* (*La Dame Blanche*), 2006
    Stainless steel
    14 ¾ x 22 ½ x 16 ½ inches
    Collection of the artist

24. *The Shoulder* (*L'Épaule*), 2006–7
    Stainless steel
    15 ¾ x 20 ¼ x 44 ¼ inches
    Collection of the artist

Catch Me, 1987
Checklist no. 19



Detail: Drawing for *Untitled*, not dated, Checklist no. 41



Detail: Machine tool drawing for *Imprisoned Bird* (*L'Oiseau Emprisonné*), Checklist no. 42

DRAWINGS

25. *Untitled*, 1978
Ballpoint pen on paper
9 ⅞ x 9 inches
Collection of the artist

26. *Untitled*, 1978
Pencil on paper
10 ⅝ x 9 ⅜ inches
Collection of the artist

27. *Femme Tonnerre*, 1979
Ballpoint pen on paper
9 ½ x 12 ½ inches
Collection of the artist

28. *Twisting Throwing Figure* (*de l'éclatement un nouveau monde*), 1981
Pencil on paper
8 ¼ x 11 ⅝ inches
Collection of the artist

29. *Untitled*, 1981
Pencil on paper
8 ¼ x 11 ⅝ inches
Collection of the artist

30. *Untitled*, 1981
Pencil on paper
8 ¼ x 11 ⅝ inches
Collection of the artist

31. *Untitled*, 1981
Pencil on paper
8 ¼ x 11 ⅝ inches
Collection of the artist

32. *Beautiful Dreamer: Homage to Stephen Foster*, 1983
Marking pen on paper
11 ¾ x 8 ¼ inches
Collection of the artist

33. *Untitled*, 1998
Pen and ink on paper
11 ⅝ x 8 ¼ inches
Collection of the artist

34. *Untitled*, 1998
Pen and ink wash on paper
11 ⅝ x 8 ¼ inches
Collection of the artist

35. *Le Coeur Brisé*, not dated
Pen and ink on paper
6 ½ x 10 ⅝ inches
Collection of the artist

36. *Untitled*, not dated
Charcoal on paper
24 ¾ x 19 ½ inches
Collection of the artist

37. *Untitled*, not dated
Marking pen on paper
8 ¼ x 5 ¼ inches
Collection of the artist

38. *Untitled*, not dated
Marking pen on paper
12 ⅛ x 9 ⅜ inches
Collection of the artist

39. *Untitled*, not dated
Marking pen on paper
12 ⅛ x 9 ⅜ inches
Collection of the artist

40. *Untitled*, not dated
Pen and ink on paper
14 ¼ x 10 ¾ inches
Collection of the artist

41. *Untitled*, not dated
Pen and ink on paper
14 ⅛ x 10 ⅜ inches
Collection of the artist

42. *Untitled*, not dated
Marking pen on paper
7 ¼ x 9 inches
Collection of the artist

MACHINE TOOL DRAWINGS

43. For *Projectile*, not dated
24 x 48 inches
Collection of the artist

44. For *Imprisoned Bird* (*L'Oiseau Emprisonné*)
24 ¾ x 51 ¼ inches
Collection of the artist

About the Artist

Born in Chicago in 1932, Caroline Lee established herself in Paris in 1958, laureate of a Fulbright grant. Her participation in the *Salon de la Jeune Sculpture* in 1961 opened the door to public and private commissions, and introduced her to many art collectors. Several one-person shows followed in Paris at the galleries of Lahumiere, Darthea Speyer, and Jean Briance as well as at locations in Amsterdam, Stockholm, and Chicago. During these years she completed major commissions for the School of Medicine and Pharmacy at the University of Clermont-Ferrand, Puy de Dome, which awarded her a medal; for the Marine National, Cercle des Officiers Mariniers in Toulon; a signal sculpture marking an entrance to Champs Roman, an industrial zone of St. Martin d'Heres near Grenoble; and in 1982, the *Monument to the Resistance,* at Montreuil-sous-Bois for which she won the competition. In 1980 she received a Professional Achievement Award from the University of Chicago. In 2006 she received the Sculpture Prize of the Simone and Cino Del Duca Foundation, Academie des Beaux Arts, Institute of France.

Caroline Lee holds degrees from the University of Chicago and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art of Paris, the National Center for Contemporary Art, and the Musée des Beaux Arts de Pau, among others, as well as in private collections in France, the United States, Sweden, Serbia, and the Netherlands.

For further information, visit the artist's website: http://www.carolineleesculpture.com/

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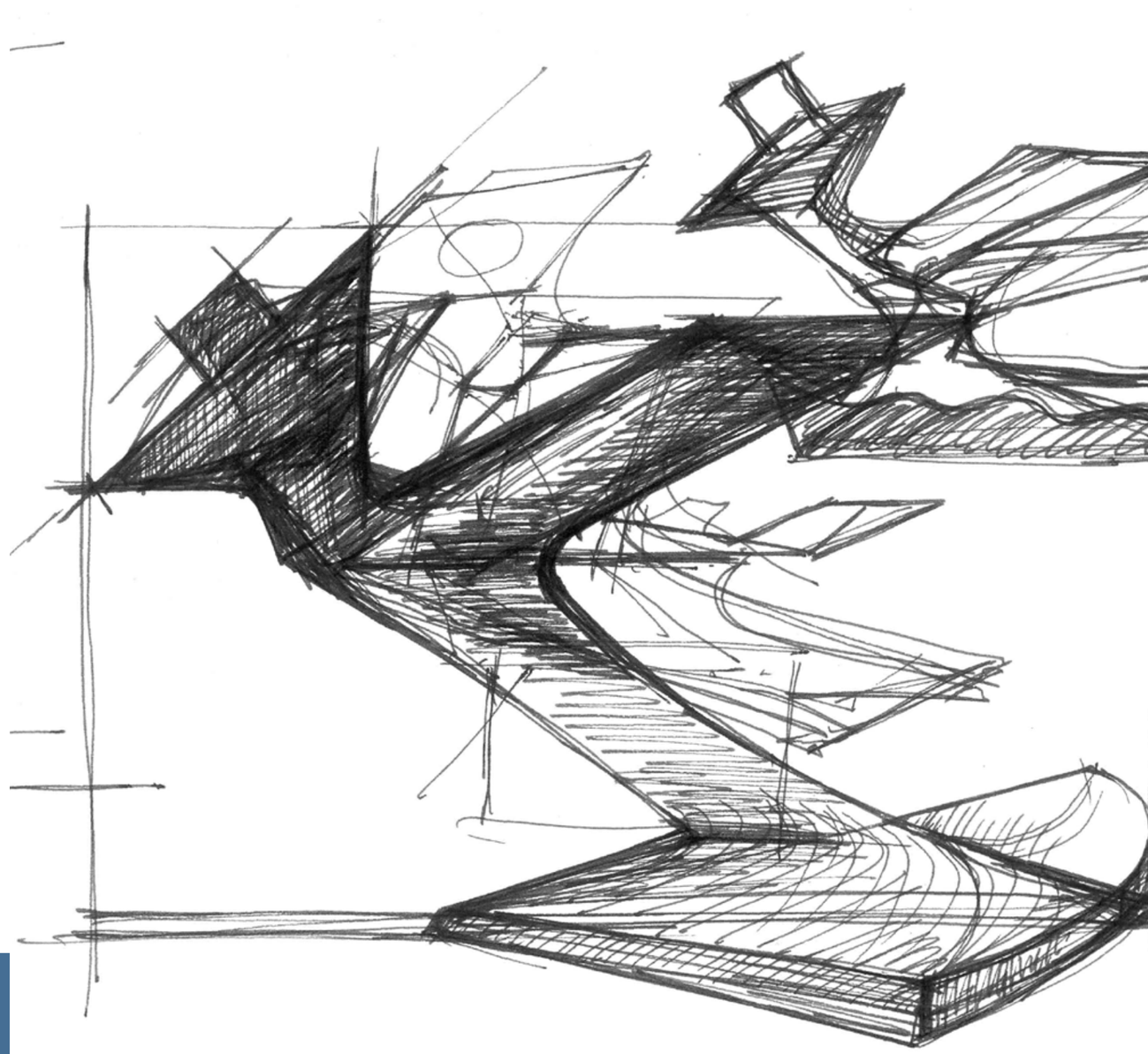
The artist tracing a pattern onto stainless steel for *The Great White Lady* in her studio in Le Perreux, Paris, 2004

Contributors

Lydia Harambourg is a historian, writer, curator, and art critic specializing in the art of the 20th century. She is a lifetime correspondent of the Institute of France, Academy of Beaux Arts, and author of numerous books including the *Dictionary of 19th-Century Landscape Painters* (1985), the *Dictionary of Painters of the École de Paris 1945–1965* (the reprint of which in 2010 received the Joest Academy of Arts Award), and many monographs and prefaces for modern and contemporary painters and sculptors. Harambourg has been editor of a weekly column in the *Gazette of the Drouot Hotel* since 1998, and is the director of the editorial collection *The Circle of Art*. She has been President of the *Salon de Mai* (2002–2004) and of the *Salon d'Angers* (2002). She was founder and curator of the Biennale of Sculpture of Yerres (2007–2009) and Commissioner of Sculpture Exhibitions at the Chateau of Pierre Cardin at Lacoste, Vaucluse (2011–2012).

Dominique Dalemont is an engineer, journalist, writer, and art critic. After studying physics in Paris and graduating in engineering from the University of Michigan in 1971, Dalemont worked as an engineer for the next 15 years. In the 1980s, he started writing and became a journalist, contributing to the professional press in the wood industry. He developed a great interest in art and craft. Meeting and interviewing numerous creators in their workshops and visiting exhibitions during the past 20 years, he became a critic and author. He has published several articles and authored two major illustrated books on wood sculpture and "direct" metal sculpture: *50 Sculptors Choose Wood* (Somogy éditions d'art, Paris, 1998), and *Sculptors in Metal—66 Portraits of Artists* (Somogy éditions d'art, Paris, 2006).

The author's website is dom.dalemont@wanadoo.fr



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Detail: Drawing for *Untitled*, not dated, Checklist no. 42