

TOP STORY

## Sculpture raises the bar with IMAS exhibit

NANCY MOYER | Special to The Monitor Mar 7, 2016 (0)



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The Big Daydreamer by George Tobolowsky 2014 Welded steel and stainless steel and original color.



George Tobolowsky's sculpture has been referred to as form and substance. And it's true.

His welded, seemingly abstract works, initially seem to fall into the expected artistic camp of 20th century formalism, whose primary purpose was the combination of simple shapes. Tobolowsky fast-forwards over that part. His exhibit at IMAS, George Tobolowsky: "Is This the Road I'm On?" is on display, beginning on the grounds with works leading into the main exhibition in the large Clark Gallery.

Yes, we've seen a lot of welded sculpture, but Tobolowsky raises the bar.

Yes, he also works with scrap metal from scrap yards, but his selection and combination of materials is far more perceptive than most artist-welders.

His work reflects a witty engagement with cast-offs, and an uncanny ability for wonderful visual analogy. His "Tool Menorah #2" is a brilliant incorporation of tools into a vision of religious orthodoxy where large drill bits become candles held by machine cogs. This entire vertical procession rests on a large wrench that is further supported by a horizontally structured tool reinforcing the message of stability. Most of the sculptures are combined with tables or stands, imbuing the works with psychological and ideological independence.

The way Tobolowsky uses materials is fascinating. Stainless steel parts mingle among basic iron scraps, allowing tonal variety among the metals, and original paint and markings on discarded parts add visual character to the overall designs. His earlier works in the show are formal and emotionally distant, but moving on, the sometimes quirky selections of sculptural parts soon begin to reflect his unique artistic personality and bring the viewer into his process.

We feel his delight in the object. For instance, the small sculpture, "The Welder," is an early window on his sense of humor. An upright large, yellow colored, red wheeled, c-clamp is pushed along by green anthropomorphic rebar pieces. Although it is not as sophisticated as later sculptures, Tobolowsky connects with the viewer.

Completed six years later and on a grander scale is the large sculpture, "Wandering." Just when you're comfortable with the formal aspect of this beautiful work, its whimsical and controlled content hits you; the wildly curving red metal never stopping on the grid evokes related experience. These curvilinear metal masses appear frequently in the sculptures, suggesting both physical and mental roads. As autobiographical signs, they reference his own life's path and thoughts.

Tobolowsky has gained attention for the fact that he came to the sculpture field late in life. Although he studied art at SMU, his ultimate vocation was business and law. After 30 years, he returned to art with a remarkable energy. A few of his early works are on display and reveal his early love of metal; the dates of the works document a sculptor on fast-forward.

Don't miss George Tobolowsky: "Is This the Road I'm On?" at IMAS. The sculptures offer several layers of interpretation and points of view. Take your time. Watch his video.

Nancy Moyer, Professor Emerita of Art, UTRGV, is an art critic for The Monitor. She may be reached at nmoyer@rgv.rr.com.

"Is This the Road I'm On?"

By George Tobolowsky

Where: International Museum of Art & Science, 1900 Bicentennial Blvd, McAllen

When: Through May 22

Hours: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday to Wednesday; 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday; 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday.