

Art International News June 1968

Two more sculpture exhibitions this month illustrated the growing trend toward conceptualism. Ursula Meyer's structures at the AM Sachs Gallery were modular units—in hard geometric forms—that could be combined and rearranged to provide a surprising variety of sculptural configurations. The larger pieces, like *Daedalus*, were constructed of wood, the smaller maquettes in metal. The implications of this mode are that the art object need no longer be seen as a final statement, something complete and unalterable, but that the nature of art is provisional. To be sure, the artist, in designing the initial form—the size, shape, number of sides, etc.—exercises some measure of control over the complexity of his work, but depending upon the number of units involved, the variations could reach astronomical proportions. Miss Meyer's work—deft, authoritative, superbly inventive in its formal range—provides one of the best examples of a radical, thoroughly rationalized new mode of sculpture.

Tony Smith's exhibition "The Wandering Rocks", installed at the Fischbach Gallery, consisted of five polygonal structures made of sheet metal and painted a soft, gray-brown. That the angular structures could be cut, bent and constructed from a single sheet of metal constituted one of the ingenuities of the sculpture and planar diagrams illustrating each of the pieces and included in the exhibition as a series of posters. It was, I believe, the Spanish architect Gaudi who remarked about his father, a worker in a metal shop, that he was a true artist, who could transform a plane into a volume. That ambition seems to mark both contemporary sculpture and painting. But aside from the structural clarity and simplicity of its forms, Smith's sculpture is impressive for the ambience which it is able to create. The Wandering Rocks, settled within the bare walls of the gallery on a broad expanse of gray floor, summoned up the impression of an ancient Japanese rock garden. This impression of the archaic and primitive is one that Smith obviously courts (a special installation of his sculpture last year at the Finch College Museum of Art pointedly recalled Stonehenge) and it is this surprising convergence of hard structural logic and personal sensibility which—as with the Nevelson sculptures—places his sculpture among the most important work now being produced.

*