



Little Bird, 2003, steel, 34.5x20x19 inches



Rapt, 2003, wood/acrylic, 36x36x2 inches

Ellen Steinfeld Interview, by Michael J. Beam, February 2004

You have produced a new body of work for your exhibition at the Castellani. How does the sculpture figure in the scope of your career?

Working with steel presents the exciting ability to push, stretch, balance, and juggle solid and linear forms more than seems physically possible.

The sculptures are perceptions of unrestrained energy reflecting universal non-representational forms. They imply nature and the artificial and the complex relationships between the two.

At what point does color come into the creative equation – while you are conceiving the piece or during the construction?

Color comes near the end. I start with a series of sketches, then cut out steel forms and bend some of them. The individual pieces are then welded according to my initial two-dimensional drawing. As each work begins to take a three-dimensional form, and as I add lines and structure to the form, it begins to change from the original sketch. Once I am satisfied with the form itself, the piece is then sandblasted and primed. Then I do many different

color studies to figure out what colors will work within the scope of the design. The final painted work is much different from the initial sketch, and color is much more important to the design at the end than in the beginning.

The sculpture Zigzag appears to refer to a musical score. Was this intentional?

When I begin drawing a sketch for a sculpture, I do not specifically think that it might be about music or dance; it just evolves. As I start forming the work in a certain direction, ideas come to me, and I work with them and push the sculpture as far as it needs to go. Often the ideas I am exploring remind me of music. *Zigzag* is a good example.

How do the viewer's life experiences affect the rapport they have with a piece?

I am not going to be around to interpret each work of art for those who attend my exhibition. Although the artist conceives of the work in a certain way, art is ultimately about what the viewer reads into the piece through his or her own interpretations. It is a conversation between the artist's intent and the perspectives that the viewers bring to the experience of the piece.

**CASTELLANI
ART MUSEUM**



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Museum Directions

From Buffalo Take the I-190 North across Grand Island to Exit 25A (Lewiston). Turn left onto Route 265 North and go to the end. Turn left onto Route 104 West. Take 104 to the entrance of Niagara University on the left immediately beyond the New York Power Authority overhead walkway. The museum is a large grey marble building in the center of the campus.

From Canada Take the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge to the U.S. Take the first right hand turn immediately after the inspection booths, 104 West Robert Moses Parkway/Lewiston. Bear left remaining on 104 West where road divides. Take next right, 104 West/Niagara Falls (you will also see a small sign for Niagara University). Take 104 West to Niagara University entrance.



ZigZag, 2003, steel, 40x21x17 inches

Ellen Steinfeld
Explorations: Desire + Balance
March 5 - May 16, 2004



The Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency that fosters innovation, leadership and a lifetime of learning, supports The Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University.

steinfeld



Pursue, 2003, wood/acrylic, 36x36 inches



Search, 2003, wood/acrylic, 36x36x2 inches



Catcher, 2003, steel, 50x28x20 inches



Swing, 2002, mixed media/paper, 47x35 inches

The sculpture, *Little Bird*, reads as if it is taking flight – separating itself from the base, collecting its parts, and taking off. After it takes off, it seems as though it is going to land somewhere else and become a completely different sculpture.

This piece is about flight and motion slicing through space. It has a sweeping circular form and the top shape is perched to fly – to take off. It is a formalist piece yet it is very lyrical. The colors had to be subdued but suggestive enough to amplify the line. If they were too dominant, the strength of the forms would be hidden.

The second series in this exhibition is the *Collect-Her-Plates*. How did these develop?

They developed from small burnt wood plate studies, each thirteen inches in diameter. When viewed together, the plates make a setting for twelve. They are a visual language of branded, incised forms that are personal and allegorical. Similarly, the composition of the large painted *Collect-Her-Plates* are cut and textured. The plates are bisected and fragmented, but whole and are analogous to emotions, relationships, and the self.

Within the *Collect-Her-Plates* series, *Rapt*, in particular, stands out.

All of the plates utilize the female form in one way or another, singularly, or accompanied by a male form. The idea was to create a narrative exploring desire and loss using cliché notions of gender and a feeling of innuendo. In *Rapt* the notion of self-identity is explored – understanding your own talents and passions in order to have a complete relationship with someone else. The passion here is music, yet there is an image representing the unknown, watching the woman playing the flute. This image represents the unpredictable future.

In *Rapt* there is a reference to one of your previous sculptures.

The model, a musician, came to my studio and posed next to one of my older large sculptures that incorporated an animal form. The two figures are very different but relate to each other. The model's long blond flowing hair, the lines of her body and her dress are all accentuated with the vines and rounded forms that bisect the plate.

Can you describe the narrative between the two figures in *Search*? The scenario alludes to something extraordinary happening.

I like to juxtapose emotions because I don't want my work to be predictable. In a dance or a relationship there is a push and pull going on, a compromise of background, values and feelings. There are also eyes always watching. They represent both the presence of spirits, the supernatural, and the endless gaze of the "audience" we experience in contemporary society.

Throughout the *Collect-Her-Plates* series, a waxing/waning moon or a rising/setting sun are omnipresent. What do these represent?

The circular form of the plates and the sculpture are symbols of time and space. The circle encloses space while creating a sense of timelessness. In many cultures, it is used ritualistically to symbolize spirituality in this life and the hereafter. It takes on a variety of meanings representing the importance of time in the wheel of life.

In the mixed media paper series, the works are physically flat although they certainly rendezvous visually with your sculptures. How can we describe this series?

These works are landscapes of the mind – worlds that have some resemblance to the familiar everyday life we inhabit, yet offer different propositions that could not exist in the physical landscape. They reflect my fascination with nature and the idea of art as the construction of personal worlds. I explore many subjects using this idea of landscape, including imaginary organic forms, spatial relationships, and the microscopic.

What are the underlying elements that hold these three new series together?

They all emphasize line, form, color, and texture, but the most significant elements that tie the three series together are energy and movement. They are not quiet works.

The artist would like to thank Dick Yencer for assisting with the construction of the sculpture. Material support was provided by Kenneth Krueger, Jack Yellen, and Scott Cant.