

# Marcia Wood opens 'extraordinary' show

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GAZETTE REVIEWER

Marcia Wood's exhibit of metal sculpture titled "Recent Work" is a "five star show." Like the grand five star hotels of Europe, this exhibit at the Kalamazoo Institute of the Arts holds up internationally.

"Recent Work" is composed of 22 pieces, the majority being of assembled cast bronze, but also including steel, cast aluminum and redwood. So recent are these works, that 11 of them have been done in 1985! This in itself is an extraordinary accomplishment given the complexity of casting, welding and finishing bronze. Wood generally spends hundreds of hours per piece.

But what makes this exhibit extraordinary is not the time required for each piece, but the ability of Marcia Wood to express themes of personal importance in ways that visually synthesize the major developments of 20th century sculpture.

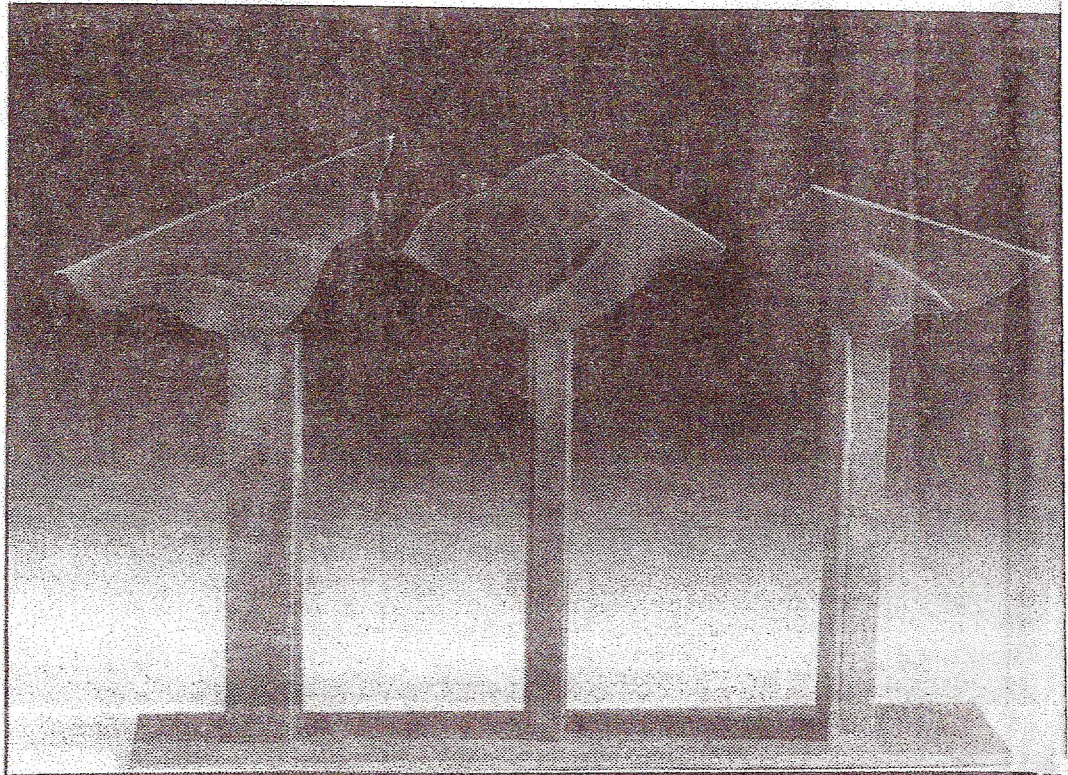
Prior to the 20th century, sculpture had to do with mass. Sculptors either took away from the mass, by carving out wood or stone, or they built up mass, by modeling from a lump of clay or wax.

Sculpture dealing with space, and constructed from the addition of parts, was not something that occurred until 1912-13. At that time Cubists such as Picasso in Paris and Vladimir Tatlin in Russia, began using string, wire and other materials to express sculptural space.

Like these early 20th century pioneer's, Wood's works all deal with space. But her space is not purely abstract. It refers to architectural relationships between people, to past works of art, and to felt natural phenomena such as the movement of water or birds in flight.

Wood's recent personal interest in the relationship of architecture and sculpture is especially visible in pieces such as "Open Door," "Meeting Point" and "Medieval Plan." Here space is shaped geometrically. These pieces all utilize a framing format that bears reference to the initial framing structure of a building, to window frames without glass, and to maps of geometrically planned city.

Wood also expresses her interest



Marcia Wood's 10-foot sculpture titled "Procession" is centerpiece of the show.

## ART PREVIEW

"Marcia Wood: Recent Work" continues through Dec. 1 at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts. Opening Reception Thursday, Oct. 24 from 7-9 p.m. Admission free.

in architecture by the scale of the space in many of her sculptures. Her spaces are like those of buildings: they are large enough to walk through. Unfortunately, many of these sculptures are so large they cannot fit into the KIA, and so they are represented by beautifully done models, coupled with site photographs.

The major exception to this is the 4,700 pound orange steel structure titled "Procession," which will become part of the KIA permanent collection. Its three main forms hover near the ceiling and their pedestals reach upward like columns in a Greek temple.

The reference to classical antiquity in some of Wood's work is a

third way in which her interest in architecture expresses itself. The interest in ancient architecture, however, has to do more with how these forms have survived, in spite of having been ravaged by time. Like the space created by broken arch supports, parts of Wood's framing and spacing seems also broken.

The "broken off" aspect of some parts of Wood's work is both accidental and intentional. It results from some parts of the sculpture being incompletely cast (by accident.) It also results from Wood's philosophy to let the "accident" remain, as part of the sculpture's "experience" in the world. In this attitude, Wood is clearly aligned with a 20th century concept in sculpture and painting of letting the process be visible.

Wood has also let her process be visible by her choosing to leave the "flashings" on some of her works such as "Medieval Plan." For those who are not bronze sculptures, "flashings" are thin, lacy edges, kind of like the crispy parts that seep out around pancakes.

Wood's relationship to 20th cen-

tury sculptural developments includes more than dealing with space and letting her process show. She also has an interest in color as part of form. In some cases this is flagrantly obvious, such as the orange paint in "Procession." In other cases, it is so subtle the average gallery goer might miss it. Because bronze is an alloy composed of copper and tin, Wood is able to make some parts of her sculpture more red by increasing the proportion of copper. Other parts are more yellow due to a greater amount of tin.

Woods is also clearly with 20th century sensibilities by her humorous incorporation of references to the works of other "masters." In "Tribute to Botticelli" Wood expressively represents figures from the 15th century Florentine painter. Only Wood depicts the women from Botticelli's "Primavera" and "Birth of Venus" as cavorting inside one of her lean 20th century triangles of space.

This is an extraordinary show. Kalamazoo can be proud of having raised, educated and sustained a sculptor of this quality.