

Jeff Brosk, Sticking to It

The Wood Sculptor's Persistence Pays Off

By Michael O'Sullivan
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Ah, the unsung artist's lament: Just what does it take to get noticed? As New York sculptor Jeff Brosk has discovered, it doesn't hurt to make yourself a little bit of a pest.

Brosk first called *The Washington Post* one month ago. He was in D.C. for the opening of his exhibition at the Organization of American States and took the opportunity to descend on the offices of this Major Daily Newspaper to talk about his work.

Wielding a three-inch binder stuffed with photos of his work and 20 years' worth of clips from national and international art publications, Brosk spoke eloquently—and tirelessly—about his transition from MIT-trained architect to artist. This columnist politely noted that his Asian-influenced works in wood evoked the natural grace and simplicity of furniture maker George Nakashima.

A pleasant visit, to be sure, but, as any job hunter will tell you, the secret to success is in the follow-up call. *Calls*, actually, as in Brosk's subsequent weekly solicitations gently inquiring as to whether "there were any further questions" he could answer. Was this man really an artist or a PR agent in disguise?

But a visit to Brosk's exhibit revealed that he is indeed an artist. The show is in a tiny gallery in the main OAS building, just beyond the fountain and tropical foliage of the tile-lined atrium. There are only 10 smallish pieces, flat assemblages made from slabs sliced from irregular-looking logs. Some gouged and painted, some naturally cracked, some inset with slate, they have a quiet, meditative quality that resonates doubly, evoking both the minimalism of the East and the vastness of the American Southwest.

That's not surprising. For a guy who lives and works in SoHo, Brosk certainly gets around. In recent years, he has spent a lot of time in Texas, where he has received commissions to build several larger, outdoor environmental installations (examples of which are shown in four photos at the OAS show). Next month he leaves for Peru, where he will begin work on an 85-foot-long construction at the Cultural Center of Miraflores in Lima, set to open in the spring of 1998.

That piece, like much of Brosk's art, will be made of what he calls "flawed" wood, in this case timber from a log donated by a lumber mill in the Peruvian jungle. The wood's Indian name, he says, is *huangana casha*, or "wild boar fruit," and its cavities, cracks and curves make it inappropriate for commercial use, but perfect for art that can call to mind lightning on the prairie, a charred stump or the sensuous dips of an arroyo.

"I consider all my work a collaboration between myself and the wood," says Brosk, who actively seeks out material that others would normally discard. "I think of it as unwrapping a Christmas present. Each stroke reveals another part of the beauty of the natural object."

"Jeffrey Brosk: Wall Sculptures" at the Organization of American States building gallery, 17th Street and Constitution Avenue NW, through Jan. 5. Open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Brosk's "Caballo de Paso," on display at OAS through Jan. 5.

