

NEW ART examiner	APRIL 1990 Volume 17, No. 8
REVIEWS	

PENNSYLVANIA

Bill Walton

Morris Gallery,
Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts
Broad and Cherry Sts., Philadelphia, 215/972-7600

Larry Becker
43 N. 2nd St., Philadelphia, 215/925-5389

Throughout the '80s, Bill Walton has worked in a minimal format. In his mostly wall-mounted sculpture, Walton established a sense of place through specific correspondences between the visual qualities of his materials--the reflective depth of a metallic surface, the volume of a chunk of metal or wood, and the fluidity of paint--and the textures, volumes, and fluidities found in the landscape. He has always been well-respected among a small group familiar with his work, and since 1987 he has become known to a wider circle through important group shows at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia and Carnegie Mellon Gallery in Pittsburgh.

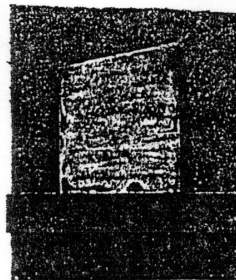
His particular sensitivity to the tactile qualities of metallic surfaces reflect his background in printing, which he teaches at Moore College of Art and Design. On a more abstract level, there is a close relationship between the way a printer disturbs the surface of a material and the way Walton's sculptures disturb the surface of a wall. Both work close-up with texture and shallow distances, sharp edges, and firm surfaces.

Overall, Walton's wall assemblages can be divided into two categories. The first is concerned with interrupted relationships. In works such as *Cinco Flat*, *First Day Lake*, *Iron Creek #3*, and *Red Rock*, elements of each piece are placed discontinuously, bringing the wall surface and the space of the room into the pieces as active elements. But in these works issues of installation often overtake the delicate statements of Walton's carefully selected materials and subtle surfaces, with the result that the works visually dissipate into the random character of the paint and floor coverings of the galleries.

Most successful is the second category of work, in which Walton unites color, texture, and material form in self-contained objects. In works such as *Unnamed Branch #2*, a chunk of pitted aluminum sits on a copper bar in front of a small piece of canvas painted teal blue. Texture, color, and shape combine with visual and tactile strength to speak with a quiet and authoritative voice. Here everything that's eliminated has been carefully considered, and, as in a haiku, the thought is distilled to the point where only essentials are left.

Price range: \$3,200 to \$5,800.

Tom Csaszar



BILL WALTON, "Unnamed Branch #2," aluminum, steel.
Photo courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of
the Fine Arts.