

Sam Fuller

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Every piece of Sam Fuller's sculpture has its own identity, but there is a quality which each work shares with its creator — a sense of self. The sculpture feels as if it is centered. There is nothing extraneous. It makes a complete, unequivocal statement.

Two of Fuller's sculptures at Artfellow's are made of fired stoneware, and the other out of metal.

"When I work in clay," says Fuller, "I build up, and then take away. Working in other media, such as metal or found objects it is a totally constructive process."

He works with no preplanned vision of the sculpture he is creating. "I'm always amazed at what happens. Even when it's finished, I don't know what I've done. And then it clicks, and I say, 'Oh, that's it.' I'm usually the last one to know."

Fuller has shaped his life with the same unconscious assurance that he applies to his work. He has made

decisions which satisfied his needs without regard to how they might be perceived. When he speaks about his life or work it is with a sense of impatience at having to think about and articulate what to him is a natural process.

He was born in New York City, and grew up in New Caanan, Conn. In high school, he studied painting and drawing. After one year at Brown University, he decided to take a year off from college, and spent it working in Victor Robinson's studio, in Wilton, Conn.

Fuller then spent three years at the State University of New York at Purchase.

"When I was at Purchase," he says, "I majored in philosophy, and did a lot of sculpture. Then afterwards, I was seriously considering going for an M.F.A. (Master of Fine Arts). I had attended the Studio School in New York City during one summer, and that was a great experi-

ence. I was looking forward at one point to working with the English sculptor, William Tucker. But I decided that the best thing for me was to work with my hands. I made a conscious decision, for my own growth, to put aside any ambitions or thoughts about a career as an artist, and to simply work with my hands in a very simple, straight-forward manner. I went to a welding trade school."

He then took a job working at the Robert E. Derecktor boat yard, in Port Chester, N.Y. Fuller had planned to spend a year there; in fact, he spent seven.

"It turned out to be a great experience. It was a privilege to be one of the workforce which was mostly Portuguese. I learned a lot about learning, about life, about myself, about working with my hands, and what it means to really do a job. I just had to come to terms with myself through working with my hands.

"In college I was fascinated by philosophy and theology and the sculpture I had done, but if it (transcendental thought and feeling) isn't grounded, if you don't feel it in your daily life, to me it's not worth anything.

"When I decided to try to ground the (transcendental) elements in my life, I found myself involved in a journey which I have to complete."

Fuller first heard about the Rockport Apprentice Shop, where he now works, on a visit to Mystic Conn.

At Rockport, in a two-year program, apprentices are taught wooden boat building. For Fuller the shop seemed to combined his desire to be a sculptor with his seven-year's experience building ships.

In the summer of 1987, he spent six weeks as an intern at Rockport, and he says, "I just knew it was what I wanted to do."

In July, Fuller will have completed the apprentice program. "After that," he says, "I want to get a job in a wooden boat yard. Maybe that's a naive dream, but Maine is the place for wooden boat building."

Fuller has created only seven sculptures since 1981. When asked whether he plans to continue to work as a sculptor, he replies if he does two more pieces of sculpture while working at the apprentice shop he'll be surprised; if he does one, he'll be pleased.

Fuller's primary focus is learning all that he can at Rockport. "Here (at the Rockport Apprentice Shop), you really have a sense of being a boat builder. Where I was working before, the boats were so big that you just worked on a small project. As to what I'll do afterwards, I don't know. That's how I've always



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pursued my life. I just have to do what I have to do. I don't have a big picture or big plans. It's not worth it. You just have to be involved in what's going on now."