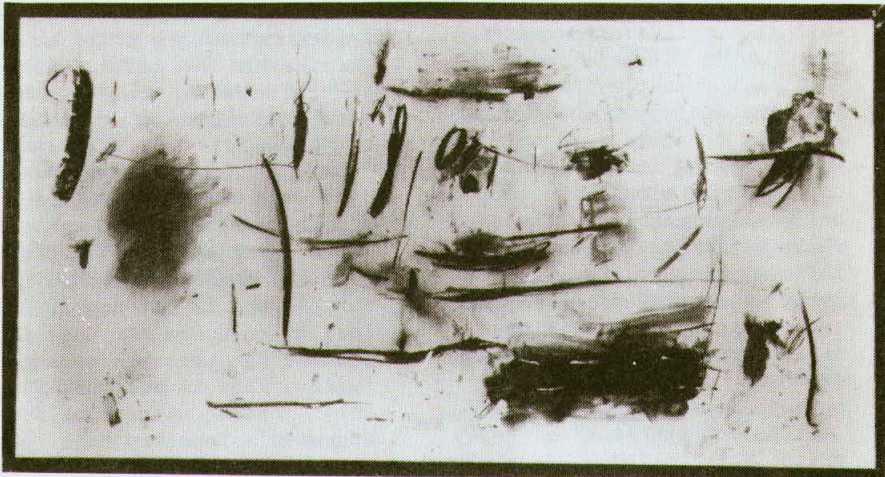


Wadsworth Atheneum
Mid September to late November

Michael Singer
MATRIX 24

Ritual Balance Study, 1974



MATRIX is supported in part
by a grant from the National
Endowment for the Arts, a
Federal agency.

Notes on Sangam Ritual Series

9/76

This piece takes its name from the Sangam, a holy place in India where two rivers join together to form one. Usually a shrine is built at this spiritual site.

Michael Singer
September, 1976

Michael Singer seeks a collaboration with nature. He is best known for his elegant sculptures wrought in harmony with their wilderness settings. So close is Singer's communion with each carefully chosen site that the decisions about what he wants to build come not while working in his studio but rather as he slowly and methodically acquaints himself with the characteristics unique to each particular space: how it feels as he walks around it, where the sunlight comes from as the day progresses, the subtle ways in which colors change from hour to hour.

It is compatible with the artist's intentions that visitors often experience an unanticipated feeling of reverence when viewing his sculptures. Generally made of light materials held in an interdependent balance through tension, Singer's totemic structures gently but firmly guide us away from the hectic and mundane to a few precious moments (or more if we will share the time) of contemplation.

Singer labors to ensure that the focus of attention is not limited to the structure he has introduced into the space but rather that his work will heighten the viewer's awareness of the space itself. In no way meant to be confused with natural phenomena, Singer's sculptures always stand as positive, reassuring human statements. For Singer each work culminates in this "offering" to the visitor, the opportunity to partake in an intensely private and personal

experience. It is in this sense that Singer hopes his work will function as ritual, a refreshment for the soul.

The extraordinary rapport Singer effects with outdoor spaces has prompted those most concerned with environmental protection in this country to applaud his work as complementary with their efforts to preserve the balance of nature. Recognizing an unequivocal respect for the landscape integral to his work, the United States Department of the Interior, America the Beautiful Fund and the Smithsonian Institute have sponsored major outdoor pieces by Singer.

Yet it would be a significant distortion of Singer's special vision to classify him as an "environmental" artist as that term is commonly used. Nature, for Singer, is not confined to the out-of-doors nor does it exclude the presence of human beings. Thus it was that Singer felt a strong attraction for the Atheneum's Tapestry Hall. He knew within minutes of his first visit to the museum that he would like to build a work on this site.

The space is a definite and imposing architectural statement. Singer wanted to construct a piece that would draw the viewer into the space. He welcomed the challenge of building a sculpture that would sustain its aesthetic integrity when seen from the ground floor as well as from the balcony above. He wanted to contrast the warmth of the materials he uses - most notably the rich striations he intentionally combines in the wood he dowels together - with the cold grey floor. Using the light as it enters from the windows of the vault and changes direction during the day, Singer consciously plays with the movement of shadows and reflections.

All the more remarkable, as it appears to occur with such ease in Sangam Ritual Series 9/76,

is Singer's accomplishment in building a low hovering construction not three feet in height which when punctuated with only nine thin bunches of phragmites effortlessly holds its own with the over 48 foot high vault.

Michael Singer was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1945. He received a B.F.A. from Cornell University in 1967 and did graduate study at Rutgers University in 1968. In the early 1970s, Singer spent much of his time in Vermont where he began to build works in remote settings and to use materials associated with nature. He received a Fellowship Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1974 and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1976. Singer maintains studios in New York City and Northampton Massachusetts and is represented by SperoneWestwaterFischer, Inc. of New York City.

AMK

MATRIX in Tapestry Hall (through Oct. 31, 1976 only): Sangam Ritual Series 9/76 (Dedicated to Gladly, Keon and Bruce McKinnon), 1976, phragmites, clear pine, maple logs, jute and rock, 37' x 17' x 14'. Built by the artist on the site.

First Gate Ritual Series 1/30/76, 1976, collage with charcoal and chalk on paper, 42 1/4" x 81 1/4".

Ritual Series 2/20/76, 1976, collage with charcoal and chalk on paper, 41 1/4" x 82 5/8".

Ritual Series 4/3/76, 1976, collage with charcoal and chalk on paper, 41 5/8" x 81 5/8". Lent by Roy Neuberger Museum, State University of New York, Purchase, New York.

Ritual Series 6/12/76, 1976, collage with charcoal and chalk on paper, 47 3/4" x 46 5/8".

Works in MATRIX:

Ritual Balance Study, 1974, collage with charcoal and chalk on paper, 40 5/8" x 80 1/2". Lent by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City.

Glades Ritual Series, January-March 1975, photographic documentation (23" x 77") of piece built of bamboo, jute and phragmites at Everglades National Park. Sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Lily Pond Ritual Series, July 1975, photographic documentation (23" x 59") of piece built of bamboo and jute at Harriman State Park, New York. Commissioned by America the Beautiful Fund.

Sangam Ritual Series, March 1976, photographic documentation (23" x 66 7/8") of piece built of bamboo and jute at Chesapeake Bay Center for Environmental Studies. Commissioned by Smithsonian Institute.

First Gate Ritual Series, April 1976, photographic documentation (77" x 23") of piece built of oak and rock at the Nassau County Museum of Fine Arts. Commissioned by the museum.

All works in this exhibition unless otherwise indicated are courtesy of SperoneWestwater-Fischer, Inc., New York City.

Outdoor commissions:

Pelham Bay Park, New York City (June '72), under the auspices of New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; Saratoga Center for the Performing Arts (July '73), sponsored by State University of New York; Heckscher State Park, Long Island, New York (October '73), sponsored by New York State Arts Council; Everglades National Park, Homestead, Florida (January-March '75), sponsored by National Endowment for the Arts; Harriman State Park, New York (July '75), commissioned by America the Beautiful Fund; Chesapeake Bay Center for Environmental Studies, Edgewater, Maryland (March '76), commissioned by Smithsonian Institute; Nassau County Museum of Fine Arts, Roslyn, New York (April '76), commissioned by the museum.

One-man exhibition:

SperoneWestwaterFischer, Inc., NYC '75.

Selected group exhibitions:

Art Resources Center Gallery, Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC '69; Hudson River Museum at Yonkers, New York Light and Environment '70; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NYC Ten Young Artists - Theodoron Award Show '71; Finch Museum of Contemporary Art, New York Projected Art and Artists at Work '71; Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, California '72; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NYC Recent American Art '75.

Selected bibliography about Singer:

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Foote, Nancy. "Reviews, New York," Artforum, vol. 14, no. 7 (March '76) p. 70+.

Grove, Nancy. "Reviews: Michael Singer," Artsmagazine, vol. 50, no. 6 (February '76), p. 20.

Kingsley, April. "Sculpture Gets New Energy," The Soho Weekly News (January 1, '76), p. 16.

Russell, John. "Michael Singer Blends Nature with Art at a Show Here," The New York Times (December 27, '75), p. 11.

Zucker, Barbara. "New York Reviews," Art News, vol. 75, no. 2 (February '76) p. 110+.

Gussow, Alan. "Let's Put the Land In Landscapes," The New York Times (March 14, '76) p. E-1+.

Forgey, Benjamin. "Art Is Where You Find It; Even in the Marshlands," Washington Star, (May 14, '76), p. C-1.

Kuspit, Donald. "Michael Singer at SperoneWestwater-Fischer," Art in America, vol. 64, no. 4 (July-August '76), p. 104+.