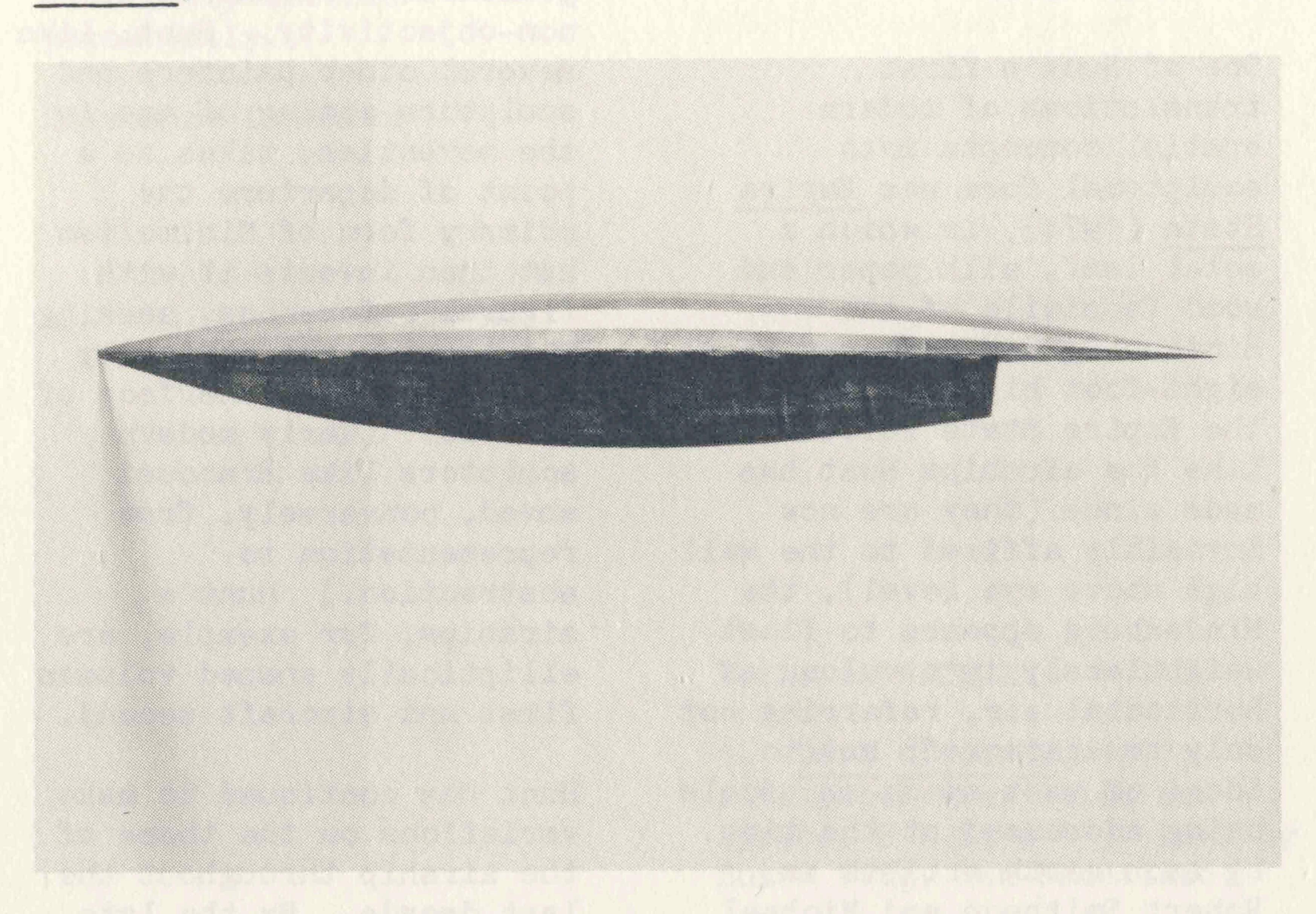
Bryan Hunt MATRIX/BERKELEY 98 University Art Museum mid-July - mid-September 1986

Warrior, 1982



As a boy growing up near Cape Canaveral, Florida, Bryan Hunt was fascinated with space exploration. He even worked for a while as an engineer's aid on the Gemini project, learning something about structural engineering. In developing his own sculptural style, Hunt drew on these early experiences, believing that sculptors must address new concepts of space in their work.

One of Hunt's first translations of modern spatial concepts into sculptural form was Empire State (1974), in which a metal leaf, silk paper and wood facsimile of the Hindenburg was tethered to an eight-foot high replica of the Empire State Building. Like the airships Hunt has made since (they are now invisibly affixed to the wall high above eye level), the Hindenburg appears to float weightlessly in a volume of horizontal air, referring not only to spacecraft but to ideas of vast space and scale being addressed at the time by such earth artists as Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer. Smithson and Heizer had moved out of the studio into the landscape to create massive works of earth and stone. Although Hunt was not interested in pursuing an early and brief involvement with earthworks, he wanted to include the concept of monumental scale in his work, "using a more classical, compact kind of sculptural form" (View, 1980). Hunt found a unique way to bring the landscape into his work on a human scale. In plaster and bronze pieces in the shape of lakes and waterfalls, he isolates and gives permanence to fluid fragments of nature. And, like the airships, the tall,

slender waterfalls are mysteriously balanced on the floor without stabilizing bases, defying gravitational expectations.

Although earth art was an influence on Hunt, he also owes a debt to Minimalist ideas. In sculpture, Minimalism, as practiced by Donald Judd and Carl Andre, is defined by symmetrical, geometric form and strict non-objectivity. Hunt, like several other painters and sculptors coming of age in the seventies, takes as a point of departure the primary form of Minimalism but then invests it with figural references, seeking the tension and ambiguity created by the interface of the two. (Early modern sculptors like Brancusi moved, conversely, from representation to abstraction.) Hunt's airships, for example, are elliptically shaped volumes first and aircraft second.

Hunt has continued to make variations on the theme of the airship throughout the last decade. By the late seventies, his airships, such as the black with white Dark Crest II had become increasingly streamlined and elegant metaphors for flight. Certain later examples, such as Warrior (1982) and Night Landing (1983) in which the undersides have been cut away to create sharply pointed ends, look aggressive, even menacing. Light is an important element in these works, playing dramatically off the copper and gold leaf painted surfaces. According to Hunt, the airships are essential sculptures. "They deal with gravity. They instill life within a contained form. And they create a place of experience"

(Artnews, Oct. '85).

Hunt was born in Terre Haute, Indiana in 1947. He studied architecture briefly at the University of South Florida before moving to Los Angeles where he attended Otis Art Institute (B.F.A., 1971). In 1972 he was selected for the Whitney Museum of American Art's Independent Study Program in New York, where he eventually settled permanently.

Constance Lewallen

Works in MATRIX:

- 1. Dark Crest II, 1977, silk paper over balsa and spruce, 8 x 54 x 8". Lent by Susan Swig, San Francisco.
- 2. Warrior, 1982, copper leaf and lacquer on silk paper over balsa and spruce, 8 x 64 x 8". Lent by the artist; courtesy Daniel Weinberg Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 3. Night Landing, 1983, gold leaf and lacquer on silk paper over spruce and balsa, 10 x 65 x 10". Lent by the artist; courtesy Daniel Weinberg Gallery, Los Angeles.

Selected one-person exhibitions:

The Clocktower, Institute for Art and Urban Resources, NY, '74; Daniel Weinberg Gallery, S.F., '76, '78, '82; Blum Helman Gallery, NY, '77, '79, '83; Galerie Bischofberger, Zurich, Switzerland, '79; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, '83; University Art Museum, California State University, Long Beach, CA, '83 (catalogue). Daniel Weinberg Gallery, L.A., '86.

Selected group exhibitions:

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY, Young American Artists: Exxon National Exhibition, '78 (catalogue); Whitney Museum of American Art, Biennials, '79, '85 (catalogues); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Twenty American Artists, '80; Palacio de Velasquez, Madrid, Tendencias en Nueva York, '33 (traveled, catalogue); The Museum of Modern Art, NY, An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture, '84 (catalogue); University Art Gallery, Sonoma State University, CA, Works in Bronze, '84 (traveled, catalogue).

Selected bibliography (see also catalogues under exhibitions):

White, Robin. Bryan Hunt (interview), View 3 (Oakland, CA, Crown Point Press, '80).

Kramer, Hilton.
"Sculptors Who Triumph in Bronze," The New York Times,
May 24, 1981.

Tuchman, Phyllis.
"Bryan Hunt's Balancing Act,"
Artnews, Oct. '85.

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