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Mark's Art and Bridge Construction

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MARK'S ART AND BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION

A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty

Central Washington State College

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

J. Mark Erlander

March, 1972

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Plactic is the material I chose to communicate my ideas. Named for its ability to be shaped, melted, bent, moulded, and extruded into an infinite number of forms, is one of two reasons I used it. The other is its concept is familiar to modern man and even a definition of him.

To make the communication bridge complete the sculptures are constructed to allow the viewer to take part in the final form. By moving the work, he is as involved in the concept, form, and material as I have been in making the piece.

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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MARK'S ART AND BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION

Ethyl rummaged through a stack of cardboard boxes in that corner of the attic which had become the annual resting place for her dismantled Christmas baubles. Under a shiny pile of discarded tinsel she found the object of her search, and began the familiar task. The steps were simple enough, and after twenty minutes of snapping numbered limbs into a remarkably realistic stem, she had resurrected the perfect Douglas fir. A few last bends and twists gave the green cone just the right look to be called a Christmas tree. She stood back and imagined the ornaments in place and was content that once again its inorganic construction would not be too obvious. Her actions, typical of many homes during the season, were at once as old as the conventional trimmed tree, and as young as the material which simulated the Douglas fir. That material, of course, is plastic.

That material, named for its ability to be shaped, melted, bent, moulded and extruded into an infinite number of forms has entered into every aspect of modern life. Since its original function, a replacement for ivory billiard balls, it has found a place in products used by all of us, from I. C. B. M. circuitry to water beds, to heart valves, boats, furniture, recording tapes; from Disneyland buttons to toilet seats; and perhaps most significantly to "Baggies". The spectrum is familiar to everyone, of course, but the point here is that it is the nature of the material which has led to its place high on the list of man's useable items. It is only the imagination of

the manufacturer and the limits of his tools which restricts the form to which plastics can be moulded.

Even the word "plastic" has come to a place of prominence in twentieth century vocabulary. It can be used as descriptive of those kinds of people who are merely products in themselves, manufactured by their families and schools perhaps, but completely moldable. People, it could be argued, should be made of sterner stuff; toilet seats or Christmas trees, perhaps not. But again, the point is not to judge the material or even the quality of being completely moldable. The point is that the material and the concept of plasticity is central, vital even, to modern man. We know it as a material we all accept, even if disgustingly; we all understand the concept. Indeed, we are all part of a very plastic world in form and in concept. In ways that is tragic, in ways it is amazing and helpful, but in all ways it is a fact.

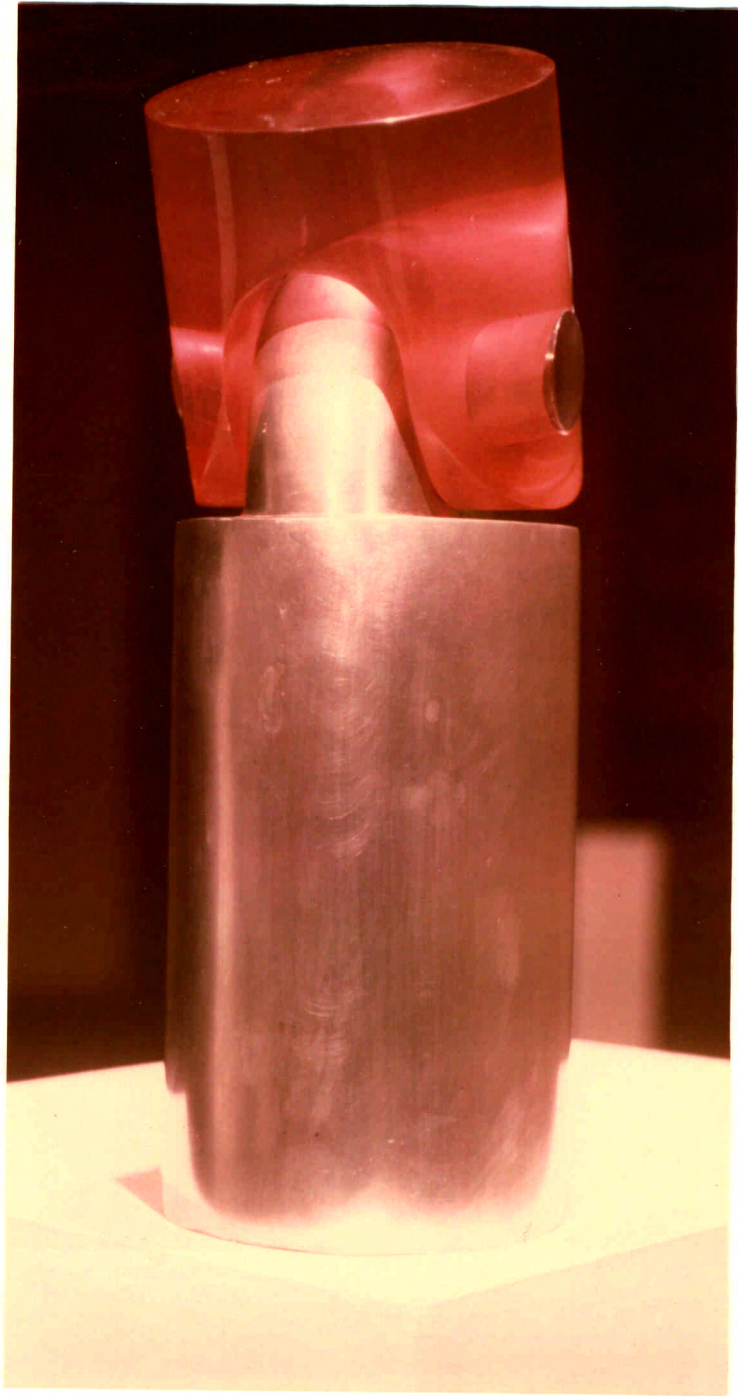
For two main reasons I use this material in order to achieve what I believe sculpture is. Firstly, because plastic, in form and concept is understood and accepted by contemporary man, it serves to increase the viewer's understanding and acceptance of my work. Too often art can become academic or worse, esoteric. In movies, novels, poetry, music or any art form, the artist often becomes the product of the critic or the scholar. Art need not communicate to each person who is exposed to it but if it doesn't, an important communication is lost. I prefer to communicate with the viewer. The use of a material which is familiar, understood and accepted, is then of great advantage to me.

Secondly, there is the point that plastic is completely moldable. That fact makes it possible for me to work with a material that does what I wish it to do. The material then does not limit my expression of form.

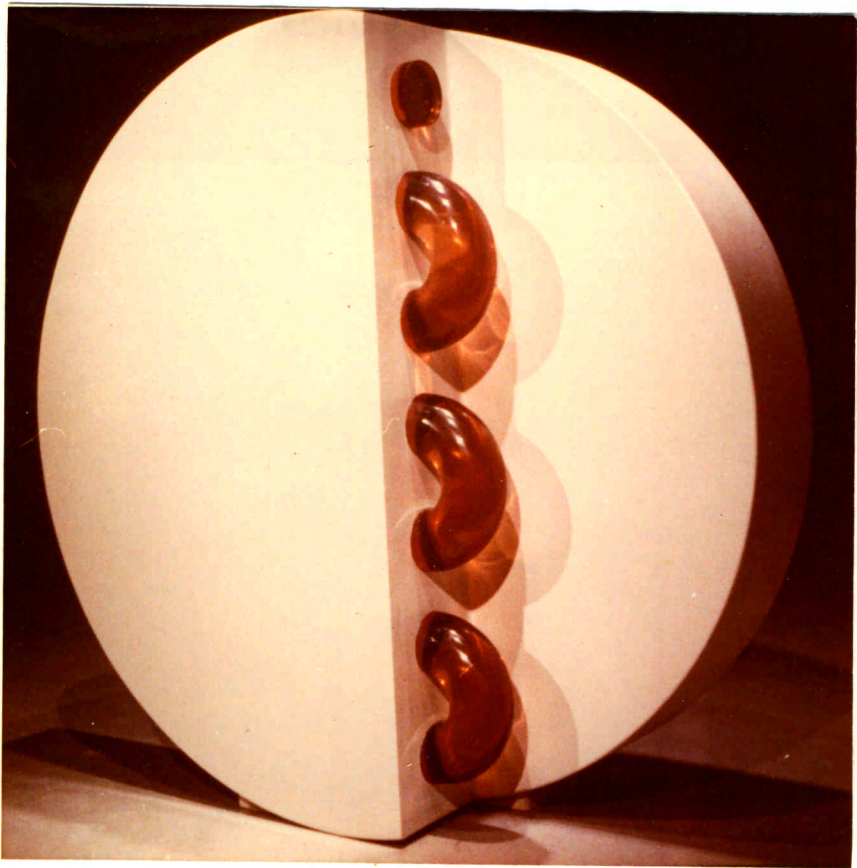
I alone am accountable for the limits, or am responsible for the successes of the forms I create. What better material could be desired? Plastic as a material, then, is physically correct for my expression of form.

The artist is usually removed from the viewer at the place of presentation. He is left only to observe the results of the artist's process. In most of my work the observer is invited to take part in the final form. In this way, it is my hope that the viewer can get as involved with the concept, form and material as I have been in making the piece. He is limited only by his personal inhibitions and his personal skills of observation.

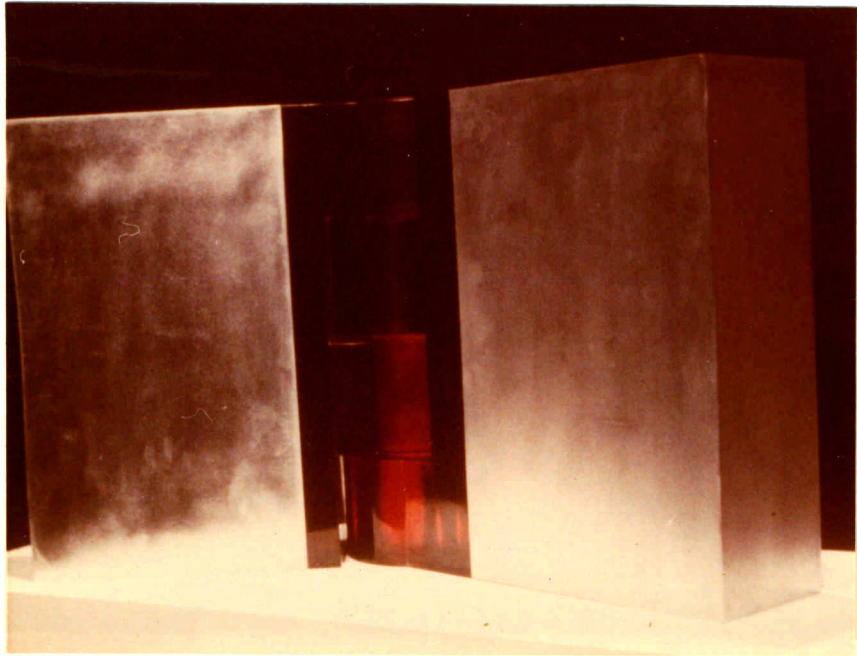
When the viewer sees the work, recognizes and relates to the material, one gap is bridged; when he moves the pieces to create a form of his own invention, the second gap is bridged. The viewer is involved with the sculpture... actively involved with a work he can relate to.



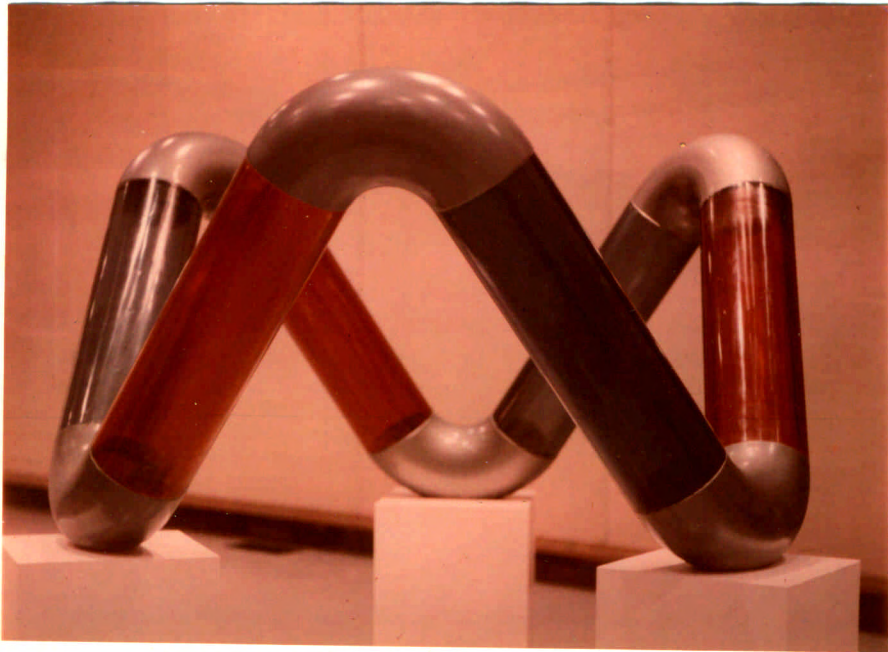
18 inches



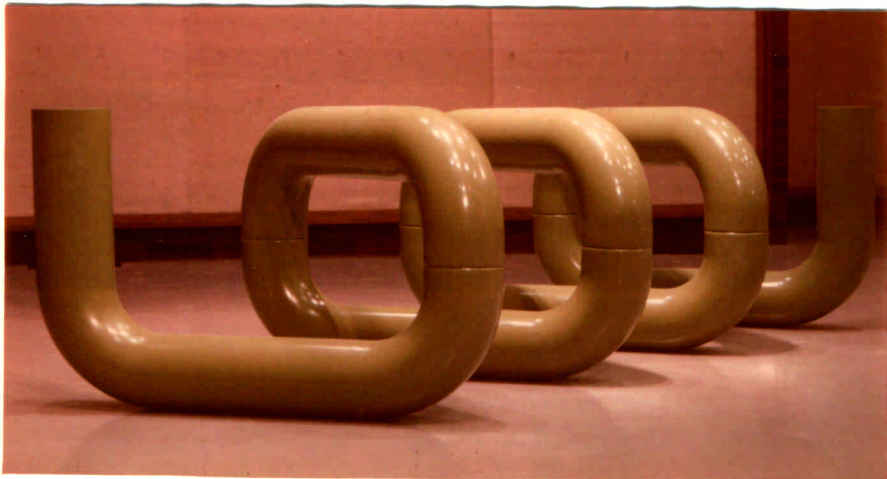
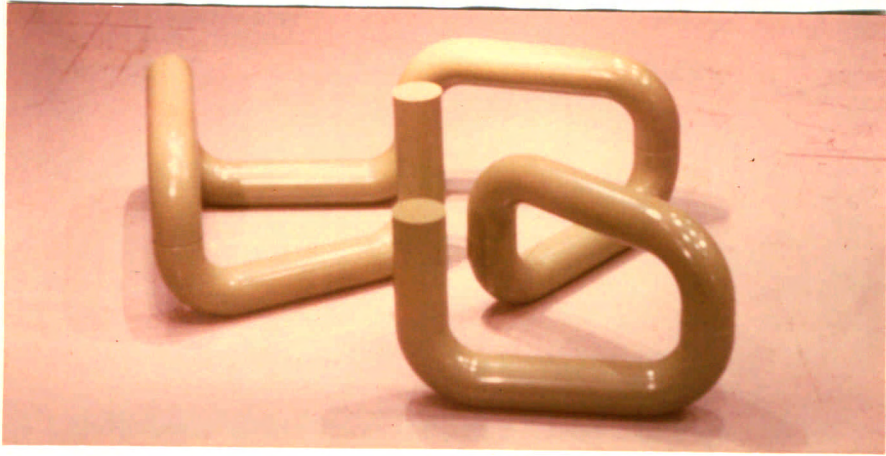
60 x 60 x 20 inches



20 x 38 x 6 inches



38 x 70 x 70 inches



height 26 inches