

Syracuse University Art Galleries

Duffell

The School of Art, Syracuse University

D. LEE DUSELL, SCULPTURE AND DESIGN

An exhibition of recent work
held in the galleries of the
Joe and Emily Lowe Art Center
under the auspices of

Syracuse University Art Galleries

THE SCHOOL OF ART, SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
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INTRODUCTION BY

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Dean, The School of Art
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Introduction

Lee DuSell is another one of those artists of today whose single-minded purpose is positive, direct, productive, uncompromising and genuinely creative. There are no boundaries between the traditional concepts of painting and sculpture, architecture and decoration, form and space, idea and involvement, the individual and his environment. Indeed it is a total process by which the spiritual idea, the technical means and the humanitarian needs are fused into a single entity.

The practical definition of this point of view can be seen in the artist's background as well as the selection of representative work on display in this exhibition. He was born in 1927 in what is now the suburban town of Aurora, near Chicago, Illinois. A French-Canadian father and an Austrian mother provided the family tradition of artistic encouragement from his earliest youth. He attended East Aurora High School for four years before his enlistment in the United States Navy in 1945.

While obviously talented as a boy, DuSell had been reared on the doctrine of hard work as a personal responsibility, which accounts in part for the belief he has frequently expressed that work is a privilege rather than a burden. The family tradition was that of the farm and many of his summers as well as weekends were spent at work on the farms of his aunts and uncles in the prosperous rural area of northern Illinois. His father operated a small factory in Aurora and the son's natural mechanical aptitude made him a valuable asset as machine repairman, shipper, cleaner and all-around handy man.

As so frequently happens, it was the intelligent guidance and instruction of an inspired high school art teacher, Jessica Shirley, who not only started him as an artist, but took him to the museum and art schools of Chicago. During his last year at high school, he attended afternoon and evening classes at the Chicago Art Institute. His two-year career in the Navy began as a ship repairman until he was promoted to the rank of "Painter, 3rd class", which included everything from painting signs to portraits of ships and officers, largely in the Phillipine area.

On his return to civilian life, he spent a year at the American Academy of Art in Chicago, then took a job as a fashion illustrator at Mandel Brothers department store which in a short time convinced him that the life of the commercial artist was not the one he wanted to lead. He then took off for Mexico to study at the art school in San Miguel de Allende. Where the work at the American Academy had been concentrated

on the disciplined study of the model, the situation in Mexico was completely open. There was no instruction, no curriculum and no requirements. Everyone was left completely to himself and whatever progress the individual experienced as an artist depended on his own discipline and self reliance.

For DuSell the Mexican experience had a deep and lasting impact. It was his first exposure to what was genuinely a community of artists in an environment that was somehow imbued with a sense of the artistic so that one could recognize without embarrassment that art was a part of life. Two of the Mexican artists he had known were particularly significant to him: One was Roberto Montenegro, whose greatness DuSell considered not so much in his artistic accomplishment but as a medium through which a world of ideas became available to a new generation of artists. The other was the great mural painter, Jose Clemente Orozco, whose modest one-armed stature, thick glasses and silent day by day working program as he painted the dramatic frescos in nearby Jiquilpan, gave no hint of the tremendously expressive power that made him one of the greatest muralists of the Twentieth Century.

Within a year DuSell was back in Chicago at work in a metal furniture factory. He had produced an enormous amount of work, mostly paintings and lithographs which though exhibited successfully in various competitive exhibitions, he later destroyed. He then spent three semesters at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, where the exposure to the diverse professional activity in the arts of painting, architecture, sculpture, ceramics and metal work strengthened his conviction of the totality of artistic endeavor.

Another year's activity as director of a community project called The Art Barn in Salt Lake City and the return home to work in his father's factory in 1951 cleared his point of view as to artistic philosophy and career objectives. Convinced of the irrelevance and isolation of the studio artist he began the combination of refinement and elegance of jewelry techniques which he had learned in Cranbrook, with the industrial technology he had acquired from personal experience on the assembly line, into the production of custom made furniture. These products were largely individually-made tables, chairs and accessories which soon placed him among the leaders of the national designer-craftsman movement of the early 1950's.

From there it was but a short step to the large-scale architectural projects undertaken in 1958 in collaboration with Minoru Yamasaki and his associates. For DuSell,

the ten-year sequence of projects developed with the great Japanese-American architect was important, not only because he considered it a privilege to work with a man whose humanitarian convictions took precedence over those of the architect, but because it provided the opportunity to become totally integrated with architecture in an environmental complex. This began with the eight aluminum entrance doors for the McGregor Memorial Center of Wayne State University in Detroit, and continued through many lighting, portal and screen projects in major buildings throughout the country.

The most important of these is the new temple of the North Shore Congregation Israel in Glencoe, Illinois, which is not only one of Yamasaki's finest but one of the great examples of contemporary American religious architecture. DuSell's design work is concerned primarily with the bimah, including the general platform, the end wall with its Ark of the Covenant, Eternal Light, Menorah and lecterns. To the floating, atmospheric monumentality of the interior space, these forms provide sensitive yet strong points of focus through which the visual and religious experience can be identified.

With this kind of a design philosophy, the urge to teach is a natural and logical part of life. DuSell's teaching experience began in Salt Lake City in 1950 when he directed a community-minded group of artists and patrons in a program that included everyone from preschool children to professional performers. For a year he taught at the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts and then accepted an appointment in 1956 as assistant professor in the School of Art of Syracuse University to teach industrial design. After an interim period of four years in 1961-65, when he worked independently as a sculptor and design consultant, he returned to the University to teach the more general field of what is frequently identified as environmental design.

The teaching philosophy is simply stated: given the basic skills of drawing and design, the working knowledge of tools and machines, and the will and capacity for sustained effort, the teaching process is not one of conveying facts and information, but of helping others to discover for themselves. The objective is not the fact but the capacity to uncover fact. This in turn serves to strengthen the individual confidence which makes discovery possible.

For the most part the work on display in this exhibition includes small models of figures or forms for fabrication in large scale. They represent ideas, concerned largely with man and the human condition, which are conveyed through an abstract form that is both decorative and self-sustaining.

The most important of these are the models and sketches for Spiritual Freedom, an 8-foot bronze monument for the Community Plaza facing the new Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse. Another series of studies has to do with the soaring spirit of man symbolized by wing forms as in the Good Samaritan and Earth Angel. The Revelation, though small in size in this model study, is a powerful and massive tribute to that moment when, as the artist says, "The curtain is torn aside and the truth is revealed. . . .drastic, soul-wrenching, and full of beauty."

What is especially significant about this exhibition and the remarkable story of the artist who produced it, is the record of work in progress, the consistency of its development, and the luminous vision toward which it appears to move. Even the pen and ink sketches show a remarkable integrity of form characteristic of the beliefs he professes: From the jewel-like sparkle of a lighting fixture to a monument to spiritual freedom, indeed to the total design of a "radiant city" of the future.

Laurence Schmeckebier
Dean, The School of Art
Syracuse University

CHRONOLOGY

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| 1927 | Born Aurora, Illinois |
| 1940-1944 | Attended East Aurora High School, part time studies in drawing and painting at the Chicago Art Institute during his senior year. |
| 1945-1946 | Service with the U. S. Navy as ship repairman, then painter, 3rd class. |
| 1946-1947 | American Academy of Art, Chicago, Illinois. |
| 1948 | Esquela De Belles Artes, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. |
| 1949-1950 | Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. |
| 1950 | Married Mary Stewart, M.F.A. in Painting from Cranbrook Academy of Art. |
| 1950-1951 | Director, The Art Barn, School of Art, Salt Lake City, Utah. |
| 1951-1955 | Custom Furniture, Design & Production. |
| 1955-1956 | Instructor in Design, Society of Arts & Crafts, Detroit, Michigan. |
| 1956-1960 | Assistant Professor in the School of Art, teaching Industrial Design, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York. |
| 1961-1965 | Independent work as sculptor and Design Consultant, Liverpool, New York. |
| 1965-1969 | Assistant Professor in the School of Art, teaching Design, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York. |

EXHIBITIONS AND AWARDS

- 1948 First one man exhibit of paintings and prints, Stevens Gross Galleries, Chicago, Illinois.
- 1949 Michigan Artists Exhibition, Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, Michigan, Paintings.
- 1950 4th Old Northwest Territory Art Exhibit, Springfield, Illinois, Paintings.
- Wichita Museum of Art, Wichita, Kansas — Purchase Prize for Lithograph.
- 6th Annual Print Exhibition, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- 1951 One man exhibition of drawings — Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, California.
- 13th Annual Exhibition, Artists West of the Mississippi, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Drawings.
- 1953 Designer-Craftsmen U.S.A., Awarded the Hillis Baker prize for a dining table, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, N. Y.
- 1954 Midwest Designer Art Fair, Chicago Art Institute, Chicago, Illinois.
- 1954-1955-1956 “For Your Home Exhibition”, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois (Furniture)
- 1956 11th Annual Exhibition for Michigan Artists and Craftsmen, Detroit Art Institute, Detroit, Michigan, W. B. Ford Design Award for sofa.
- Photographs of DuSell furniture featured in Look Magazine (1956).

- 1957 Retrospective Exhibition of Furniture, Joe and Emily Lowe Art Center, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.
- 1960 “Designed for Silver”, prize award in the International Competition sponsored by the American Craftsmen’s Council and the International Silver Company: Knife, Fork and Spoon exhibition.
- “The Pursuit and Measure of Excellence”, Weatherspoon Art Gallery, Greensboro, North Carolina (Furniture).
- 1962 25th Annual Exhibition, Munson Willian Proctor Institute, Utica, New York (Drawing).

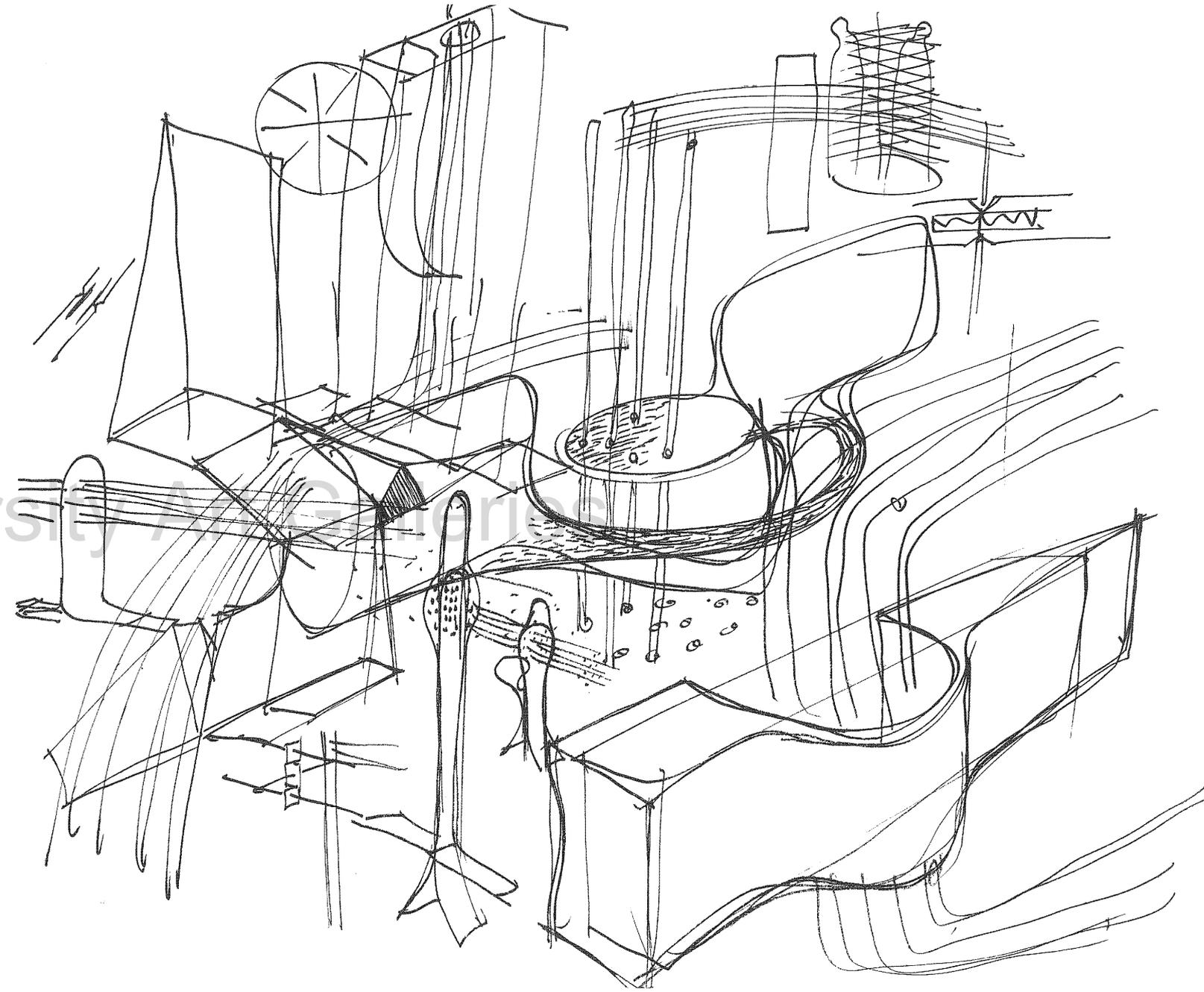
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CATALOGUE

1. Atonement	Red Brass	1968	H. 22-1/2"
2. Earth Angel	Red Brass	1968	H. 37"
3. Revelation	Red Brass	1968	H. 19"
4. A Memory	Bronze	1968	H. 20"
5. The Temple	Bronze	1968	H. 25"
6. Alternative I	Bronze	1968	H. 23"
7. Alternative II	Steel	1968	H. 21-1/2"
8. Theologian	Bronze	1968	H. 28"
9. Sepulchre	Bronze	1968	H. 12"
10. Cain and Abel	Laminated Wood	1967	H. 100"
11. The Family	Steel	1969	H. 90"
12. Door, Full Size Segment	Bronze	1962	H. 106"

MODELS FOR DECORATIVE PROJECTS IN METAL

"The Harvard Door"		1962	H. 14"
"The Butler Screen"		1964	H. 36"
"Invitation"		1969	H. 4"
"Passers By"		1969	H. 9"
"Poet"		1969	H. 4"
Detail for Cast Screen	Bronze	1963	10" x 14"
3 Cast Stainless Steel Studies for Screen		1963	H. 10"



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