

“An endless journey of discovery . . .”

The sculptor and artist Urs-P. Twellmann



K/. **The sculptor and artist Urs-P. Twellmann works with mature wood which he endows with new and surprising forms before returning it to nature. There is a very perceptible harmony between his work and the landscape.**

Urs-P. Twellmann returned recently from an extended winter sojourn in the arctic cold of Siberia. It is deeply nurturing for him to experience the world in this way - in all its limitless size and scope - on journeys

which have also included Canada, Australia, Africa and Japan. 'There I can rid myself of any feelings of limitation,' he says.

In fact, Twellmann's objects widen one's vision and lead the observer into a world in which the art loses any artificiality and develops a harmony with the breadth of the landscape. Despite the enormous size of his objects, nothing is impertinent, showy or presumptuous, but blends in as though it is part of the plan of creation.





The fascination of the material

The key material for the artist is wood, largely in its basic, natural form. 'I am always fascinated by its growth and versatility,' he says, 'by its strong individuality and originality.' He is less successful in giving shape and meaning to stone and adds 'Wood invites me on an endless journey of discovery and research.' Because he can most easily enter the spirit of a tree, its essence, its stature and its structure, he adds, 'It is the material with which I feel the greatest affinity.'

Abstract in concrete

In Twellmann's sculptures the observer experiences nature re-worked artistically and nature appears magnified in surprising ways. 'Nature is perfect,' he says. 'I cannot improve on it. What is left to me is to change it, to put it into a new context and arrangement.' The familiar in unusual arrangement; here something unexpected happens, a surprise, an important feature of Twellmann's work. Despite that surprise, the observer has a clear, although fresh,

impression of the still-natural, intrinsic shape of the wood. Abstraction, an important feature of Twellmann's art, is certainly involved here. Visible, for example, in the perfect formation of a sphere derived from tree segments, is the notion that all seek the exact centre of the sphere - a repeating motif.

The inherent nature of the wood remains dominant, despite the abstraction, and it seems to speak and to permit formerly unseen interpretations. With regard to this the artist says, thoughtfully, that he is primarily interested in the creative process; the dialogue with the material, with the surroundings and with the tools. 'But,' he muses, 'there is also the conflict between chaos and order, between the chance and the principle. There should be room in my work for both.'

Transitoriness

Wood is transient in its natural surroundings. In ten to thirty years it decays. Twellmann does not use only

wood, he also forms ice into symbols in the landscape in front of breathtaking mountain backdrops. Here the ephemeral nature of the object is particularly apparent. It seems as if decay is part of the artistic intention. 'A world without a past and death - wouldn't that be dreadful?'

Because without past there is no future, no growth and no development, he says. But, he adds, smiling, although it is easy for him to accept the transitory nature of things, he is glad to have photographs of pieces of his work that have already disintegrated, or will do so in the very near future. So photography, the original tentative start to his career, still provides the documentary tool of the artist whose development encompassed photography, sketching and wood carving before he turned to sculpting. 'The limits would be unbearable if I worked only in the most durable woods or only for indoors.' For this reason the photograph has a very practical function.

The space

Wood and the landscape are the two aspects of the artistic space in which Twellmann moves. But it is also determined by another feature; the tools that he uses, in particular the chain saw. With this the artist, with mastery, brings into being his artistic will, whether the object is filigree or solid, transparent or sombre. Of course, he has also worked with hammer and chisel but only rarely these days. Apart from the sketching pencil, the most important instrument in the design stage today is the chain saw. 'It is the wood-carving tool par excellence, efficient and very versatile,' he says. 'For the observer it is perhaps gross and loud, but in reality one can work very delicately and precisely with it.' In the same way that it is important for him to constantly research the special characteristics of the different

woods – which is why there are frequent internal views in the form of elaborately hollowed-out tree trunks – so he also constantly has to explore new possibilities of the tools he uses.

All over the world

Twellmann's sculptures can be found all over the world. When asked how a young sculptor has such international appeal, he replies 'Through invitations to symposiums and exhibitions'. He is also invited by galleries and sculpture parks to present his work and says 'Instead of sending a sculpture to another country, I prefer to do the work there.' Occasionally he is offered accommodation, a workplace and living expenses for a few weeks or months, but he also travels independently. For the last two years, the E. & M. Sandoz Foundation has awarded him a generous grant that has enabled him to work in Australia, South Africa and Japan. An ideal situation!



Urs-P. Twellmann was born in 1959 in Langnau in the Swiss Emmenthal. He attended the Higher School of Applied Arts in Bern, followed by the Art Students League and Manhattan Graphic Center in New York. Since 1979 he has had many individual and joint exhibitions here and abroad. He has worked as an independent sculptor since 1981, frequently being invited to international sculpture symposiums. Urs-P. Twellmann has won a number of prizes, grants and commissions for his artistic work. His studio is at Hintergasse 19 CH-3110 Münsingen Tel. ++41 (0)31 721 86 43 E-Mail: info@twellmann.ch Website: www.twellmann.ch