



Photography:
Ursula Christel Cranmer

PROJECT DETAILS

- Project Name:** The Kiss
- Project Location:** India, Denmark, New Zealand
- Project Type:** Landscape Sculpture
- Submitter:** Gill Gatfield
- Submitter Location:** New Zealand
- Artist Name + Company:** Gill Gatfield, Gill Gatfield Studio
- Client Name + Company:** Sculpture by the Sea Aarhus Denmark
- Collaborators + other design team members:**
- Engineer:** Peter Boardman
- Supplier Liaison:** Lars Svaerdpil
- Client Liaison (Denmark):** Karen Louise Juhl Christensen
- Client Liaison (NZ):** Deborah McCormick
- Materials:** Black granite
- Size:** 2mH x 3m Diameter
- Start/Finish Dates:** May 2013 - June 2015

Project Description

An ambitious and unique granite sculpture, The Kiss is an international project which has touched three continents and inspired audiences from across the globe. Inspired by



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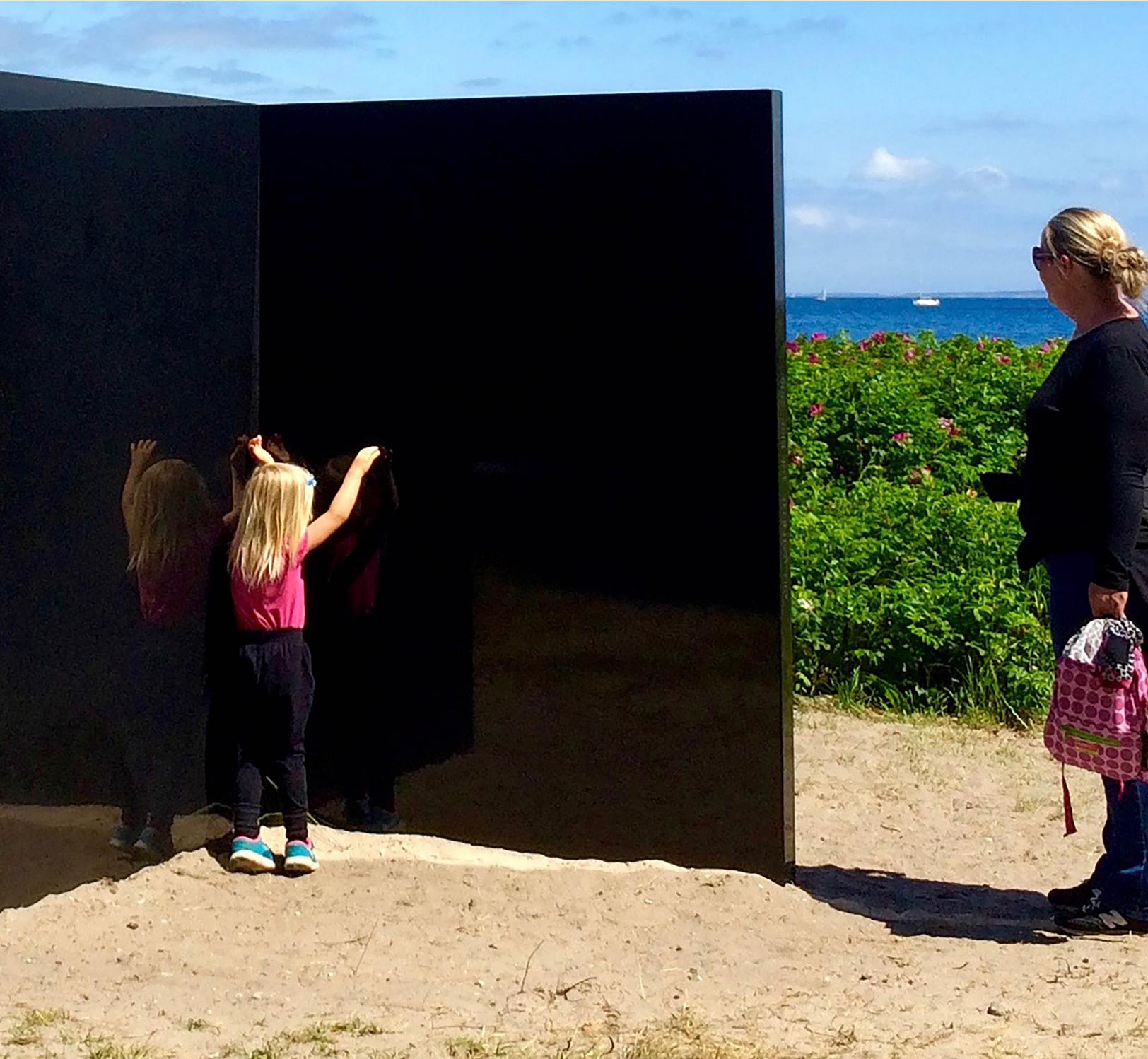


Palaeolithic cave paintings in Southern France, artist Gill Gatfield imagined a single abstract gesture that could combine the sensory experience of a cave and the primitive human impulse of mark-making.

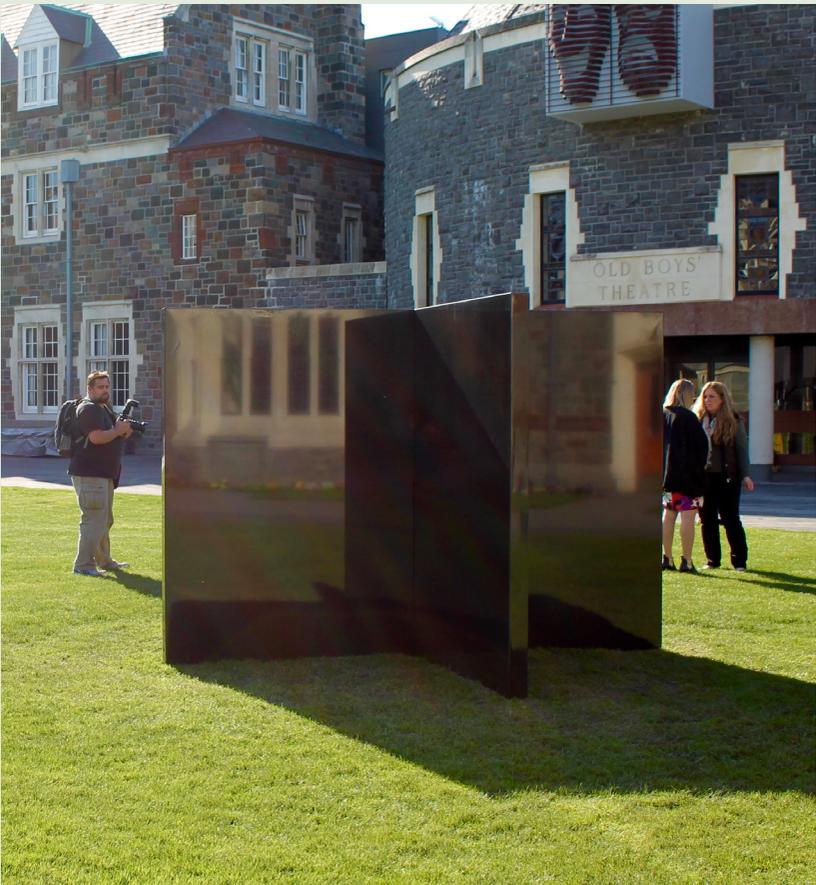
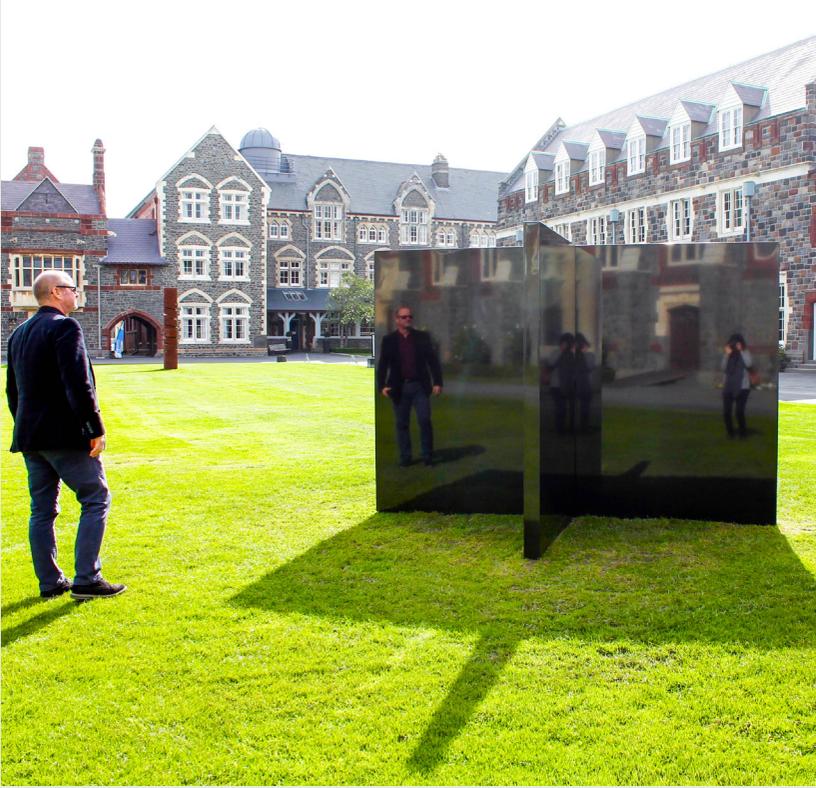
Carved in stone, the sculpture would celebrate connectivity while enabling freedom of movement. Experimenting with designs and construction systems through a succession of models, she arrived at an

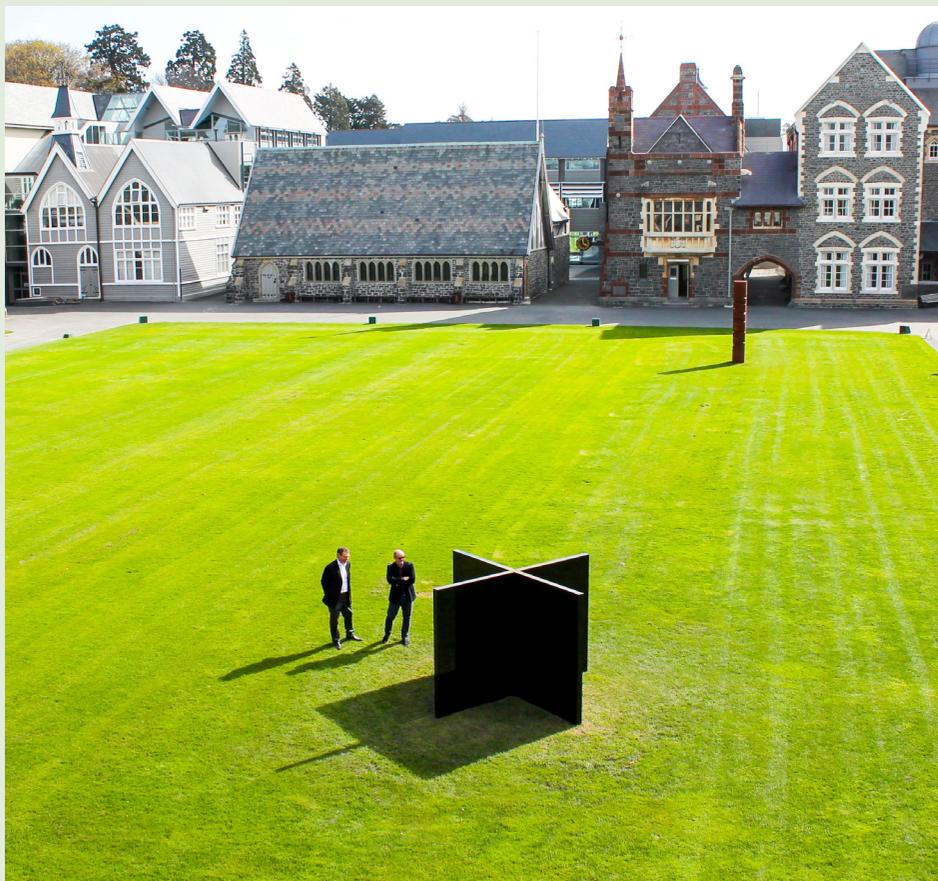
abstract X-figure, The Kiss, using igneous stone to render a modern mark of love - a text message x, a kiss.

The X form is an expansive symbol with



Winner : Landscape





meanings that traverse cultures, religions, and nationalities. A horizontal axis on a grid and a sign of hidden treasure, X marks a significant place on a map. In this sense, The Kiss would create its own territory, making a place of art.

The invitation to exhibit at Sculpture by the Sea (Denmark) - an international biennial exhibition featuring artists from 27 countries, created an ideal context to develop this abstract figure. The exhibition would coincide with Denmark's suffrage centenary celebrations led by the national Women's Museum. Shaped like an 'x' on a voting paper, The Kiss is a symbol of equality. A universal chromosome, X is shared by all women and men regardless of nationality, race, and religion.

The title The Kiss relates to the sculpture's form and points to a lineage of iconic artworks of the same title by Hayez, Klimt, Rodin, Brancusi, and others, where two figures - one male and one female are depicted in a tight embrace. In Gatfield's idea of The Kiss, the two elements are identical and prised apart, positioned at right angles, where they reflect and reproduce each other, becoming multiple arms that also embrace the viewer. The two primary elements appear separate but are mutually inter-dependent. Without the other, one would fall.

Taking two years from conception to realisation, the artist-led project involved working with a team in three countries - India, Denmark, and New Zealand, working across three time zones and in three languages - Hindi, Danish, and English. Each stage of the project from design and construction to installation systems, crating, and freighting, was coordinated by Gill Gatfield Studios based in New Zealand. As the work advanced, studio drawings, photographs, and 3D models of the sculpture ensured everyone involved understood the aims of the project.

The first challenge was sourcing a piece of pure black granite in the size and quality required for the project. To render and enable 'an embrace', the sculpture needed to subsume the proportions of the human

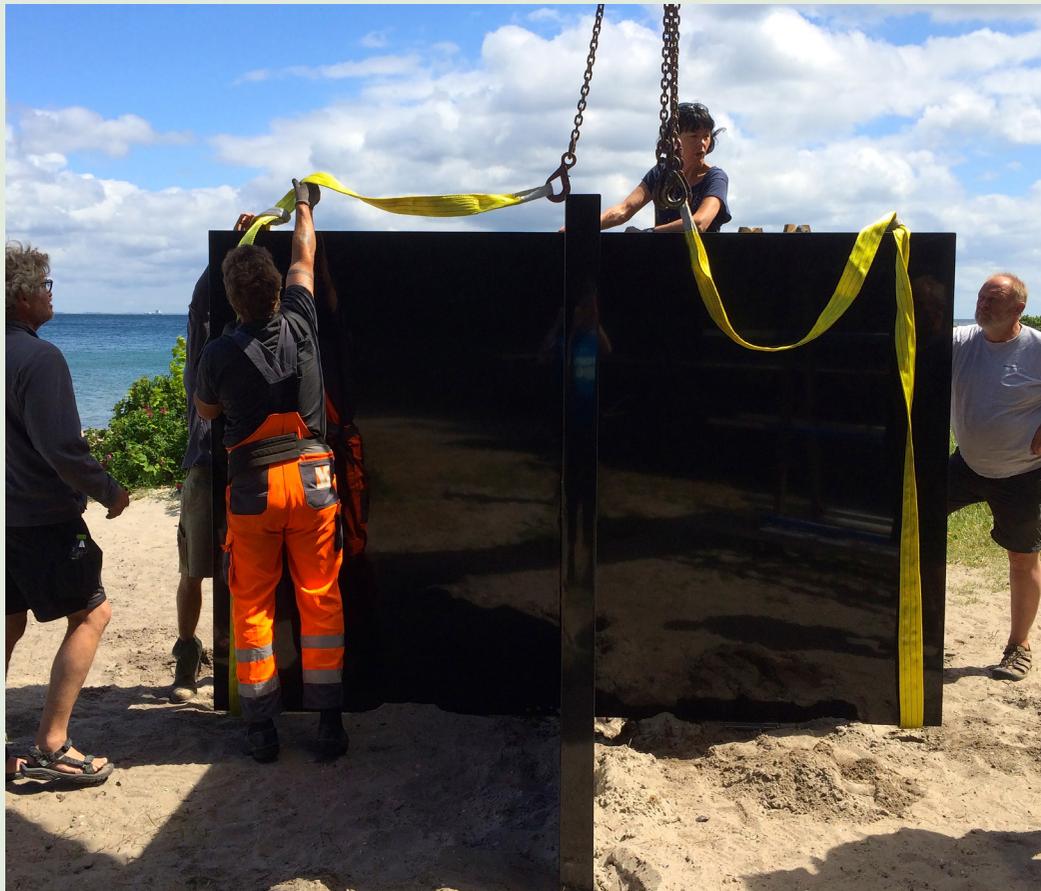


figure. The size and quality of the stone specified by the artist exceeded usual commercial parameters and would be difficult to extract. Research into granite quarries across three continents led to India where, after several attempts, an oversized block of monument black granite was extracted and processed using age-old and cutting-edge technology.

A further challenge was to express the artist's intention to enact 'a kiss' in both form and method of construction. The Kiss was envisaged as two elements that would intersect but not touch. Working with New Zealand engineer Peter Boardman on sculpture foundation and installation systems gave life to the artist's objective of coupling equal yet independent elements. The method of construction expresses a key conceptual premise of The Kiss – a partnership of equals.

As design and construction progressed, a constant flow of communication about site options, steel fabrication, shipping, and installation was underway with the Sculpture by the Sea site team and curators in Denmark. To reveal the qualities of The Kiss and enhance visitors' experience of the sculpture, the chosen site needed to provide elevated views and close-up encounters within a context of nature. Nestled below an ancient beech forest, a curved white sand beach in Aarhus Bay offered the ideal site. In this location, the white sand creates a striking contrast to the black stone sculpture and captures the sculpture's revolving geometric shadows.

After months of working across multiple time zones, the four tonnes of mirror-polished black granite reached the Port of Aarhus in Denmark, just days before the artist arrived to construct The Kiss on the beach. The sculpture site is across the Bay from the city of Aarhus, designated European Cultural Capital in 2017. Over 500,000 people visit the international sculpture biennial, held in association with ARoS Aarhus Art Museum and under the patronage of Crown Prince Frederick and Princess Mary of Denmark.





Waves of visitors traverse a succession of small beaches to reach The Kiss at a crossroad on the coastal trail. People circle the stone with hands reaching out to touch it. Some tap the granite in disbelief – it looks like mirrored glass or polished steel. Positioned in nature, the sculpture is in constant flux. Appearing dark and moody beneath clouds, brilliant in sunlight, and reflective at dawn and dusk, The Kiss seems to mirror the human spirit. Capturing the forest, city, and sea, it reflects and refracts light and image, recording constant movement across the beach and Bay.

Shaped as a monumental text message, the scale of the work embraces individuals and groups and provides an inclusive experience. People find intimacy, self-reflection, community, and connection in the wings of The Kiss. Art historian Dr. Warren Feeny explains “responses to The Kiss reveal numerous points of view: The Kiss represents universal DNA, the genetic

code shared by all women and men. It is also a single sound, a letter, a mathematical sign for plus and multiply, a symbol, a cross, circle, and square. The X announces: ‘You are here: This is it’”

In 2016, The Kiss completed its global journey, arriving in New Zealand to be presented at Christ’s College in Christchurch for SCAPE Public Art. An innovative public-private partnership, SCAPE brings world-class artworks to a city being rebuilt after devastating earthquakes. Curator Heather Galbraith selected The Kiss for “its conceptual and formal strength, and subtlety.” Sited on the hallowed lawn of a historic boy’s school and surrounded by heritage architecture, The Kiss marked a treasured spot. Director of SCAPE Public Art, Deborah McCormick describes “the sculpture’s conceptual approach, audience appeal, and technical sophistication,” an impressive combination that creates “the magic of The Kiss.”



“Gill Gatfield creates minimalist sculptures steeped with content. Her works are philosophical and beautiful, revealing scientific inquiries into human nature – in and with nature itself. Her abstract conceptual artwork appeals to the senses and simultaneously provokes political content.”

*Curator, Julie Rokkjaer Birch
(Women’s Museum, Denmark)*



About the Firm

Founded by Gill Gatfield in 1999, Gill Gatfield Studios creates abstract-conceptual artworks that engage and enrich site, tempt touch, and provoke thought. Working internationally, the artist leads a studio team highly skilled in artwork design, fabrication, freight, and installation. In each project, unique materials and innovative processes are combined to create elegant abstract sculptures and installations imbued with sensory qualities and layers of meaning. The artworks generate intrigue and a sense of belonging in time and place. Commissions are developed in collaboration with clients to create inspiring and enduring connections between owner, artwork, audience,

About the Lead Artist



Gill Gatfield MFA (Hons) LLB is a sculptor and author with a background in business, public policy, and law reform. Recognised for innovation in media, methods, and theory, her artworks explore human nature through abstract forms rich with conceptual content. Her work is exhibited widely in public and private galleries, sculpture symposiums, national and international art awards; and held in corporate, private, and public collections worldwide.