

COLOR IN 3D



Through the ages, sculptors tended to express themselves in monochrome. Confronting Praxiteles' languid statue of *Hermès*, Michaelangelo's pensive *David* or Henry Moore's brooding *Reclining Figures*, it is the form that compels our attention while the hue of the material is incidental to the impact. Challenging the concept that mass is the principle element of sculpture, "Color in 3D," a recent exhibit at the Westport Arts Center, presented pieces redefining the attributes of sculpture. Twelve prominent contemporary artists created works that disrupt the sense of order by seeming to be something other than what they are.

Woven chains of vivid filter gels, hand painted cobblestones, webs of knotted shoelaces and beakers filled with bright epoxy resins were among elements of the works displayed this spring. Curator Saul Ostrow, chair of visual arts and technologies and

departmental head of painting at the Cleveland Institute of Art, selected pieces that provoke interaction and response, an alternative to Abstract Expressionism's metaphysical detachment from life.

Acknowledging recent predecessors, who began employing color in the '50s and '60s, Ostrow cites the painted sculptures of David Smith and Alexander Calder's mobiles along with influences of the industrial aesthetic introduced by Claus Oldenberg's painted plaster, Donald Judd's colored Plexiglass and Dan Flavin's creations of colored light. Unlike the forerunners, Ostrow explains, the artists of "Color in 3D" use color not merely as an intrinsic aspect of their materials but as a basic and essential condition of their work.

Employing familiar components, household materials or items usually associated with toys and construction, the sculptures were a world away from a traditional painting show. "What we were looking for was a different way to engage the community," explains Artistic Director Eileen Wiseman. "We wanted to both delight and provoke, to be both thoughtful and playful."

Using color in three different respects, the pieces in the show were categorized as "applied," "found" or "readymade." While many works cross the boundaries, Curtis Mitchell's *Natal*, a circular arrangement of cobblestones painted in bright shades, and Paul O'Keeffe's *Still Life* of tubes and balls painted vivid Day-Glo red, illustrate the impact achieved by the unexpected application of paint to "everyday" objects.