TRICERACOPTER
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THE HOPE FOR THE OBsolescence OF WAR
PATRICIA RENICK

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CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER

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115 EAST FIFTH STREET, CINCINNATI, OHIO
In presenting Patricia Renick's Triceracopter, the Contemporary Arts Center continues its tradition of exhibiting works of art which await definitive critical judgment. Although Triceracopter stands some distance from more familiar territories of formalism and abstraction in which we have concentrated major interest, the artist's intentions are also relatable to a recent spirit of concern for public comprehension. Renick and others have chosen to substantiate through their art the validity of traditional themes and imageries. Art in the 'Seventies, unlike Art of the previous decade, is eclectic, inclusive, hybridized. Now, more than ever, doctrines exist to be challenged, not followed and the last moment of art history is not the only point of departure. Instead, the history of art is a treasury to be raided for reinterpretation through contemporary thought and contemporary materials. Thus, a work of art that has synthesized public outrage against war, curiosity about pre-history and the ingenuity of fiberglass fabrication commands respectful attention.

Patricia Renick's activities as an artist in the Cincinnati community have brought her considerable recognition. Through her energies many have been made aware not only of her talents, but of the talents of others. She has spoken out determinedly for the needs of artists, recognition, support and encouragement, which should be provided in a city that takes pride in a cultural heritage. The acknowledgments she presents in this catalog are an indication of her spirit for community among artists and public. I would take this opportunity to thank her for offering us the Triceracopter for exhibition, and also to honor her achievements on behalf of those who cherish the artistic life of this city.

I would like to thank Center staff members who assisted in the preparation of this catalog, Jean-Marie Baines, Carolyn Brown, Matthew McClain and Sandye Utley. And I want to congratulate Frank Farmer for yet another superb installation.

Ruth K. Meyer
Curator
"I was determined not to be among those rocking chair people on the front porch of the future, saddened by what might have been. So I made a Triceracopter. It’s as simple and as complex as that."

The Triceracopter created by Patricia A. Renick is the focus of this exhibition. The scale, the stylized form and decipherable image place it within a tradition of monumental commemorative sculpture typically commissioned for a public place or civic building and historically financed by a government for the benefit of "the people." Whether allegorical or representational, the intent of such works is essentially the same: to be of inspiration.

Renick’s intent here given form results from the sequence of actions and reactions that is the artist’s career. An interpretation of Triceracopter can serve as a bridge between artist and audience, especially if the interpreter has been privileged, as I have been, to witness the creation of the work and the development of the artist.

Triceracopter was conceived in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and in the context of several themes stated in the artist’s prior work: the mutations of spirit and identity that seem to characterize our time, the impact of technology on our sensibilities, and the varieties of obsolescence we can experience. The improbable merging of animal, mechanical and human form seen in many of Renick’s works serves as a vehicle for treating these themes.

The artist’s first sculpture Mechanical Man (1967. Painted wood covered with silk. Collection of the artist. 38" x 17" x 12") merged features of a human figure with a hand cranked mechanical toy. The decorative surface of the silk-covered form, the sinister face with deep set eyes and rigid smile, the undisguised mechanical parts inside the raw abdominal cavity—all contribute to a sense that we are in the presence of a foreboding relic from an era in which people, by the simple manipulative acts of another, could be made to exhibit programmed expressions and be forced to utter mechanical sounds.

Conversation Piece (1972. Fiberglass, plastic, metal. Collection of the artist. Three units, each 60" x 17" x 30") is here represented with only one of the
three identical figures that comprise the work. The figures vary only in color—red, white, blue—and in types of clamps presented in the bubble forms—"C" clamp, wood clamp and bar clamp. What appears to be a wry statement about businessmen on wheels is a multi-layered commentary on the pressures and anonymity of contemporary life. The wheeled figures are not nearly as mobile as they seem, they must be pushed or pulled to be set in motion. The figures are sleek, rigid, manufactured people, complete with interchangeable parts. They speak in isolation, but of a shared form of feeling. Inside the tragi-comic bubble is a decipherable message, a remnant of the thought that might have communicated each to each: the very implements which support creative potential can also exert pressures that may destroy it altogether.

The Stegowagen-volkssaurus (1974. Fiberglass and metal. Collection of the artist. 12' x 7' x 20') foreshadowed the artist's interest in large-scale works. The work addresses the themes of obsolescence and extinction through two instantly recognized forms, icons for our time. The resulting bio-mechanical form is displayed as it might be in a natural history museum, with a plaque identifying the species. It suggests the existence of an ancestral form—a prototype—from which other undiscovered variations might have evolved. The curves of the automobile and the massive stylized animal parts echo the kind of art deco styling typ-
ical of governmental sculpture in the Thirties. It was during this time that Hitler conceived of the people’s car—Volkswagen—and oversaw its development. The basic design remained the same for about forty-five years. In spite of its well-known efficiency, it has become obsolete. According to paleontologists, the stegosaurus—shingle covered lizard—became extinct because climactic changes cut off the growth of ferns and palms on which it grazed. Similarly, the fate of the automobile is inextricably linked with a climate of opinion about the use of resources it demands: billions of gallons of gasoline, miles of highways and parking lots, acres for graveyards.

"War is a dichotomy. It seduces our dream self through heroic fantasy while threatening our physical self with extinction."

The Triceracopter alludes to actual and possible mutations that may result from technology. It speaks specifically of instruments of destruction—killing machines—and the long evolutionary haul in which predator and prey have battled for survival. The triceratops dinosaur was one of the last to become extinct and is noted for its highly developed systems of defense. There is enormous destructive power inherent in the long horn shafts that could stab and fling; in the lower tusk that could lift and batter and plow and pound. The massive rill is a shield. Fused with the upper horns, it guards the eyes; flared up, out and back it protects the more vulnerable vital organs. To this fortress-like head we must add an estimate of the destructive force latent in the strength of the legs and the several tons available for a charge. Finally, we should note that it was an herbivor—a plant eater. It was not a predator, but prey.

As a species human-kind is unique. We are future-oriented, we command natural resources and fashion them to our will. We engage in battle in order to defend ideas, not just to save our hides. Among the many instruments of destruction we have developed, the helicopter seems an unlikely candidate for selection as an icon for weaponry and a point of reference for mutation. One must understand in that choice the evolution of technologies which have enabled a two-footed upright creature to succeed at flying in an efficient, but un-birdlike form. This helicopter, the OH-6A Cayuse, had capabilities which were fully realized in the Vietnam War. There it served as bait for a larger strike. Fitted with an intense light and flying at night near tree tops it would draw enemy fire to provide a known target for hits by jet fighters. Unlike a kill in the natural world, the intent to kill is shared and governed by an elaborate consciously developed plan. In the case of Vietnam, the War, its necessity, its strategies, its modes of combat were questioned causing a secondary battle to rage at home. From that experience many people fully grasped that in human warfare the issue in survival is not biological, but political; not physical, but ideological.

The fusion of the two images results in a form recognizable at once as animal and machine; a formidable presence, passive, but menacing. The sense of transmutation is carried forward in the design and execution of the work. The principles of continuity in edge and repetition of form operate throughout the biologically derived parts of the work. The volumes are planned to create soft rolls of shadows punctuated with dramatic highlights and deep cast shadows. At close range, the pattern of rivets seems decorative, at a distance it heightens the mutation of hide and armored plating. The direction of mutation is two-way, as
seen in the deeply textured areas of the head and rill.

In contrast to the integrated curves of the animal form are the unmodified parts of the helicopter. The logic of gears, pinions, rivets and metal plating has its own beauty and visual intrigue. In place of what might have been a natural tail is now a rigid pod that supports the stabilizer and bears military emblems. In place of an animal backbone and nervous system is a new center of energy; the cowling and the rotary hub supporting the four blades. The concepts of mutation and dichotomy are thus seen to operate both within the details of the form and among its larger units.

The work is executed in fiberglass, an industrial material that is tough, light weight, and capable of registering almost any surface quality. Here the surface is developed to emphasize the cold machine-tooled smoothness we associate with manufactured products. The industrial and military references are further emphasized by the play of light on the dark olive green metallic paint.

It is significant that this work was created without a commission and no certainty of its ultimate location. The artist secured the helicopter from an Army salvage yard. Badly damaged, it was reconstructed for the fiberglass version with parts lent by several National Guard units. In the process of securing resources from military and industrial sources the artist necessarily engaged many potential donors in conversation about the work. While there is no simple explanation for the cooperation received from both of these sectors, it is worth noting that virtually all of the donors of materials or services were not involved in art—occupationally, socially or personally. That they became involved is, I think, an important aspect of the final artistic statement. All shared with the artist a pride in good work and found in dialogue with her some connecting link which made it seem imperative or wise for them to participate. The Tri-
ceracopter is figuratively and literally a work fashioned from transactions the outcome of which few would have predicted. While the project was necessarily a cooperative venture, it was not a collaborative one. Renick was physically involved in every stage of the three year project, except for the operation of the industrial fiberglass gun and the painting of the work. Those who assisted in the labor recognized that no person could manage the job alone. Many offered technical advice or performed operations that required special equipment, and their contributions affirm the inspirational intent that lay behind Renick’s conception.

“I am frightened most by power in hands that take delight in tearing the wings off dreams.”

The commentary on life and death inherent in the Triceracopter is echoed in the Self-Portrait, 1978. In this foreboding work the artist turns that commentary toward herself. A seated human figure with a triceratops head holds the original model for the larger work. Portrayed as a mutant bearing some familial relationship to the larger work, the pensive black figure seems to engage in dialogue with it, and its smaller prototype, and with itself. The triadic relationship of artist to concept model to finished work metaphorically questions whether the options available to artists today favor their survival or extinction. Do we become what we create and behold: Renick’s self-portrait suggests that we might.

Laura H. Chapman
UNCLAS

Subj: Disposition for Salvage OH-6A Heli

1. Req that engine and electronic gear be removed from salvage OH-6A, S/N 68-17268, for inspection and retention in stock.

2. Req that the fuselage, tailboom, skids, rotorblades and other airframe components be shipped to: University of Cincinnati, College of Design, ATTN: Prof P. Renick, Clifton Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45221. MRO: W58PB9-5085-H600/W24PM4.
A studio is secured, made habitable, and the working platform is constructed. A preliminary drawing is made in order to grasp the scale of the work. The platform is marked to show where the helicopter and supporting armature must be placed. The helicopter is then lifted into position. A styrofoam buck is made to block in the form, thereby reducing the volume of clay needed for the sculpture. The form is developed with a wax and oil-based automotive modeler's clay. It is heated to make it pliable enough to apply. When cool, it can be carved and polished to a high sheen. The work requires 4½ tons of clay. The clay form is ready for molds. Silicone rubber is first applied to the textured areas. Wax dividers mark the separation lines for the molds. Fiberglass molds are made over the clay. The mold lines are trimmed so that each part can be removed and cleaned. The molds are reassembled in large sections for the final fiberglass lay-up. Parts are sanded to remove the mold lines and surface discrepancies. Details are added. The work is painted, polished, and ready for installation. When finished the work measures 30' x 12' x 9'.

“To cope with delayed closure for the past three years was the most difficult challenge of all.”
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"To cope with delayed closure for the past three years was the most difficult challenge of all."
Patricia A. Renick was born in Lakeland, Florida in 1932 and grew up in Temple Terrace, Florida. After earning a Bachelor's Degree in 1954 from Florida State University, she served for seven years as an art teacher in Miami, Florida. Following a trip around the world, she taught for one year in France at Vitry le Francois and another year in Miami. She then attended the Ohio State University where in 1968 she completed an M.A. in art education and in 1969, an M.F.A. in printmaking and sculpture. During the seven years she has been a working sculptor, she has exhibited in 27 invited and juried shows in the Midwest and South.

Her first one-person show was held in 1970 at Closson's, Cincinnati, Ohio. Within the next two years her work was seen in 11 invitational shows. Among the most important during 1972 were the Invitational Exhibition, Cincinnati Art Museum; Eat Art, The Contemporary Arts Center; You Name It, Taft Museum; and A Generation of Sculpture, Closson's—all in Cincinnati, Ohio. In the following year, in addition to exhibiting in You Name It II at the Taft Museum; Regional Artists, The Contemporary Arts Center; A Decade of Prints and New Directions at Closson's, her work was presented at the Light and Motion exhibition, Living Arts Center, Dayton Ohio and in Contemporary Prints for Collectors at the Columbus Gallery of Fine Art, Columbus, Ohio.

In 1973, the artist was one among six awarded one-person shows at the Cincinnati Art Museum. It was for the Cincinnati Invitational Awards Exhibition in 1974 that she created the Stegowagenvolkssaurus. In 1975, she was one of three Ohio artists selected as participants in the Sculpture for a New Era exhibition, sponsored by Works of Art in Public Places and the National Endowment for the Arts, and held in the Chicago Federal Center plaza. In the same year she received the Corbett Award for outstanding contributions by an individual artist to the cultural vitality of Cincinnati.

In addition to her accomplishments as a sculptor, the artist is also known for her long-standing commitment to public education, her skill in speaking before a variety of audiences, and her effectiveness as an advocate for assistance to and initiatives by artists. Never patient with lip service support she has personally secured, at the University of Cincinnati Health Sciences Library, a continuing exhibition service with payment of honoraria to local and regional artists. In 1975, she organized the exhibition 14 Cincinnati Artists and negotiated for its display during 1976 in Florida at the Tampa Bay Art Center and Trend House Gallery, Tampa; in Georgia at the Peachtree Center, Atlanta; and at The Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio. Between 1974 and 1977 she secured seven grants and private contributions that directly benefited over 20 artists. Little known, but also worth mentioning, is the fact that the artist has published articles in the American Journal of Optometry and Archives of the American Academy of Optometry (1972) as well as Studies in Art Education (1972). In 1969, Patricia A. Renick was appointed to a faculty position at the University of Cincinnati. She is presently an associate professor in the College of Design, Architecture and Art.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Laura H. Chapman provided the essay, as well as most of the photographs in the exhibition and for the catalog. She is Professor of Art Education at the University of Cincinnati, author of Approaches to Art in Education, and editor of Studies in Art Education.

Dennis Foster produced the video tape presentation Patricia A. Renick and Her Triceracopter at the exhibition. He works in production at WCPO-TV. Among his productions is a film on the sculpture of Gail Corbett in The Museum of Modern Art.

Keith S. Kleespies designed the exhibition catalog. He is a graphic designer working in film and print and also a fine artist whose work has been exhibited by The Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati Art Museum, and Taft Museum.
Paul M. Palombo composed **Music for Triceracopter** for the exhibition and catalog record. He is Associate Dean of the College Conservatory of Music and Director of the Electronic Music Studios, University of Cincinnati. He has been the recipient of numerous commissions for original works which, in addition to being performed in the United States and abroad, are available on records.

For the opening of the exhibition Fanchon Shur choreographed and performed (with Gail Heilbron) **Mythic Initiation**. She is the founder and director of two major west coast dance companies and guest artist in Israel at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. A multi-faceted artist, her work encompasses concert dance, as well as dance for film, as social statement, and as communal ritual.

Judith A. Wittlin offered innumerable services throughout the project and greatly facilitated its completion. As an artist, she works in acrylic with images that address patterns of transit and change. Her work has been exhibited in Cincinnati, Ohio; Jacksonville, Florida; and Frankfurt, Germany.
The artist gratefully acknowledges:

Mr. E. Pope Coleman for his sensitive understanding and moral support when the project was in jeopardy.

Mr. Jack Neiman for his many contributions including welding services.

Mr. Ron Martin, Detroit, Michigan, for his continued technical assistance.

Mr. Lon Smith, Ann Arbor, Michigan, who understood the dream and gave four months of himself so graciously.

Mr. Bob Linnerman for providing technical support and physical space during the fabrication.

Mr. Dan Zimmerman for contributing his superb painting skills.

Mr. Jim Farr, “Dauber,” for his rendering of the military symbols.

Mr. Hans Scharig, St. Louis, Missouri, the man behind the voice on the phone who made the helicopter a reality.

And finally to The Contemporary Arts Center, particularly Ruth K. Meyer, who provided a supportive ground, and Frank Farmer, for skillfully designing and executing the installation.

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