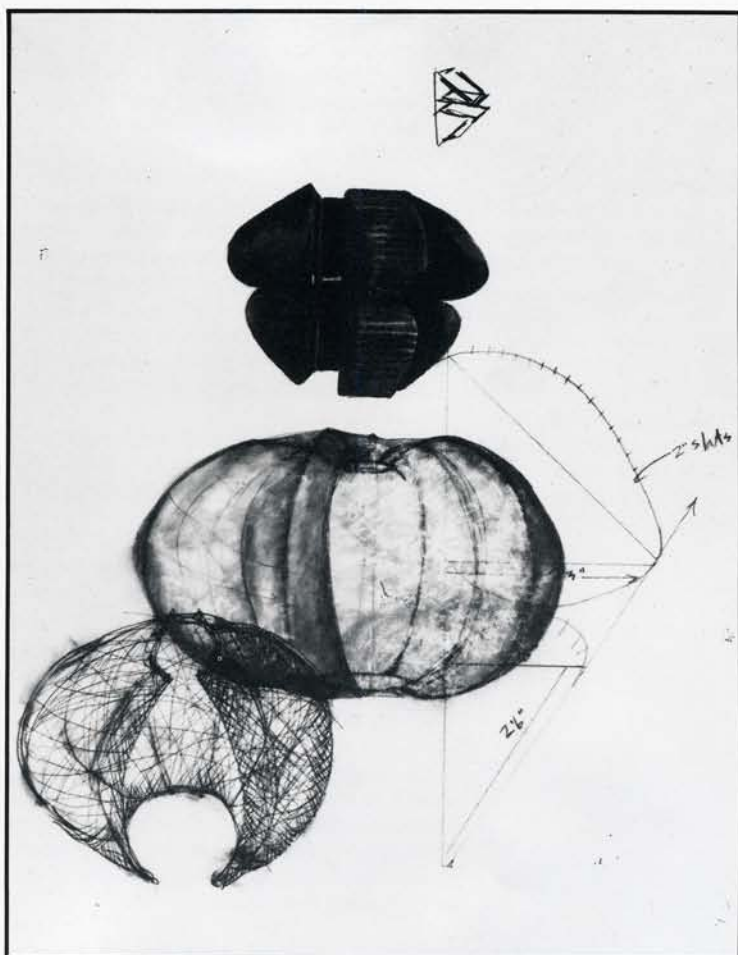


**Kendall Buster: Uncertain Embraces**



**McLean Project for the Arts • Emerson Gallery • McLean, Virginia**

April 1 - May 8, 1993

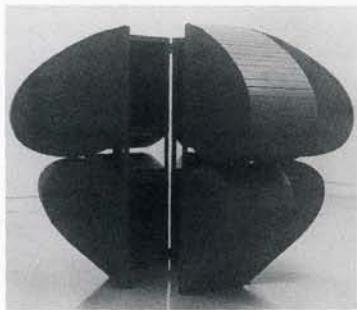
Three sculptures quietly assert their presence in the main gallery. They vary in shape, scale, color and texture, yet they generate a dialogue of shared formal and metaphoric concerns. The title, *Uncertain Embraces*, suggests a tender gesture which teeters on the edge of commitment. Buster acknowledges the complexity underlying emotional actions and pushes this idea into sculptural form. She makes the viewer recognize that seemingly simple shapes are constructed of carefully engineered systems of supports, ribs, volumes and surfaces.

Taking her cue from botanic dissection, Buster explodes the scale of her work to relate to the body rather than to the eye — or what one may discover underneath a microscope. This expansion of scale transforms the sculpture into an interactive "object-experience" for the viewer because the artist introduces the suggestion of architecture into the aesthetic formula.

The skeletal nature of structure and enclosure are paramount formal investigations. Buster allows the components of structure to show so that we become aware of what form (which we may take for granted) is made of. In an interview with the artist, she discussed her interest in the nature of form as a "peeling back to see what lies underneath." Her creative process involves a conceptual dissection of form. The structure of bulbs and flowers, for example, are composed about harmonious symmetries which she brings to her work.

Generally Buster conceives smaller works around one or more axes of symmetry which provides an organizational logic. In the past, her smaller-scale sculptures have resembled industrial mechanistic creatures or flowers, whose allure is countered by menacing innuendos.

Earlier large-scale work explores lines of sight (axes) as sources of voyeurism or espionage thereby expanding into issues of power and control. This concern still lingers in *Uncertain Embrace I*. It is a transitional work from her earlier steel panopticon/doughnut structures which revealed how the mechanics of institutional design controlled individual behavior.



*Uncertain Embrace I*  
steel, graphite, enamel paint  
66" x 96" diameter  
1993



In this body of work, however, she introduces an organic element in her use of voluptuous curves, inflated volumes and varied textures. There is implied movement in each piece: *Uncertain Embrace I* has hinges which suggest contraction and expansion; *Uncertain Embrace II* is covered by a paper membrane which evokes inhalation and exhalation; *Uncertain Embrace III* manipulates circular movement to imply a sexual union or a serpent biting its tail.

In looking at this work, it would be facile to concentrate only on her formal concerns. Buster's artistic awareness of structural aesthetics isolates each structure for metaphoric meaning and allows emotive possibilities to enter.

The general passivity of the round pod-like structures belies their trap-like nature, although the interactive experience is more adventurous than punitive. It is somewhat like discovering one has stepped into a great botanic aberration. The menace still persists, but the organic curves and swells orchestrate a nurturing environment. Entry into these structures is a voluntary contemplative exile to seek refuge, however momentary, in the self.

— Andréa Pollan  
Curator-in-Residence



*Uncertain Embrace II*  
steel, tracing paper, glue  
96" x 102" diameter  
1993

*Uncertain Embrace III*  
steel, clay, papier mâché, glue, mud  
78" x 30" x 72" (each)  
1993