



HEAVY METAL

JUNKED METAL TRANSFORMS INTO ARTISTIC SCULPTURE

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Austere in form, muscular in execution, Mark Cesark's welded assemblages of found metal from discarded cars and scrap yards abstractly express nature. On junkyard expeditions in search of materials, Cesark is drawn by color and unusual painterly wear patterns, which give his works their textural variety. With a cutting torch, he slices from the flanks of rusted-out cars and harvests industrial plate metal. "I'm a purist when it comes to the found object and the surface: I don't alter the surface in any way," says Cesark.

Cesark, age 40, and his wife K., a ceramics artist, were attracted to Colorado 10 years ago by family and by their love of the mountains. They came from Boston, where they each pursued a master of fine arts degree at Massachusetts College of Art. Prior to that, Cesark, born in New Jersey, had fueled his passion for sculpture in the independence of a home studio, even as he apprenticed for the monumental sculptor John Van Alstein in upstate New York.

Cesark stockpiles pieces of metal at his studio in Carbondale, sometimes for years, until they find their place. It takes time and arduous effort to compose his cool, restrained creations. Often working outdoors to cut, grind and weld, Cesark fashions each rough piece into a flat panel with a tray edge, clamps the panels together, then welds the seams. "To finish the piece I put a steel frame all around, hammer that metal over the frame and weld it together. It's almost like the way a canvas wraps around a stretcher." The pieces are graphic, almost flat. "Painterly sculpture" perhaps best describes the competing tendencies of his work. Cesark enjoys the paradoxes: "I like to remove the viewers from what it was and then, at the end, I like to bring them to its origins."

By arresting the decomposition of the metal, by composing it in a work of art, he somehow freezes it in time. "Once you take the metal out of the elements, put sealer on and bring it indoors, it remains stuck in time." Still, Cesark keeps track of the circumstances and provenance (if that isn't too lofty a word for junkyard metal) of his finds, often providing a written narrative of each finished work. "That way people understand what caused the markings," he says. "I think that history is important, to understand the transformation of the metal."