

## FOREWARD

With an artistic career spanning more than five decades, artist and educator Edwin Owre works continuously in his Grand Isle, Vermont studio creating new, colorful "constructions" that explore the possibilities of drawing and the gesture through abstract sculpture. Referencing the sensibilities of the formative American art movements of the 1960s and 70s, while embracing contemporary expressions of mark-making, Owre creates work that is exciting, immediate, and most importantly influential to a generation of contemporary artists working today.

*New Constructions* features a selection of the artist's wall-relief constructions, drawings, and a grouping of free-standing, smaller constructions created over the past two years. The dynamic compositions and vivid intensity of Owre's "Constructions" are a conflation of several disciplines – sculpture, drawing, painting – that resist narrow definitions and traditional formats.

The artist's polychrome sculptures embody duality – expressive color and geometric line, subtractive and additive process, an underlying tension between the representational and the non-objective. Whether you are a novice to the art of Edwin Owre, or a former student still inspired and influenced by his creative challenges, *New Constructions* is a captivating next chapter in the artist's well-established oeuvre. Admired by his colleagues and students, Edwin Owre has surely established his place in American contemporary art.

Heather Ferrell  
Curator, BCA Center

### EDWIN OWRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Patty Corcoran, Cameron Davis, Bill Davison, Leslie Fry, Melinda Johns, Bill Lipke, David Sellers, Andrea Rosen, Kathleen Schneider, and Frank Owen.

Edwin Owre, *Beaufort Scale*, 2016, polychrome wood and paper, Courtesy of the Artist (detail).



Edwin Owre, *Fleurs du Mal*, 2016, Polychrome Wood and Paper, Courtesy of the Artist (detail).



**EDWIN OWRE** (b. 1928, Tillamook, Oregon) is an American artist currently residing in Grand Isle, Vermont. Owre pursued his undergraduate studies at Reed College, Portland, OR (1948-55); the Art Students League of New York (1956-57); The Cooper Union, New York City (1957-61); and earned his BFA (1963) and MFA (1964) from Yale University, New Haven, CT. In 1965-66 Owre traveled to Vermont to work with fellow Yale graduate, David Sellers at Prickly Mountain in Warren. Together they created architectural projects defined by experimentation, materiality, and creativity as part of the emerging Design-Build movement.

In 1969, Owre joined the University of Vermont's faculty, teaching drawing and sculpture until his retirement in 2003. While at UVM, Owre was a well-respected and beloved professor who influenced several generations of talented Vermont artists. He often devised creative "challenges" for his students that balanced creative thinking, ingenuity, and a practical application of common materials. The artist also led collaborative projects with fellow colleagues and students such as The HAY project at Shelburne Farms in 1998.

Owre has exhibited regionally and internationally with select exhibitions that include Flicker Street Gallery, Memphis, TN (2016); Stanley Picker Gallery, Kingston-upon-Thames, London, England (2001); National Arts Center, St. James Cavaliere, Malta (1998); Dubrovnik International Arts Festival Croatia, (1997); O. K. Harris Gallery, New York City (1991); Fleming Museum, Burlington, VT (1993, 1990, 1978, 1974, 1969, 1966); Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, NY, (1979); and the De Cordova Museum, Lincoln, MA (1970). Since his retirement from UVM, Edwin Owre has continued to create impactful and creative work in his studio in Grand Isle.

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**EDWIN OWRE**  
*NEW CONSTRUCTIONS*

**JANUARY 19 - APRIL 7, 2018**



Edwin Owre, *Barometer of Mercies*, 2016, polychrome wood and paper, Courtesy of the Artist.

## EDWIN OWRE'S NEW WORK

*"Art belongs to those who create it and those who savour it."*  
- Julian Barnes, *The Noise of Time*

Painting, sculpture, drawing: a veritable mix of media. Edwin Owre's new work is visually rich in materials, shapes, and color. The work challenges the viewer to "take it all in" despite the visual jumps, wacky cuts and ellipses. Scatter-brained in the best sense of the word, concise and uncompromising in content.

Owre's larger Constructions measure 22 ½ by 30 inches. At first glance they appear to read as "landscapes," however these are not flat planes with "horizon lines" as cues, but bas-reliefs sculpture built up from layered, heavy plywood. A variety of jagged shapes - some brightly painted - are overlaid with Arches paper on which glimpses of graphite drawing appear. The resulting works are complex, jig-saw, crazy-quilt quasi-cubist compositions of varying depth; reading also as architectural models, or mini-cityscapes projecting from the wall rather than viewed from above on a table as in the artist's smaller, playfully composed painted constructions.

The emotional affect which radiates from Owre's work is brash and brassy, scored for blaring horns rather than reeds or strings: cacophonous visual polyphony à la Spike Jones [the musician.] They are "in your face," recalling the be-bop hard-edged, colorful, and playful compositions of Stuart Davis (1892-1964); enigmatic conjunctions of ideas and images which in spirit also echo the work of H.C.Westerman (1922-1981) and Paul Klee (1879-1940). They seem infused with a joyful Jitterbug energy. Not the dance step, but the fishing plug whose erratic jerking motion skips across a body of water to attract fish, and with Owre's *Constructions*, challenge the viewer to stay focused and to inevitably be visually "hooked."

Owre's work has consistently been rooted in a practical aesthetic. It is a sensibility defined both by the artist exposing the inherent nature of a material (lead, glass, plywood, corrugated steel) and further informed by the hand and power tools used to manipulate those materials. Historically, Owre's work has also mirrored West Coast and East Coast artistic movements from the last half of the twentieth-century: abstract-expressionism, minimalism, the new realism, and post-modernism. His work exudes an overriding compositional playfulness, experimentation and bravado equally found in the architectural work of fellow Yale student David Sellars with whom he worked in the mid-60's at Prickly Mountain in Waitsfield, Vermont. Kindred spirits, Owre and Sellars' collaboration has been mutually influential on each other's artistic achievements.

Owre's long history of teaching sculpture and drawing at the University of Vermont has been an inspiration to many generations of students, with a philosophy based upon the belief in the immediacy of the expressive

possibilities of materials. It is an approach to making art reinforced for Owre while a student at the Art Students League in New York and later in his graduate studies at Yale University. Owre's earlier drawings - overlaid and overlapping transparencies inspired by the paintings and drawings of Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) - continue to inform the artist's work. Nowhere is this more evident than in these recent Constructions. Paul Klee once said of his drawing that he liked to "take a line for a walk." Edwin Owre has surely taken his ideas for a fast gallop. The viewer's share is to hang on, savor the work, and enjoy the ride.

Bill Lipke, Professor Emeritus, Art History  
University of Vermont

Edwin Owre, *Gravity Undone*, 2016, polychrome wood and paper, Courtesy of the Artist.

