

O F S I L E N T  
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L A W R E N C E  
A R G E N T



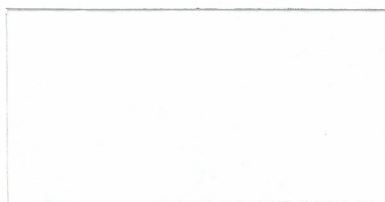
**Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art**

1750 13th street Boulder, CO 80302 • Tel: 303 443-2122 • Fax: 303 447-1633

**LAWRENCE ARGENT**  
OF SILENT TOUCHING

Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art

June 2 - July 30, 1995



All works produced in this exhibition except "Library of Applause" page 6  
Untitled (1995) page 12 and Untitled (1992) not shown, were made with the  
assistance of Kohler Co. and the John Michael Kohler Arts Center Arts /  
Industry Program whilst in residence in the Fall of 1994. I would personally  
like to thank...

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and the many other employees of Kohler Co. who assisted me generously  
throughout the term of my residency.

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Untitled, 1994. Copper and brass metallized cast iron.  
64 x 12 x 4 inches.



A sensation of the human body pervades this space, as if wandering through a collection of missing hands. Oars that do not yet power the ship, *frozen gestures of silent touching*, gloves preserved like ancient tomes in a minimalist library, encapsulating something of the antique. Bugles are encased within a hospital sterilizing cabinet — musical instruments replacing those of surgery; their resonating sound forever stilled in resin. In the mind's eye, an imaginary finger reaches for the frozen valves. There is a military metaphor here, uniformed soldiers playing in a marching band, following the rhythm of a patriotic ceremony, sounding the shrill tempo of history, marking the stoppage of time.

### **Where are we going on this journey?**

A single oar floats in a field of light. Fractured resin mimics the splash of waves.

### **What memories are encased here?**

Bronzed remembrances like those of a baby's shoe . . . the distant father . . . a fire in the studio . . . the perilous flow of molten iron.

### **What is the secret of this laboratory?**

Metallic earth is forged by fire. Accident and intent challenge each other within the fluid dynamics of coagulation.



Untitled, 1995. Cast iron, cast brass and steel.  
18 x 18 x 7 feet.

### And the story?

A romance is unfolding. Two hands are reaching across the vacant horizon, fingertips copper, the metal of Venus, rubbery and joyous at having survived their toxic history. Oars are stilled and suspended within a ring, a single golden oar appears touched by grace among the many, pulled by the four pillars of society, or the four ancient elements, or the four corners of the world. A womb of iron, the metal of Mars, becomes an absurd grid of narrow escape, an open spirit trap tethered to the earth. Small babies are dancing on the horizon, a chorus of replicas cast in iron, wiggling in anticipation. Exponential growth. The frozen flexibility of adornment.

### And its language?

It is the primacy of the materials, also the effect of accident that gives new meaning, contradicting original intentions to give form and to confound the simple understanding of what is being viewed. The spiral sentinels of the Tower of Babel remind us that this language may not be so simple to decode. These soldiers and their fortress are one and the same. In this magic ringed circle, two marked forms are singled out for special consideration. Their twin golden spirals signal purity, growth, evolution, and transcendence.

The recent sculptures of Lawrence Argent provoke a poetic reading. An evocative narrative emerges within the gallery space coupled with considerations of his technical precision and expertise. Some of these sculptures have been distilled from parts of earlier pieces, by eliminating many of the mechanical and more blatantly humorous qualities of their earlier configurations, he has honed these assemblages with a new simplicity and formal clarity that carries greater meaning.



Untitled, 1995. Cast iron, wood and steel.  
55 x 12 x 12 inches.





Library of Applause. 1994. Leather gloves, cast resin and bronze.  
24 ft. x 16 in. x 16 inches.



Untitled, 1995. Cast iron and bronze.  
61 x 16 x 21 inches.

His work has developed over these years with remarkable strength and variety. He often incorporates found objects, things with implicit meanings displaced into new and provocative contexts, transforming their original meaning through the language of materials. In earlier sculptures, he played with mechanical movement, activating their component parts with a humorous absurdity. As counterpoint to his larger pieces, he also created smaller relief sculptures covered in dark encaustic, like poetic windows capturing the fleeting remains of a distant memory. Several objects here are encased in clear resins, framing the found object and further complicating its interpretation. He plays with surfaces, like the skin of the material, contrasting the highly polished and the unrefined in a carefully controlled exchange between the calculated and the accidental. He enjoys the fact that meaning becomes slippery and convoluted, that meaning is provoked and contradicted at the same time. As Argent explains, these displacements are intended to “retain a sense of the irony of the haphazard.”

Many of these new works are the products of his fellowship from the John Michael Kohler Foundation, a three month Arts/Industry Residency in the fall of 1994, at the Kohler Factory in Kohler Wisconsin. In these vast spaces, filled with rows of expectant bathtubs and elegantly shaped sinks, he used the industrial foundry equipment to obtain a volume and scale in his work that is difficult to achieve in the artist's studio. It was a creative time of intense activity, experimentation and problem solving, working to control the capricious qualities of iron and its various melting temperatures. The latticed web of Untitled (not shown) was adapted from a sink mold. Its fragile crackling the result of miscalculating the flow of highly ductile iron, producing an accidental pattern that even more perfectly matched Argent's intentions.



Soldiers, 1994. Cast iron and metallized cast iron.  
10 x 10 x 2 feet.



In *Untitled*, 1995 page 7, he plays with the absurd humor of what seems to be a light bulb, a found object cast in iron with meticulous skill. One is tempted to associate the form with the everyday object, an impulse instantly contradicted by sensing the material in which it is cast. Sinking or melting into the bed of the shiny copper surface, the two bulbs generate the uncertainty of passage. Is the light bulb only the object perceived, or does it bring with it the meaning of light, of inventions, and of new ideas? Another golden light bulb sinks into a velvet pillow. How does one consider the new meaning provoked by placement? There is a reciprocal relationship between the idea, the material, and the purity of form. The viewer, in constant flux between known and potential meanings, experiences what Argent would term "the unencumbered expectations of recognition, confounded by alternate readings."

Many of these sculptures are placed to create an equilibrium between the horizontal and vertical. Formal elements achieve a spiritual peace through the optics of leveling, balance, and floating. These recurring dialogues create a connection between the piece and the viewer, as the component parts of these sculptures form complementary pairs and dynamic oppositions. The exponential growth — of the oars, the bugles, the towers and the babies — can hardly be contained. An yet, these objects are multiplied with subtle variation, while one or two among the many have been chosen for special treatment, cast from a different material or cloaked with a more sumptuous and extravagant finish.

It is the material that gives the form its language. Themes recur of a timeless passage and the timelessness of passage. Argent is sending us on a journey where the known dissolves into the realm of possibilities.

M.E. Warlick



*Untitled*, 1995. Cast brass with 24kt. gold plating, steel and pillow.  
46 x 17 x 14 inches.





Untitled. 1995. Bugles, cast resin and stainless steel cabinet.  
62 x 17 x 32 inches.

## LAWRENCE ARGENT

### EDUCATION

- 1979, 1982, 1983 - B. A., Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia, Sculpture.  
1984 - 1986 - M.F.A., Rinehart School of Sculpture, Maryland Institute, College of Art, Baltimore, MD

### AWARDS

- 1995, 1994, 1993 - Faculty Research Grant, University of Denver, CO  
1994 - John Michael Kohler Foundation, Arts/ Industry Residency  
1990 - Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant  
1986 - The Amalie Rothschild Rinehart School of Sculpture Award  
Core Fellowship, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX  
1984 - Sculptors Association of Victoria, Australia. The Andor Mezzaros First Prize.  
1979 - Design Commission; West Gate Bridge Authority and Amalgamated Metal Workers Union, Melbourne, Australia 20 x 14 x 14 ft. painted steel.

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1995 - "of silent touching". Installation and new work at The Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Boulder, CO.(Catalog).  
Lawrence Argent". Mary Mackey Gallery, Denver, CO  
1994 - "Lawrence Argent - Recent Work". Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Santa Monica, CA  
"Lawrence Argent - Connections" University of Denver Art Gallery, University of Denver, CO  
1992 - 1993 - "Lawrence Argent", Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Santa Monica, CA  
1991 - "Making Thoughts" - Lawrence Argent, Frances Puccinelli Gallery, Carpinteria, CA  
1989 - Lawrence Argent, Recent Works, Allan Hancock Community College, Santa Maria, CA  
"Ein Licht", A Window Space Installation, Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, CA  
"Catch Me If You Can", A Mechanical Device. Installation at the College of Creative Studies Gallery, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1995 - "A Gathering of Galleries, A Gathering of Artists". Arvada Arts Center, Arvada, CO  
"Challenges of Childbirth". Gallery of Contemporary Art, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, CO  
1994 - "National Showcase Exhibition" The Alternative Museum, New York, NY  
"Nature Morte/ Still Life". Group show of gallery artists. Rule Modern and Contemporary, Denver, CO  
The Fifth International Shoebox Sculpture Exhibition, Invitational, University of Hawaii Art Gallery, Honolulu, HI (Catalog)  
26th Biennial Exhibition, Works on or of Paper, University Gallery, University of Delaware, Newark, DE  
"Group Show". Ro Snell Gallery, Santa Barbara, CA  
1993 - Second Summer, New work by gallery artists. Ro Snell Gallery, Santa Barbara, CA  
1992 - "Contemporary Uses of Wax and Encaustic", Palo Alto Cultural Center, Palo Alto, CA  
Group Show, Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Santa Monica, CA  
1991 - "Lawrence Argent, Richard Gate, Richard Sedivy", Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Santa Monica, CA  
The Fourth International Shoebox Sculpture Exhibition. Invitational. University of Hawaii Art Gallery, Honolulu, HI (Catalog)  
1990 - "California Small Works", California Museum of Art, Santa Rosa, CA  
1989 - S.I.T.E. "1989". S.I.T.E. Gallery, Culver City, Los Angeles, CA

### RESIDENCIES

- 1994 - Residency at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Arts / Industry Program (August - Oct 1994)  
1986, 1987 - Artist in Residence, Glassell School of Art, Fine Arts Museum of Houston, Houston, TX  
1986 - Artist in Residence, Georgia Fine Arts Academy, Calhoun, GA

### PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

- 1993 to present- Assistant Professor, Head of Sculpture, School of Art, University of Denver, Denver, CO  
1993- Associate Faculty, Allan Hancock College, Santa Maria, CA  
1988 -91 Visiting Lecturer. (Sculpture,) Art Studio Department, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA  
1986, 1987 - Instructor at the Glassell School of Art, Fine Arts Museum of Houston, TX

### PUBLIC LECTURES AND VISITING ARTIST

- 1995 - Metro State College, Denver CO  
1994 - University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI • University of Denver, Denver, CO  
1993 - University of Florida, Gainesville, FL • University of Denver, Denver, CO  
1992 - Bennington College, Bennington, VT • University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT • Denison University, Granville, OH  
1991 - Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, CA  
1990 - Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Australia • University of Maryland, College Park, MD  
1989 - University of California, Santa Barbara. Santa Barbara, CA