

Baltimore

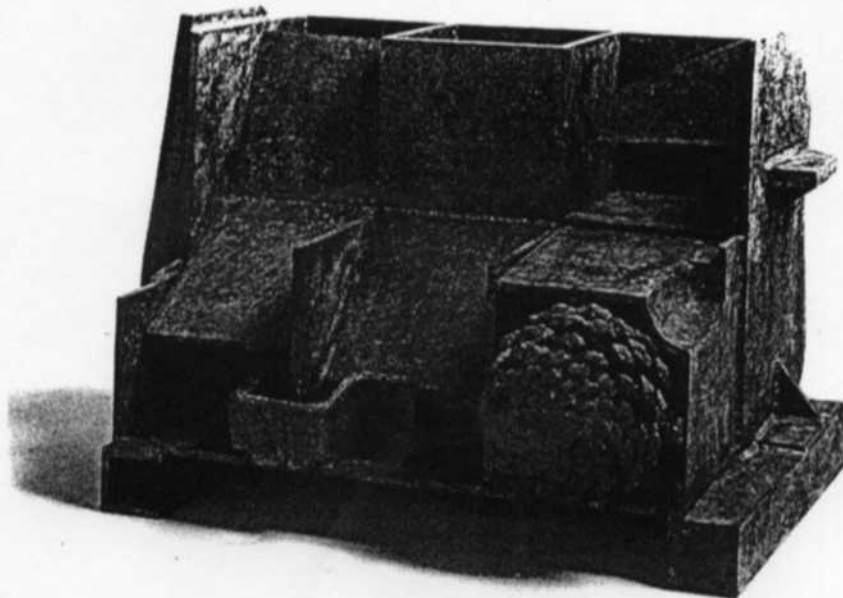
A city loaded with warehouse studios and alternative spaces, Baltimore is ideally suited to emerging artists, who often take greater risks than their Washington, D.C., counterparts. Four exhibits last fall went far in putting this city on the artistic map. C. Grimaldis Gallery presented a selection of Anthony Caro's recent bronzes. Titled "Sculpture Towards Architecture," the show revealed Caro's mastery in both finding subtle variations within the modernist vocabulary and breaking new ground.

This assuredness was most apparent in the small-scale works, which at times suggested archaeological sites or building complexes. In *Fire and Ice* (1992-94), for example, Caro created a series of interlocking, semiabstract forms at once rational and emotive, with references to landscape, still life and architecture, especially that of Le Corbusier. Shifting planes resulted in voids and interiors that played with perceptual access. Yet the rich patinas and textures of this and other works offered a visual feast that underscored their objective physicality and complemented their intellectual rigor.

Another, considerably less successful, modernist experiment is evident in the newly opened West Wing of the Baltimore Museum of Art. Designed by Bower Lewis Thrower/Architects of Philadelphia, the modular 35,000-square-foot addition to the neoclassical building by John Russell Pope features 16 galleries, including a fortresslike rotunda. Cool and slick on the outside, its inside attempts to reinterpret the notion of the "neutral" white box.

The modular design is in keeping with the 250 works by American and European artists of the postwar period hand-picked by Brenda Richardson. These works continue the theme of abstraction in the museum's earlier 20th-century holdings, and are disappointingly predictable on the whole.

Yet, in spite of the exhibit's limitations (there is no video or installation art) its unchronological installation does produce some interesting dialogues between works and their setting. In one suite, for example, rationality gets a run for its money: a Richard Artschwager wood and rubberized horsehair table contrasts with a Scott Burton mother-of-pearl inlaid table and an oversize Donald Judd plywood cube in the adjoining room.

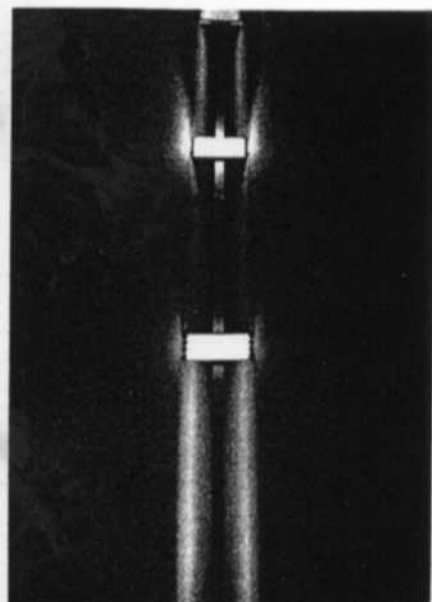


Anthony Caro, *Fire and Ice*, 1992-94. Brass, bronze, 15 1/2 x 23 3/4 x 17 1/4 in. Courtesy C. Grimaldis Gallery, Baltimore.



Willie Cole, *Products*, 1994. Photo: Edwin H. Reinsberg, courtesy the Baltimore Museum of Industry.

At the other end of the aesthetic spectrum was an exhibit by Willie Cole titled "Labor of Love," organized by The Contemporary At the Baltimore Museum of Industry—a fitting site to explore the issues of birth and population. The results of Cole's three-month residency were mixed. The exhibit was a success in its use of a central emotive metaphor, blurring the boundaries between art and life. But the orientation gallery, which recapped Baltimore's history in birth technologies and offered earlier examples of Cole's works, felt like an introductory lecture and encapsulated the



Dan Flavin, *Untitled (To Barnett Newman for Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf)*, 1993-94. Fluorescent tubes, steel, 228 x 24 x 8 in. Courtesy Baltimore Museum of Art.

larger problems of addressing multiple audiences.

Two galleries, labeled *People* and *Products*, made up the installation proper. The *People* gallery resembled a classroom, with an interactive version of "The New Word Order" (1993), a table with topical media clippings, including material on the Norplant controversy which inspired the project, and a glass globe containing cast-glass babies.

The real drama occurred in the *Products* gallery. Here, some 1,000 bread babies and their molds bore witness to the