

# Jacob Berenstein

Contemporary Sculpture from Israel

DECEMBER 23, 1999 - MARCH 5, 2000

Haggerty Museum of Art

Marquette University ~ Milwaukee, Wisconsin



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*Jacob Berenstein Sculpture*  
Curtis L. Carter

Exhibition checklist

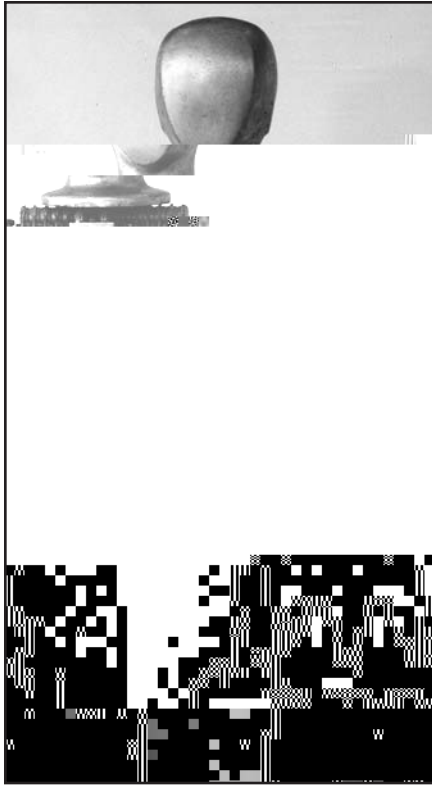
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Artist's biography

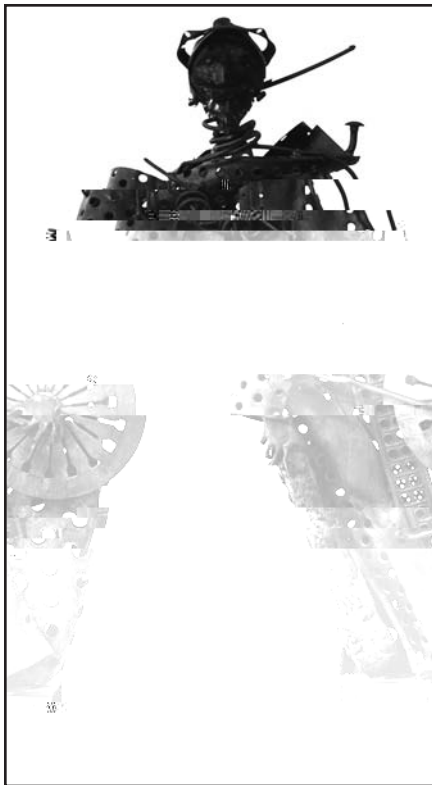


Jacob Berenstein, *Barbar*, 1984-85  
Steel with iron scraps  
16 x 7 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 5 in. (base 1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Max Lahyani

# JACOB BERENSTEIN SCULPTURE



Jacob Berenstein, *The Spectator: After DeChirico*, 1999  
 Cast aluminum, found objects  
 36 x 15 1/4 x 12 in.  
 Collection of the Artist



Jacob Berenstein, *Gallant Warrior*, 1984-85  
 Iron (bent and cut)  
 33 1/4 x 17 1/4 x 10 3/4 in. (base 2 x 2 x 8 in.)  
 Collection of the Artist

artists such as Israeli sculptor Jacob Berenstein. (Early in the twentieth century, Kurt Schwitters also drew inspiration from refuse materials for his collages.)

Like many other present day citizens of Israel, Berenstein is an immigrant. He emigrated to Israel from the Ukraine, in 1950 at age 13. His ideas concerning sculpture initially grew out of his understanding of the materials based on studies in technical school and subsequently from working with metals in the foundry and the machine shop. (Berenstein still spends three days each week working in a machine shop.) Later, he mastered the classical techniques of casting, but his most successful works are achieved through cutting, welding, and assemblage. His training and work as a graphic designer perhaps contributed to the strong sense of design that presides throughout his sculpture.

Berenstein's appreciation of the beauty of machines and industrial objects found in every day life forms an important element in his aesthetics of sculpture. His intent is to recycle the remains of discarded objects and create sculpture that expresses the beauty of the objects. He uses found objects, for example a car radiator forms a torso in *The Spectator*, 1999 (cat. no. 15) which also includes parts of an old seat from a movie theater and a pair of shoes. *Gallant Warrior*, 1984 (cat. no. 11) is constructed from bent and cut iron, and shows especially well the artist's facility with metals.

Refuse objects and scrap metals thus form the sculptural vocabulary assembled by the artist for his own expressive purposes. As with all art, the raw vocabulary selected by the artist is shaped by its cultural context. This is certainly true of Berenstein's sculptures. While some are no more than abstract assemblages, icons of the industrial age, others go much deeper into the culture that Israel now shares with the world. Without any hint of didacticism, Berenstein draws upon the rich historical symbolism of the Holy Land and Jewish heritage. *King David*, 1985, cut and welded iron, (cat. no. 2) unmistakably celebrates the Biblical character so important in the history of Israel. A figure called simply *Roman Warrior*, made of copper, iron and bronze, marks the presence of the Romans (Not in the exhibition). There is perhaps a reference to the Medieval crusaders who once battled on soil that is now modern Israel in *Gallant Warrior*, 1984-85 (cat. no. 11) made of bent and cut iron.

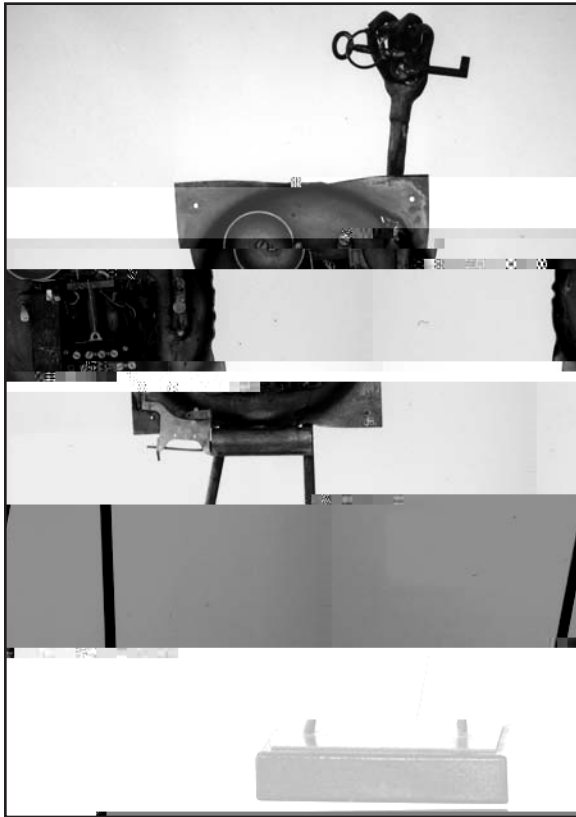
Although quietly expressed, a recurring theme in Berenstein's sculptures is the political strife and military threat facing modern day Israel. A military helmet whimsically positioned on top of a cricket made of copper and steel in *Cricket*

with *Helmet*, 1990 (cat. no. 8) appears in several other works. Dog tags from an Israeli soldier occupy a central place in *Lebanon*, 1990. This work recalls an incident involving military conflict within the Middle East. Constructed from recycled gas masks, *Compression of Time*, 1992 (cat. no. 5) contains unmistakable references to the Gulf War crisis of 1990-1991.

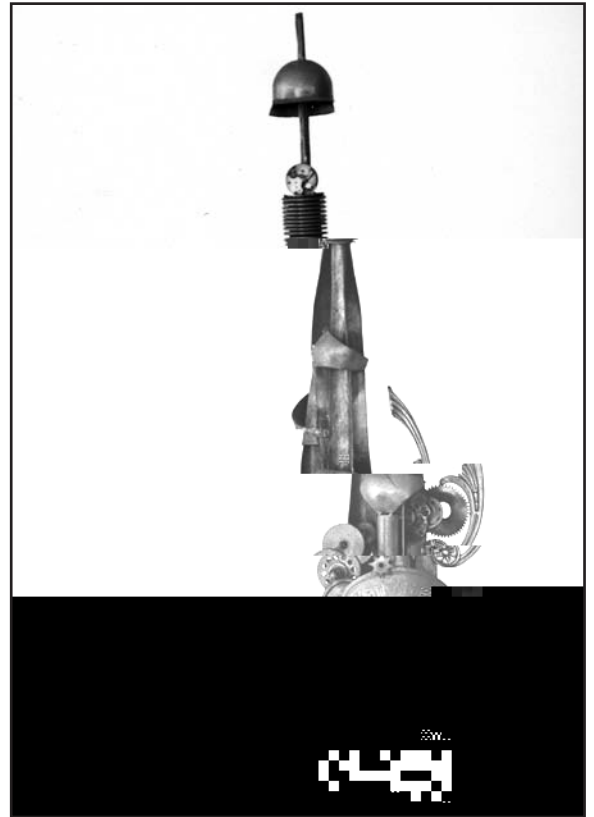
Not all of the sculptures bear such weighty symbolism. *The Key Man*, 1995-1996 (cat. no. 12) offers a satirical look at the pressures on contemporary world leaders. It is constructed with a finished wood block representing a human torso and adorned on the front with keys inserted in locks with a recycled gauge at the top measuring smoke detection. Attached to the back of *Key Man* is a yarmulke, linking the piece to a culturally specific setting. *Madonna*, 1993 (cat. no. 6) comprised of iron scraps and bronze, alludes to the pop singer, Madonna. *The Photographer*, 1999, is perhaps a reference to the paparazzi mania of our times. Together these works attest to the artist's humorous take on the icons of popular culture.

Berenstein's work is unfettered by complex art theories. Rather, his work is guided by a love of materials and a desire to transform the waste of the Machine Age into positive forms of human energy. He is endowed with a love of beautiful things and the talent to transform abandoned machine parts into objects of beauty. In accomplishing this, he reminds us of what is, after all, essential to art.

<sup>1</sup>Alfred H Barr Jr. *Machine Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1934) n.p.



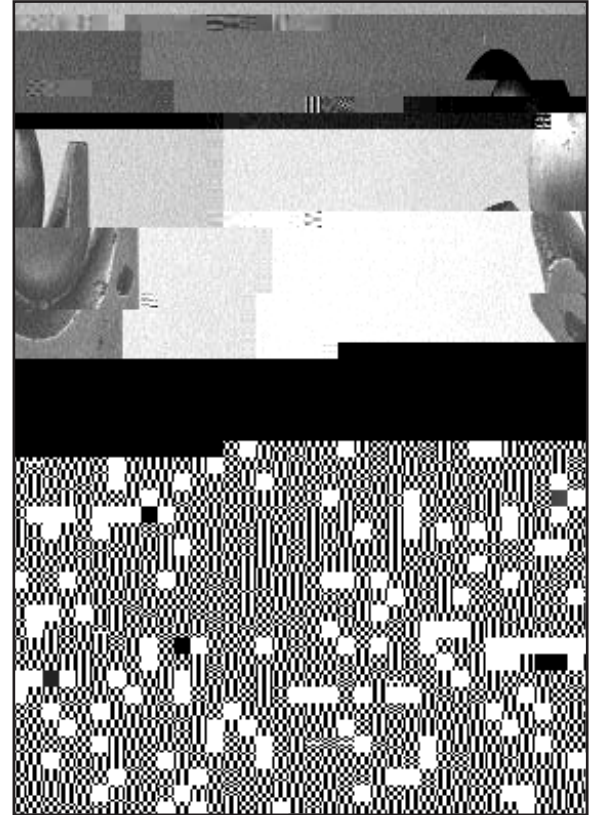
Jacob Berenstein, *The Photographer*, 1999  
 Aluminum, copper, found objects  
 30 3/4 x 8 x 4 1/4 in. (base 1 5/8 x 9 1/4 x 5 5/8 in.)  
 Collection of the Artist



Jacob Berenstein, *Leipzig*, 1994  
 Brass scraps  
 20 x 5 5/8 x 4 in. (base 2 1/4 in. high)  
 Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Max Lahyani

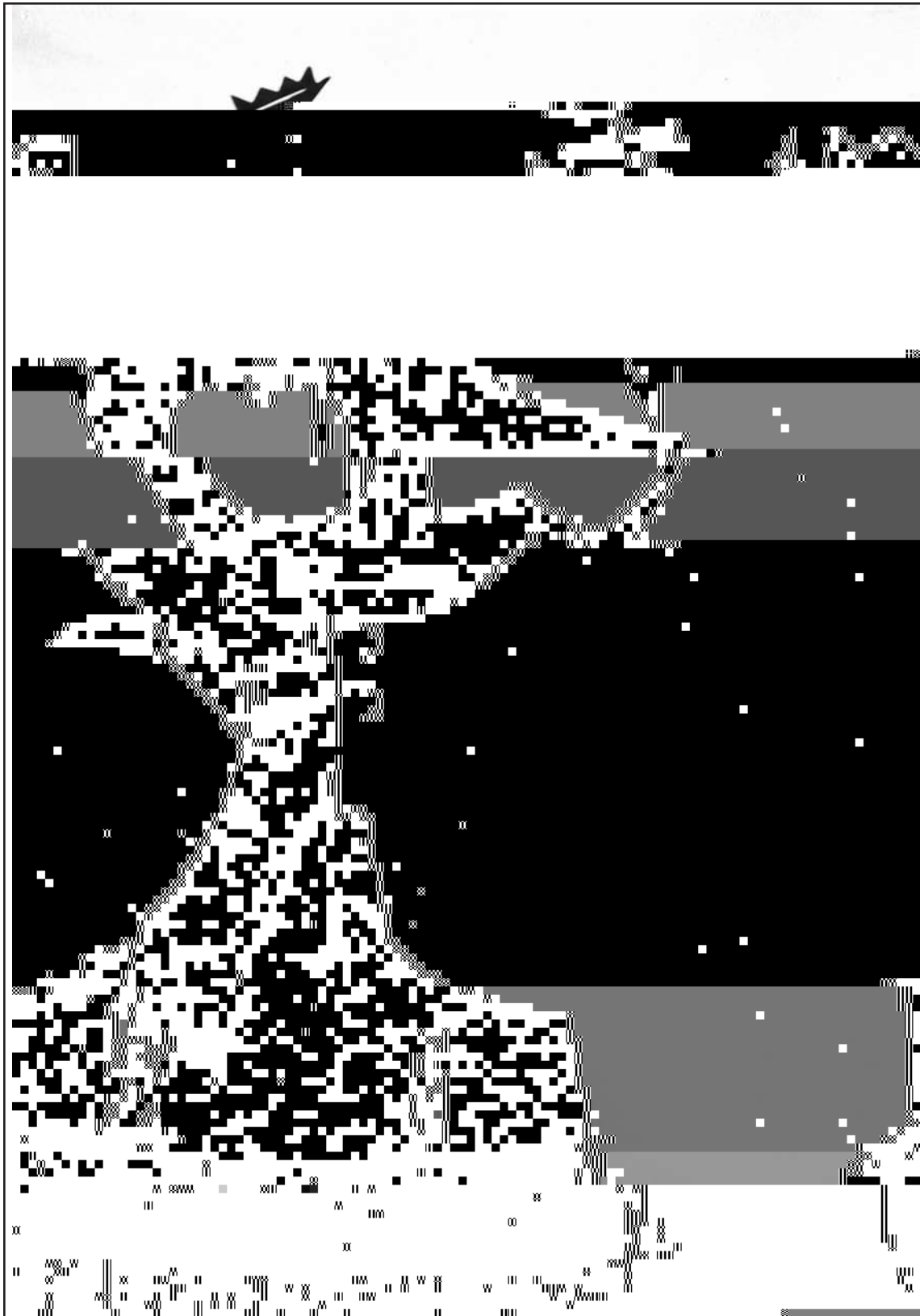


Jacob Berenstein, *Acrobat*, 1987  
 Scrap iron, mixed media  
 10 3/4 x 8 x 2 3/8 in.  
 Collection of the Artist



Jacob Berenstein, *Untitled*, 1999  
 Aluminum  
 15 7/8 x 7 5/8 x 3 1/4 in.  
 Collection of the Artist





Jacob Berenstein, *King David*, 1985  
Iron  
36 x 24 x 8 7/8 in.  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Max Lahyani

# EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

## SCULPTURE

- Barbar, 1984-85  
Steel with iron scraps  
16 x 7 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 5 in. (base 1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Max Lahyani
- King David, 1985  
Iron  
36 x 24 x 8 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Max Lahyani
- Untitled #1, 1985  
Metal scraps  
14 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 6 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (base 1 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. high)  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Max Lahyani
- Untitled #2, 1987  
Found objects  
25 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 8 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 4 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Max Lahyani
- Compression of Time, 1992  
Recycled gas masks (Gulf War)  
32 x 8 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 8 in.  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Max Lahyani
- Madonna, 1993  
Bronze casting with iron scraps  
26 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 10 x 8 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Max Lahyani
- Leipzig, 1994  
Brass scraps  
20 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 5 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 4 in. (base 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. high)  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Max Lahyani
- Cricket with Helmet, 1990  
Copper and steel  
30 x 15 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 15 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist
- 9 The Last Drop, ca. 1989  
Patinated bronze  
9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 5 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist

- Acrobat, 1987  
Scrap iron, mixed media  
10 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 8 x 2 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist
- Gallant Warrior, 1984-85  
Iron  
33 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 17 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 10 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (base 2 x 2 x 8 in.)  
Collection of the Artist
- The Key Man, 1995-96  
Wood, cloth, found objects  
26 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 15 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 7 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Max Lahyani
- Untitled, 1999  
Aluminum  
15 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 3 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist
- The Photographer, 1999  
Aluminum, copper, found objects  
30 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 8 x 4 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (base 1 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 5 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.)  
Collection of the Artist
- The Spectator: After DeChirico, 1999  
Cast aluminum, found objects  
36 x 15 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 12 in.  
Collection of the Artist
- ## RELIEFS
- Untitled, 1992-93  
Assemblage-leather, wood, nails  
36 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 24 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist
- Untitled, 1992-93  
Assemblage-circuit board, wood, tin, bolts, newspaper  
36 x 21 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist
- Untitled, 1992-93  
Assemblage-wood  
36 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 24 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist
- 9 Untitled, 1992-93  
Assemblage-wood, copper, calculator  
36 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 24 in.  
Collection of the Artist

## DRAWINGS

./ Custom Transit: Tel Aviv Central Bus Station, 1994  
Graphite and blue pencil drawing  
13 x 8 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist

./ Untitled, 1996  
Pencil and ink drawing  
11 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist

./ White-Blue Dream (One of two installations at the Ramatgan Museum), 1999  
Pen and ink wash  
11 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 8 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist

./ Untitled, 1997  
Pen and ink wash  
11 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist

./ Untitled, 1995  
Pen and ink wash  
11 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist

./ For Myself #1, 1995  
Pen and ink wash  
11 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 8 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist

./ For Myself #2, 1995  
Pen and ink wash  
11 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist

./ Proposal for Telephone Booth, 1995  
Pen and ink wash  
11 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 8 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist

./ Proposal for Recycling #1, 1994  
Pen and ink wash  
11 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 7 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist

./ Proposal for Recycling #2, 1994  
Pen and ink wash  
11 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 8 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.  
Collection of the Artist

## ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

- 1937 Born in Ukraine.
- 1950 Immigrated to Israel.
- 1954 Graduated from Max Fain Technical High School.
- 1954-1958 Performed military service.
- 1959-1962 Studied graphic design at the Balfur Institute, Tel Aviv.
- 1987 First prize for Don Kichote, Z.O.A. House group exhibition, Tel Aviv.
- 1989 Group exhibition, Memorial Museum, Ramat Hasharon.
- 1990 Artist Promenade Fair, group exhibition, Herzlia.  
Independence Day exhibition, Municipal Gallery, Kfar Saba.
- 1991 Spring Exhibition, solo exhibition Beit Naamat, Herzlia.  
Summer Exhibition, group exhibition, Herzlia promenade.
- 1992 Group exhibition, Aked Gallery, Tel Aviv.  
Independence Day group exhibition, Memorial House, Kfar-Saba.  
Sharon Artists' group exhibition, Municipal Gallery, Kfar Saba.
- 1993 Holocaust Memorial exhibition, Beit Ali Gallery, Ashkelon.  
Erection of Boabab 2, Garden of Modern Sculpture, Ashkelon.
- 1994 Erection of Mobile, Garden of Modern Sculpture, Ashkelon.  
Tin, Can, and Cast, solo exhibition, Kfar Tavor Museum.  
Art Focus, group exhibition, Kfar Tavor Museum.  
Herzlia Artists' exhibition, Kfar Tavor Museum.
- 1995 To Play with the Matter, solo exhibition, Beit Ali Gallery, Ashkelon.  
Spring of 95, solo exhibition, Beit Shapira, Petach Tikfa.  
Tavor 95, group exhibition, Kfar Tavor Museum.  
Modern Sculpture, group exhibition, Mofet Hall, Bat Yam.
- 1996 To Play with the Matter, solo exhibition, Edith Polak Hall, Kiriath Gat.  
The Wink & the Metal, solo exhibition, The Israel Painters & Sculptors Association  
Gallery, Tel Aviv.
- 1997 A Variant Sculpture, solo exhibition, Radio Gallery, Hadera.  
Or Castel Gallery, group exhibition, Rosh Haain.  
The Flutes and the Wind, Bank Leumi Garden, Lud.
- 1998 Sound and Color, solo exhibition, Khan Gallery, Ashkelon.  
The Blue & White Dream, group exhibition, Givataim Museum.
- 1999 Spidnon14315 Td(1992)Tj2 1 Tf57246)Td(solo co-oup Ashkelon)TjT1nk & tiroup exhibititRecycl