

Sullivan Goss: An American Gallery

Metal Master of Illusion

ARTIST PROFILE

By ANDRIA WATSON / CASA

REDFINING THE OPTICAL INTERFERENCE EFFECT, the sculptures of Ken Bortolazzo seemingly defy gravity, manipulate visual effects, and allow art to blend with the natural elements. His exhibit, *Optikinetics III*, is on display at Sullivan Goss July 3rd through August 31st, with a 1st Thursday reception on July 3rd, from 5 to 8pm.

“I’ve been sculpting for 40 years. I tried my hand at other art forms, but nothing took hold of my interests like metal sculpture,” Bortolazzo shared.

For this exhibit, Bortolazzo will have twelve new works including a 10’ by 10’ metal wall which weighs 1,000 lbs. Most of the pieces, however, are only ten to 20 lbs. The show is the culmination of two-years of work. Apart from the twelve sculptures in the show, Bortolazzo has three pieces permanently installed at Sullivan Goss.

Because of perforated material, the pieces have the ability to seemingly lift and rise with the slightest breeze, yet are incredibly durable in the harshest of conditions.

“It always starts with an

idea,” he explained. “Then, after I have the shape of the sculpture in mind, I make sketches and blueprints. To gather the material, I usually go to a junk yard and search for stainless steel parts. It’s really trial and error after that. I take a very pragmatic approach to the sculpture process.”

The title of the exhibit,

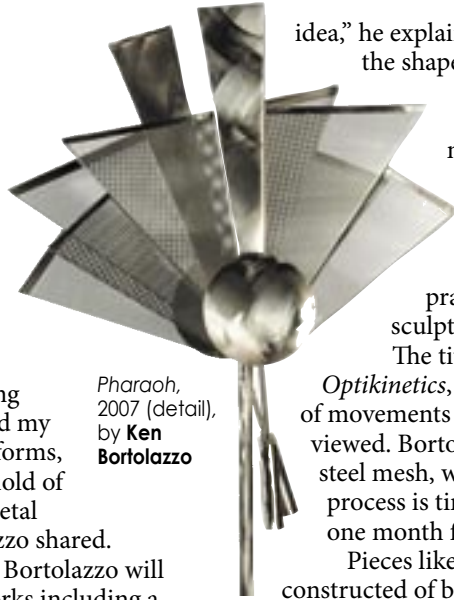
Optikinetics, refers to the occurrence of movements of the eye when moving objects are viewed. Bortolazzo uses burnishing and stainless steel mesh, which produce optical effects. This process is time-intensive, taking approximately one month for Bortolazzo to make a single piece.

Pieces like *Moon Flower*, a sculpture constructed of bronze and copper marks a departure in the artist’s evolution in the aesthetic appearances of his work.

“This show is about the next step in my career as a sculptor,” Bortolazzo expressed.

Born in Santa Barbara in 1947, Bortolazzo started melting metal at San Marcos High School. After graduating in 1965, he met five other sculptors in the Santa Barbara area through Renaissance Fair events. There, the sculptors shared techniques, made crafts, used oxy-acetylene torches, and were able to support themselves by selling their work.

“The work I was doing then was ‘earthbound’. They were large, interlocking pieces of steel. It wasn’t until I was given a commission to create a piece for P.T.I.



Pharaoh, 2007 (detail), by Ken Bortolazzo



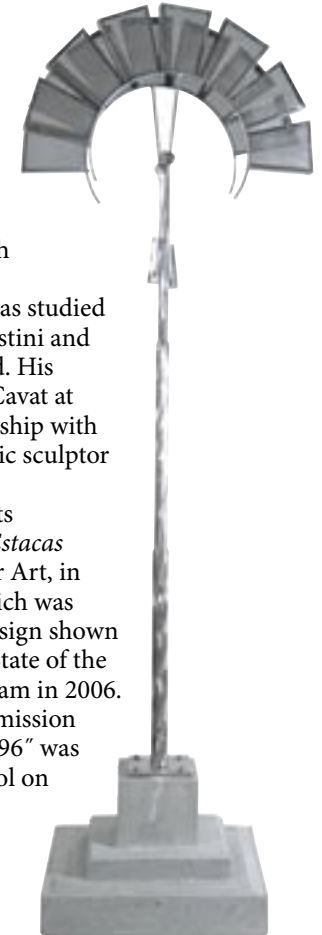
Ken Bortolazzo

Technologies in Oxnard that I started making optikinetics,” shared Bortolazzo. “I constructed a ten foot wave made from mesh metal.”

Bortolazzo has studied under Julio Agostini and Kenneth Noland. His collaborations with Irma Cavat at UCSB led to an apprenticeship with renowned American kinetic sculptor George Ricke.

His recent achievements include the placement of *Estacas* at the Museum of Outdoor Art, in Englewood, Colorado, which was enlarged from a similar design shown as part of Santa Barbara’s State of the Art public sculpture program in 2006. *Double Quad*, a 2008 commission measuring 180” by 96” by 96” was installed in a reflecting pool on the Microsoft campus in Redmond, Washington.

Sullivan Goss is located at 7 E. Anapamu St. and is open daily from 10 to 5:30pm. For information, call 730-1460.



Windows, 2007, by Ken Bortolazzo



Dyadic Dance, 2006, by Ken Bortolazzo