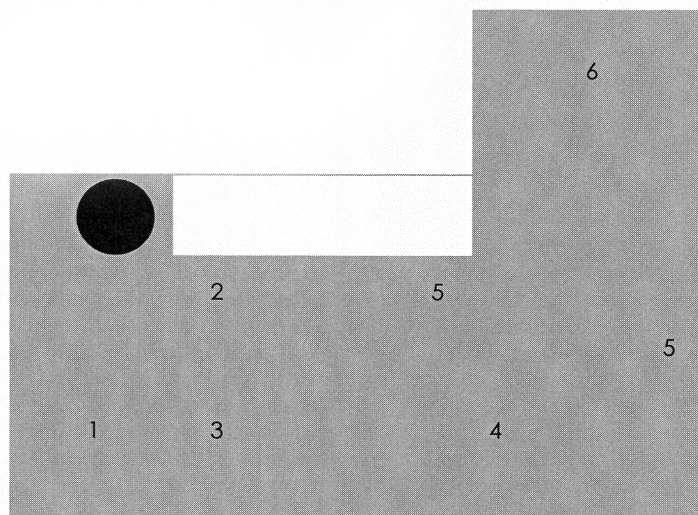


bill smith: *structures and systems*
september 16 – october 21, 2006

www.whiteflagprojects.org



CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

1. *UNTITLED (TWELVE FEEDBACK LOOPS)*
108 X 104 INCHES
This work becomes active for 35 seconds every 6 minutes.
2. *UNTITLED (BRANCHING BALL)*
28 INCHES DIAMETER
Collection Jordan and Connie Heiman, St. Louis.
3. *BURNING BUSH*
28 X 14 INCHES
When active this work emits timed sequences of flames. It will be demonstrated by the artist during his lecture October 12.
4. *UNTITLED (FOUR MAGNETIC ARRAYS)*
A & C: 34 X 34 INCHES EACH B & D: 48 X 48 INCHES EACH
Do not blow on the sculpture.
These works are activated by subtle shifts in air currents and internally regulated magnetic fields.
5. *UNTITLED (CALIBRATED ARTERIAL SYSTEM)*
DIMENSIONS VARIABLE (101 X 72 INCHES AS INSTALLED)
This work is activated by blowing gently on the bird pelvis located on the east wall of the gallery.
6. *UNTITLED (DEMONSTRATION OF EASTERN MAPLE SEEDS IN FLIGHT)*
DIMENSIONS VARIABLE (180 X 72 X 72 INCHES AS INSTALLED)
This work is activated by gently lifting the sweet gum ball. One audio element is played through the speakers and one audio element is played through the headphones.

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Bill Smith: Supernatural

It is particularly difficult to place Bill Smith's art within the context of other art. It may be the found and obsessive manner of these sculptures that tempts one to put Smith within the category of outsider art, but if an outsider artist is someone who makes art with a lack of academic training and art historical context, then Smith may be exactly the opposite. His singular style of work is the result not of naïveté or lack of training, but rather of his being oddly over-trained. Smith's art is highly unusual, and it is the result of an unusual combination of training and talents: Smith holds a BS in Biology, an MFA in Sculpture and a technical degree in Diesel Mechanics. It is one thing to have the vision to conceive such things; it is another to have the inclination, patience, and skill to make them a reality. While there is something profoundly of nature's ways and means represented in Smith's sculptures, there is something supernatural in the intensity of their conceptualization and execution.

While it seems impossible not to marvel at the harmonic delicacy of Bill Smith's art, it is essential to look beyond all of the apparent beauty and obvious workmanship to its philosophical basis. The practice of science is largely observational, and Smith is an insatiable observer of nature. By adopting the beautifully simple natural phenomena of symmetry, arterial branching, and chaos theory, Smith invests his work with a sense of infallibility. In restraining the means by which he arrives at his forms to those found in the natural world it is almost as if the artist has surrendered some part of his authority to nature itself.

One does not have to fully comprehend Smith's biomathematical foundations and resulting three-dimensional algorithms to appreciate his astoundingly broad perspective on nature. For all of its overt complexity, Smith's sculpture is in the end so resonant because it is grounded in the absolute truth of the natural systems on which it is based. Smith recognizes that "experiencing complexity is at the root of our perception of natural beauty," and this remarkable body of work insists that the viewer attempt that same recognition. As aesthetically accomplished as these sculptures are, their strange physical existence seems almost secondary to their function as lenses through which our attention is drawn elsewhere. In the case of Bill Smith's art it is not how each work first commands us to observe its own perfect strangeness, but more in how this assembly of Smith's art eventually asks us to reexamine the perfect strangeness that surrounds us everyday.

Matthew Strauss
Director

White Flag Projects is a not-for-profit alternative art gallery established to improve the quality of contemporary visual arts in St. Louis by facilitating meaningful exhibitions of quality work by progressive local, national, and international artists.

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