

The background of the cover is a white, three-dimensional sculpture of a classical building facade. It features a pediment with a decorative frieze, columns, and a central circular opening. Inside this opening, a human skull is visible. The sculpture is set against a dark, reflective surface.

# TIM WHITEN

LIFE & WORK

by Carolyn Bell Farrell

ART  
CANADA  
INSTITUTE  
INSTITUT  
DE L'ART  
CANADIEN

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## Contents

03

**Biography**

27

**Key Works**

55

**Significance & Critical Issues**

70

**Style & Technique**

84

**Where to See**

93

**Notes**

102

**Glossary**

112

**Sources & Resources**

120

**About the Author**

121

**Copyright & Credits**



# BIOGRAPHY

**Born in a poor, segregated Black suburb of Detroit, Tim Whiten (b.1941) overcame oppressive economic and social conditions to become an award-winning artist and educator who inspired generations of Canadian artists. From an early age, his parents emphasized the importance of education, service, and a strong spiritual foundation, which shaped his unwavering “belief in things beyond oneself, beyond the visible world.” For more than five decades, he has drawn from his ancestral heritage, mysticism, and philosophy to produce powerfully evocative cultural objects and ritual performances that explore the**

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

**nature of the human condition. Endowed with symbolic and visceral impact, they ignite the mythic imagination, transcending time and place.**

## EARLY LIFE IN MICHIGAN

Grover Timothy (Tim) Whiten, the third son and youngest child of Tom and Mary Emma Whiten, was born on August 13, 1941, in Inkster, Michigan, a town southwest of Detroit.<sup>1</sup> Tom Whiten, one of five siblings, was born in 1894 on a plantation in Mount Meigs, Alabama. After working as a sharecropper with his brother, he left Alabama at the age of thirteen for Chicago, where he took a job with the railroad as a porter. He later moved to Detroit, finding employment as a labourer at the Ford Motor Company (Ford), advancing through the company's ranks until his retirement in 1959.



LEFT: Tim Whiten, school graduation photograph, 1949, photographer unknown.  
RIGHT: Tom Whiten holding Tim at the first house built by Tom, 3502 Irene Street, Inkster, Michigan, 1941, photographer unknown.

Tom's curiosity and ambition were an inspiration to his young son. Tom became a licensed carpenter and a stone mason, skills he developed with the support of fellow members of the African American chapters of the Masonic order. While he possessed only a sixth-grade education, he was fluent in five languages (Greek, Italian, Polish, Czech, and English), understood higher mathematics, and played several instruments proficiently. He had hoped to become a court interpreter but was considered an unacceptable candidate because of his race. Tom was also a respected community leader, holding positions such as Deacon of the Springhill Baptist Church and President of the Planning Commission responsible for the stewardship of Inkster Township in its formation as a city. In honour of his civic contributions, a subdivision bears his name.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



LEFT: Tom Whiten standing in front of the house he had built, taken in the late fall, with him wearing a fine Stetson hat, a long black woolen coat, and fine leather gloves, Inkster, Michigan, 1930, photographer unknown. RIGHT: The Whiten family, with Mary Emma Whiten standing with the old Ford Model T that Tom Whiten owned at the time, 1935, photographer unknown.

Tim Whiten's mother was a role model too. Mary Emma Glaze was born in Tignall, Georgia, in 1914, and grew up in a family of sharecroppers. At the age of fourteen, when her parents died, she was placed in the care of her elder sisters. Two years later, she travelled north to Michigan to work as a servant in residential homes until she married Tom, twenty years her senior. Mary took night courses toward a high school diploma, which she earned in 1958, and gained skills as a butcher through a co-operative store in Inkster. She worked as a manager of a supermarket meat department and later as a pharmacist's assistant in Sinai Hospital of Detroit until her retirement. Mary also became a matriarch of the local Baptist church and served on its outreach committees.

Tom and Mary moved to Michigan in the early 1900s as part of the Great Migration, during which millions of African Americans from the rural southern states travelled to the urban north, Midwest, and west to build a better life for themselves and their families. In Michigan, they found solace from the hardships of life in the southern states. They built a home for themselves and their family, making ends meet by harvesting vegetables from their garden; sewing their own clothing; and butchering, salt-curing, and hanging meat in their attic. Tom's fluency in various languages helped foster friendships with their culturally diverse neighbours and his colleagues from Ford, who lent their skills to help build the Whitens's houses in Inkster.



Mary Emma Whiten, the day she received her high school diploma, 3427 Irene Street, Inkster, Michigan, 1958, photographer unknown.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

Overcoming the limitations into which you are born and creating opportunities for advancement were fundamental values held by the Whiten family. As Tim observes, "I firmly believe that many things in childhood identify the realities of who and what we really are."<sup>2</sup> These familial experiences inform the artist's practice. Later works pay tribute to his parents and the enduring influence of their attitudes toward labour and craftsmanship, including *T After Tom*, 2002, a partial glass brick wall and a series of glass hand tools, and *Mary's Permeating Sign*, 2006, a glass rolling pin resting on a pillow.



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *T After Tom*, 2002, fabricated and sandcast glass, limestone, brass, variable dimensions, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Mary's Permeating Sign*, 2006, edition 2/2, cast and sandblasted glass, 61 x 11.4 x 11.4 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton.

Tim was born at 3502 Irene Street, a two-bedroom house in Inkster. He was delivered by Dr. Young, the family physician who had delivered Tim's elder brothers, Leonard and Jim. The artist recalls what was said to be his father's proposal to his mother: "Mary, if you marry me, I'll build you a house. . . . It was a labour of love and just before it was fully complete, they were married."<sup>3</sup> Tom later added a grape arbour, fruit trees, and a vegetable garden, as well as an adjoining garage for his car. This was the first of two homes he built for his family; the second was a three-bedroom brick house on the same street where, for the first time, Tim had a bed of his own instead of sharing with his brothers.

Ford helped establish Inkster as a working-class subdivision of Detroit for its predominantly Black employees and their families in the 1930s. Reflecting on the formation of his hometown, the artist comments: "Ford had a large contingent of Black workers employed at its Rouge Factory in Detroit. Dearborn, Michigan, was the closest town to the factory but it was where the executives of the company lived. It was populated by all whites who had no intention of living with Blacks. The solution was for Ford to help instigate a settlement for its Black workers in order to prevent them from living in Dearborn. I remember a newspaper article written by the then-mayor of Dearborn in which he wrote, 'We don't want your little hottentots in our city.' Thus, Inkster was created, segregating the Black population, many who worked for Ford Motor Company."<sup>4</sup>



Ford Model A Assembly Line, Rouge Plant, Dearborn, 1928, photographer unknown.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

Despite living in a “rough segregated area filled with crime and poverty,”<sup>5</sup> Whiten recalls that the local Black community was composed of business owners as well as professionals, including doctors and dentists, several of whom took an interest in his development. A bright student and an attentive listener, Tim attended Carver Elementary School, Fellrath Junior High School, and Inkster High School (which he graduated from in 1959). The pharmacist William Eldon, who hired Tim as a teenager, mentored him in mathematics. When Tim was in graduate school, Eldon also gave him a car, facilitating his travel back to university and the transport of art materials and supplies.

Tom Whiten’s younger sister Harriett Beasley, known to Tim as Aunt Bea, was viewed as the “matron of the village” and highly respected, as Tim recalls. She owned and operated a restaurant with a handyman named Mr. Charleston on Harrison Avenue, a short walk from the Whiten family home, which served authentic southern cuisine: fried chicken, barbecued ribs, collard greens, cornbread, stewed cabbage, eggs and hominy grits, sweet potato pie, and Hoppin’ John, a dish made from black-eyed peas and rice. As a preschooler, Tim spent his days playing at the restaurant while his aunt prepared meals and waited on customers. A healer, Aunt Bea tended to her nephew’s minor ailments and injuries with natural remedies.



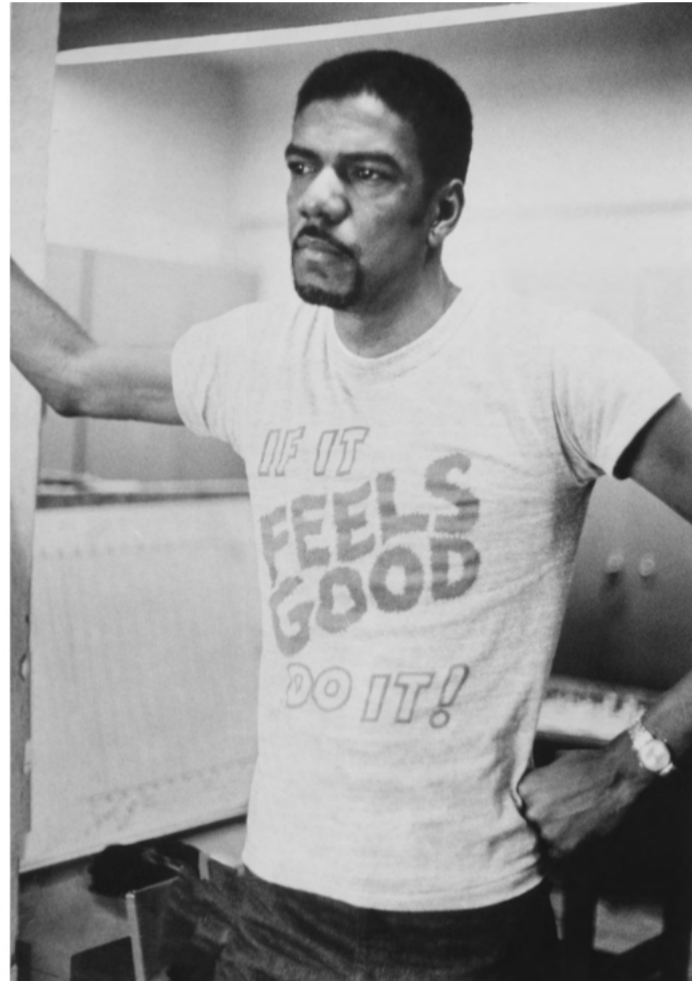
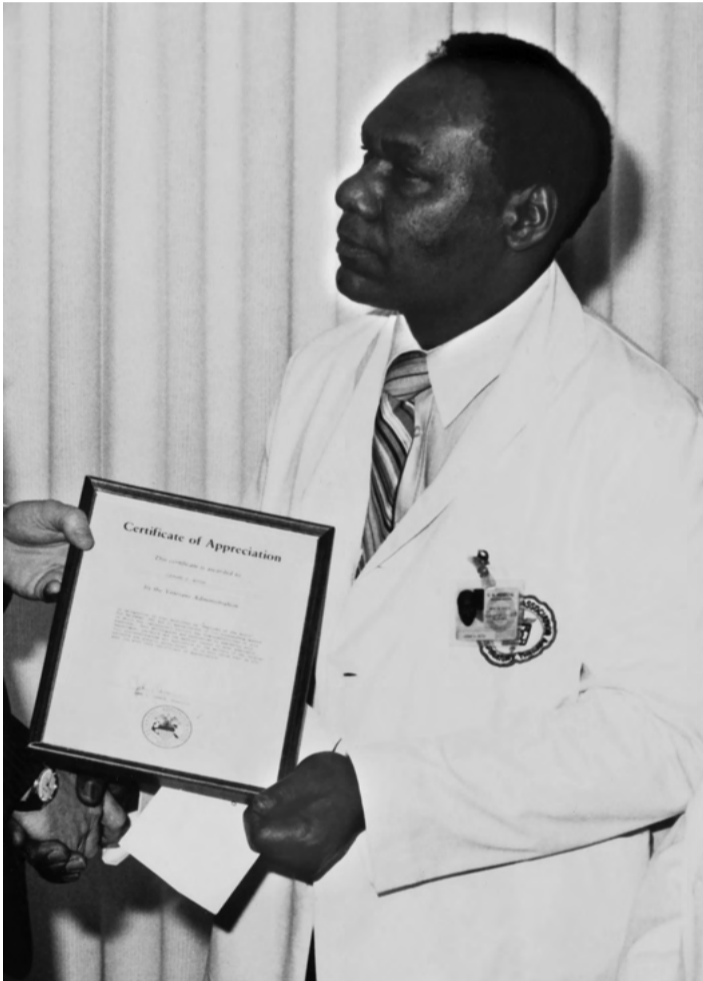
LEFT: Tim Whiten, school graduation photograph, 1959, photographer unknown.  
RIGHT: Inkster High School, pictured in the 1959 Inkster High School yearbook, photographer unknown.

Mr. Charleston, who worked for Aunt Bea, was an accomplished storyteller and a talented folk artist. His ability to turn common materials into unique creations charmed and inspired young Tim. For example, he made radio and TV consoles from tree branches spray-painted gold, silver, and black. Whiten’s artistic practice of transforming everyday objects and materials into provocative cultural objects grew in part out of these early experiences. His attenuated unicycle *Clycieun*, 1991, is a prime example.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

In later years, Tim listened to live and recorded music at Aunt Bea's home. She believed that music of any kind, especially Black Gospel music, could "open up the soul." She invited local musicians to jam in her garage on weekends, including Tim's elder brother Jim, who became a classically trained jazz musician. However, Tim's early exposure to other cultural experiences was extremely limited: "Academically, culturally, and economically, the world outside my experience was unknown."<sup>6</sup>



LEFT: Tim Whiten's eldest brother Leonard Whiten receiving an award at his retirement, St. Joseph's Hospital, Ann Arbor, 1989, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Tim Whiten's elder brother, Jim Whiten, a jazz musician, 1974, photographer unknown.

## AN EDUCATION IN ART

Whiten's first engagement with art happened after graduating high school. Supported by his parents, he attended Central Michigan University (CMU) in Mount Pleasant, an affordable state university with high standards. There, the teachings of his professor, the influential philosopher Oscar Oppenheimer, inspired his lifelong interest in psychology and phenomenology. Considered by the artist to be his "intellectual father," Oppenheimer, who was a Quaker, introduced Whiten to the world of ideas, of art, and of the spiritual. Whiten had intended to become a psychologist. As his academic adviser, Oppenheimer suggested he take courses in art. He reasoned that Whiten should explore the "conditions of becoming" found in expressions throughout the world to aid in the therapeutic process and in his development as a counsellor and educator. "At the time, I never thought about making art as a vocation," Whiten comments.<sup>7</sup>



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

During his undergraduate studies, Whiten took studio courses in landscape painting and figurative sculpture working from the model. At the same time, he taught extracurricular studio art at CMU and later taught students at Maude Kerns Art Center, a private art school in Eugene, Oregon. Under Professor Katherine Ux, he enrolled in a fundamentals course in drawing. For Ux, a graduate of the progressive Cranbrook Academy of Art, drawing was more than a preparatory tool in the production of a work of art: it was a tool of the imagination “not limited to the demonstration of physical reality but approached as a possibility beyond representation.” Quoting Paul Klee (1879-1940), she would say, “A drawing is simply a line going for a walk.”<sup>8</sup> Ux opened the door to drawing as a tool to understand human consciousness, a gesture to be shared, to be experienced by others. Whiten’s later drawing practice demonstrates these influences—evident in his 1981 series *Magic Gestures: Lites and Incantations*, where seemingly random mark-making captures the rhythmic gestures of the body.



LEFT: Central Michigan University students crossing Warriner Mall on their way to class, Mount Pleasant, 1960s, photographer unknown, Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant. RIGHT: Dr. Oscar Oppenheimer, date unknown, photographer unknown, Clarke Historical Society, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant.



With Ux’s encouragement, Whiten took studio courses under the professors and artists Robert Burkhart, Ray Nitschke, George Manupelli (1931-2014), and John Zeilman. Tours of art museums in New York City during an intensive four-week travel course led by Manupelli in 1963 also opened his eyes to contemporary visual art. These experiences were augmented by access to *Arts Magazine*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Art International*, and other periodicals, lent to him by the artist Virginia Seitz, who oversaw the extracurricular arts program at CMU.

Furthermore, Seitz exposed Whiten to African, Inuit, and Indigenous material cultures, not part of the Western art historical canon at that time. For Whiten, whose ancestral lineage can be traced to the Kingdom of Kongo, the cultural objects and images from Central Africa particularly sparked his interest in understanding his own heritage and the attendant spiritual values these objects embodied.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



A Bottle Tree in the Oaklawn Garden room of the Gibson Garden, Dallas, date unknown, photograph by David H. Gibson, Garden Club of America Collection, Archives of American Gardens, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Whiten has incorporated cobalt-blue glass in his works, referencing the tradition of using the material in the Kingdom of Kongo and in the southern United States.

Uninspired by the representational landscape and figurative traditions that surrounded his academic life, Whiten turned to the work of Russian Constructivists such as Naum Gabo (1890–1977), Vladimir Tatlin (1885–1953), and Alexander Rodchenko (1891–1956), underscored by the tenets of structuralism and semiotics; the lyrical abstract expressionistic paintings of Arshile Gorky (1904–1948); and the European artists of the avant-garde such as Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), and Piet Mondrian (1872–1944), whose explorations were predicated on the nature of the spiritual conveyed through cultural expression.

In early January 1964, Whiten earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Arts and Sciences, with combined majors in psychology, philosophy, visual art, and military science. In the spring of that year, he started graduate studies at the School of Architecture and Allied Arts at the University of Oregon (UO) in Eugene, studying fine art under Czech Constructivist artist Jan Zach (1914–1986), whom he considers his “artistic father.” Zach, chair of the sculpture department, had studied art and design in Europe and was versed in the artistic movements abroad, which Whiten was drawn to.

During this period, Whiten pursued his interests in phenomenology under Professor Bertram Jessup and met fellow graduate student Anne Trueblood Brodzky (1932–2018), who became a lifelong friend and colleague. Through the study of structuralism and semiotics, he also explored the nature of language as a mode of understanding art. Augmenting his experience as an educator,



Robert B. Miller, *Jan Zach - Sculptor*, 1980, gelatin silver print, 26.7 x 25.8 cm, Portland Art Museum.

# TIM WHITEN

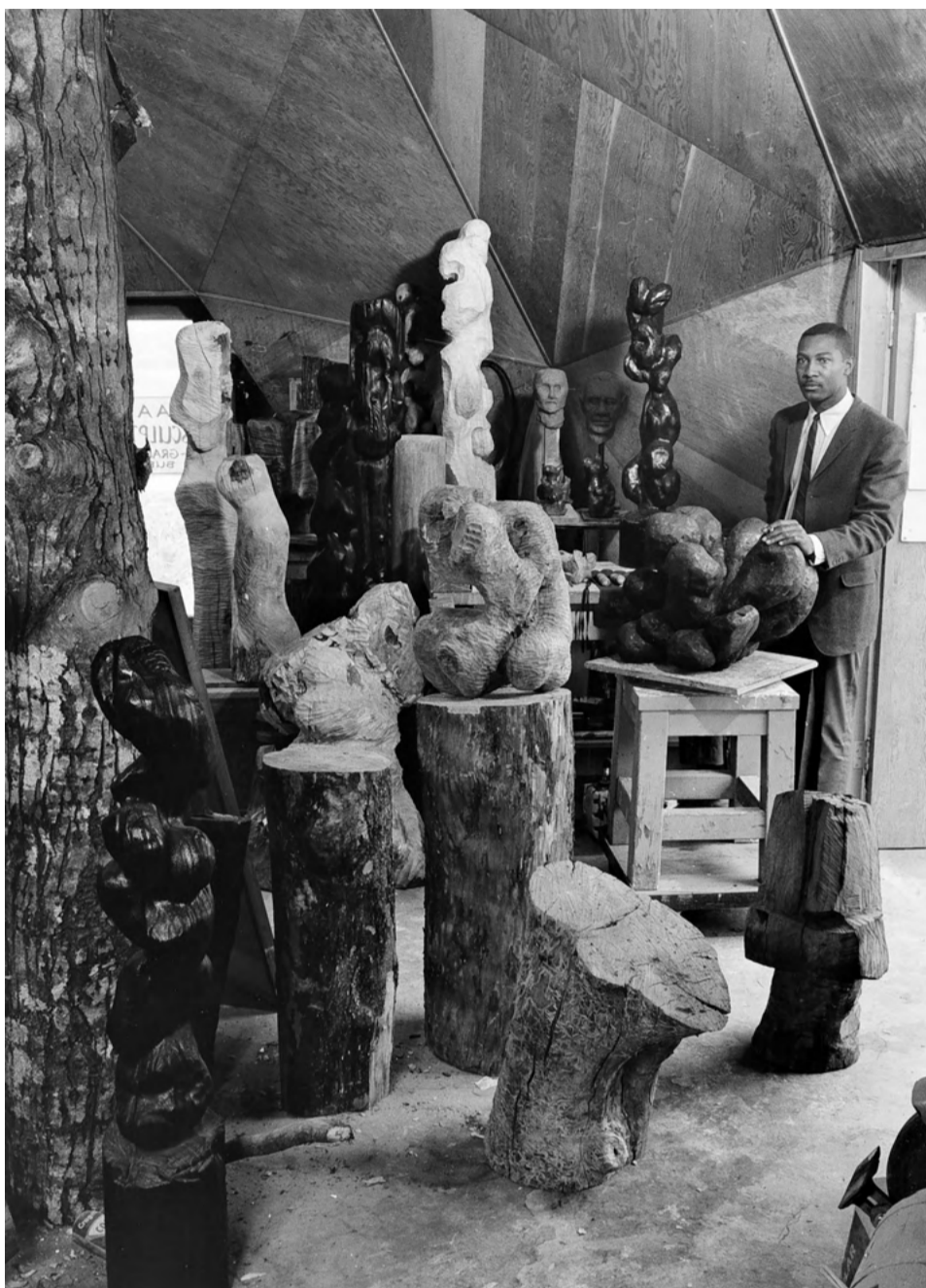
Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

Whiten taught sculpture fundamentals and second-year sculpture at the UO.

While in graduate school, Whiten's studio practice focused on carving directly in wood and stone, producing abstract sculptures inspired by geometric and organic forms, with contours suggestive of works by Jean Arp (1886-1966) and Henry Moore (1898-1986). Drawn to the materiality and formal language of European modernist artists, Whiten was especially influenced by the carved sculptures of Constantin Brâncuși (1876-1957) as well as the "readymades" of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968). His research into the material culture and ritual processes of African, Indigenous, and Oceanic peoples further informed his artistic development, as can be seen in his later ritual performances, such as *Metamorphosis*, 1978-89.

In June of 1966, Whiten received a Master of Fine Arts degree with a specialization in sculpture, having completed additional course work in phenomenology, art history, and printmaking (etching/lithography).

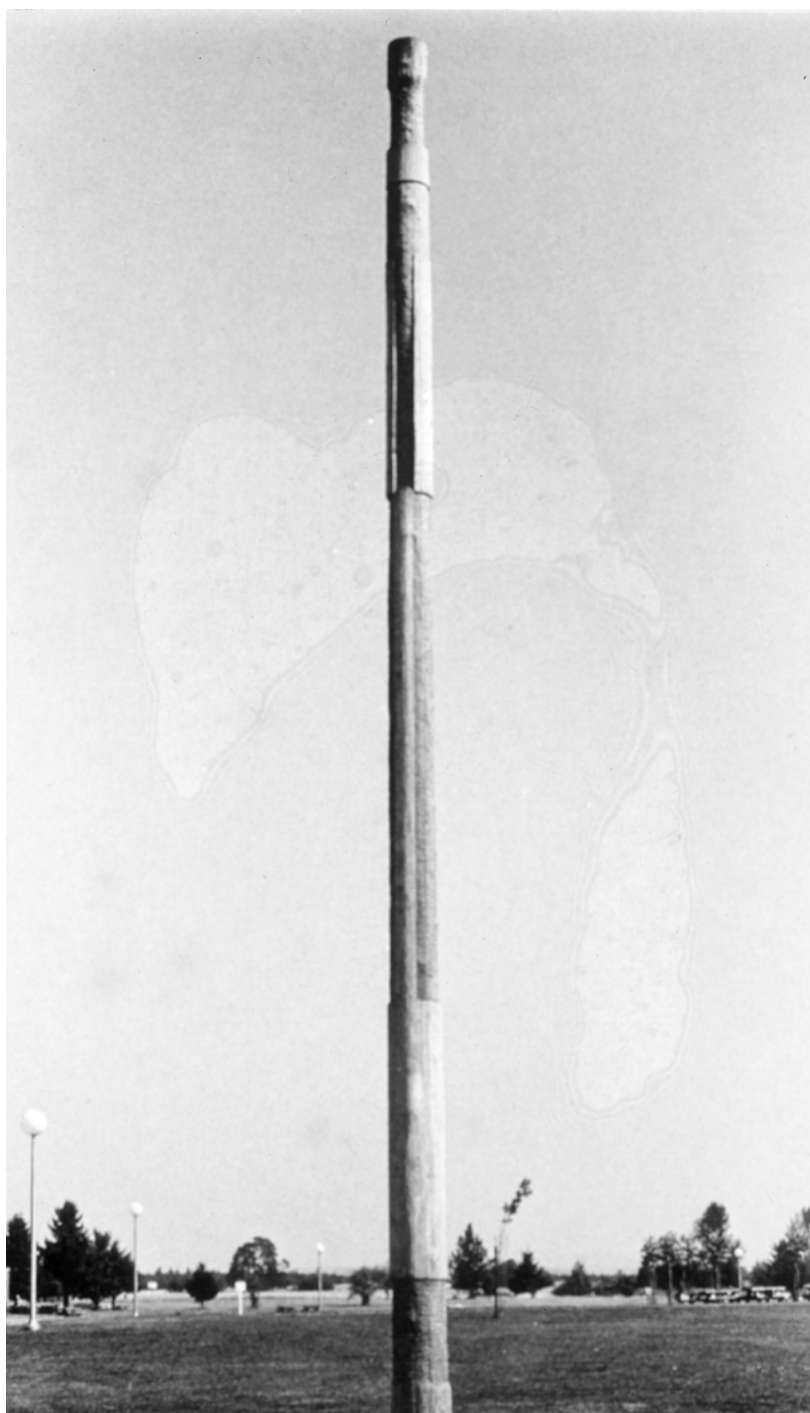
Upon graduation, he was encouraged by his graduate adviser Zach to create a public artwork. Erected in Jasper State Recreation Site near Eugene, *Cosmological I* was accomplished with donated materials and installation support, but without a fee. Modelled after Brâncuși's *Endless Column*, version 1, 1918, a physical manifestation of spiritual ascension, Whiten's monumental totem-like sculpture—a 45-foot-high cedar pole—acted as a vertical landmark in a context otherwise devoid of directional signs, pointing to that which is beyond what we see and know.



Tim Whiten with his own sculptures, University of Oregon, Eugene, 1966, photograph by Jerry Dodd.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Cosmological I*, 1966, cedar, 13.7 m high, Jasper State Recreation Site near Eugene, Oregon. RIGHT: Constantin Brâncuși, *Endless Column*, version 1, 1918, oak, 203.2 x 25.1 x 24.5 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Succession Brancusi - All rights reserved (ADAGP, Paris) / CARCC Ottawa 2024.

## MILITARY SERVICE AND IMMIGRATION TO CANADA

That same summer, Whiten entered active military duty. He had received a commission in the U.S. Army, Rank/2nd Lieutenant, in 1964 but deferred active duty until after graduate studies. In July 1966, he began specialized training as an Adjutant General Officer in Indianapolis, Indiana. In the fall of 1966, he was assigned to the 381st Replacement Company, Fayetteville, North Carolina, home of the 82nd Airborne, for staging in preparation for unit shipment to South Vietnam.

Whiten began his foreign tour of duty in January of 1967 in Long Binh Post, South Vietnam, and returned to the United States in December of 1967, where he was assigned to the U.S. Army processing station in Olympia, Washington, at the 6th Army Armed Forces Entrance and Examination Services. He was

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

released from active duty in June of 1968, after achieving the rank of captain with letters of commendation, and honourably discharged in 1970.



Captain Tim Whiten with his Austin Healey, outside Bachelor's Officer's Quarters, Fort Lewis, Washington, 1968, photograph by William Brickey.

Whiten's faith in the United States was deeply shaken by his experiences during the Vietnam War (1955-75), the bigotry he encountered while in the military, and the appalling treatment of U.S. veterans upon their return. The assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy in 1968, and the violence, racial segregation, and riots at the height of the civil rights movement, further exacerbated his profound disillusionment. He realized that living in the U.S. could quickly become intolerable.

Anne Trueblood Brodzky had immigrated to Canada in 1965 and two years later became the editor of *artscanada*, the country's leading arts magazine. She encouraged Whiten to apply for a teaching position in the Humanities Division of the Faculty of Arts at York University (York) in Toronto, a city where racial discrimination and tensions were less prominent than in the U.S. Whiten was interviewed by John (Jack) Saywell, Dean of the Faculty of Arts; Henry Best, Registrar; and artist Ronald Bloore (1925-2009), Visual Arts Representative and Professor in the Division of Humanities. An accomplished candidate in many respects—he was an experienced educator with a strong background in visual art as well as the humanities—Whiten was offered the position, which he immediately accepted. He immigrated to Canada in August of 1968 with his fiancée, Colleen Bush, whom he had met during graduate studies and would marry in Toronto that September.

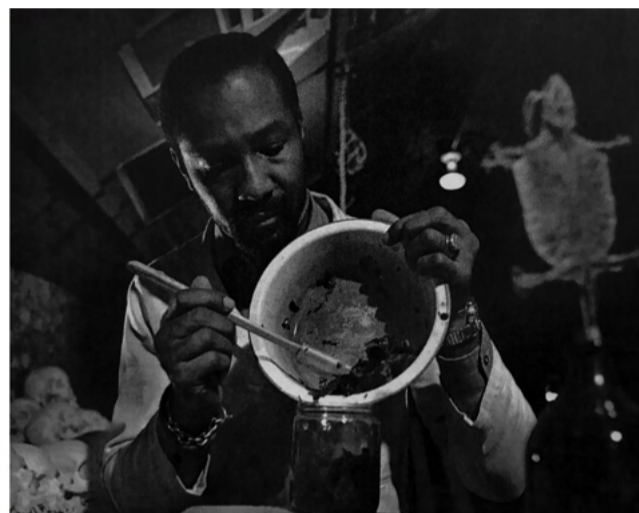


York University students stroll outside Founders College, Toronto, c.1965, photographer unknown.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

In 1969, Whiten became a founding member of the Faculty of Fine Arts at York and the newly formed Department of Visual Arts, with a cross appointment to the Faculty of Arts.<sup>9</sup> His first course was entitled “Imagination and Perception,” with professors Michael Creal and Bloore as co-lecturers. As the tutorial leader, Whiten was responsible for generating dialogue around the lecture material, reviewing written assignments, and grading papers and exams. Additionally, he was made a fellow of Vanier College and was given an office and the use of two workrooms there as Director of Extracurricular Activities in Art, as well as a personal studio in Stong House with Bloore, which was also used as an extracurricular studio space by students.



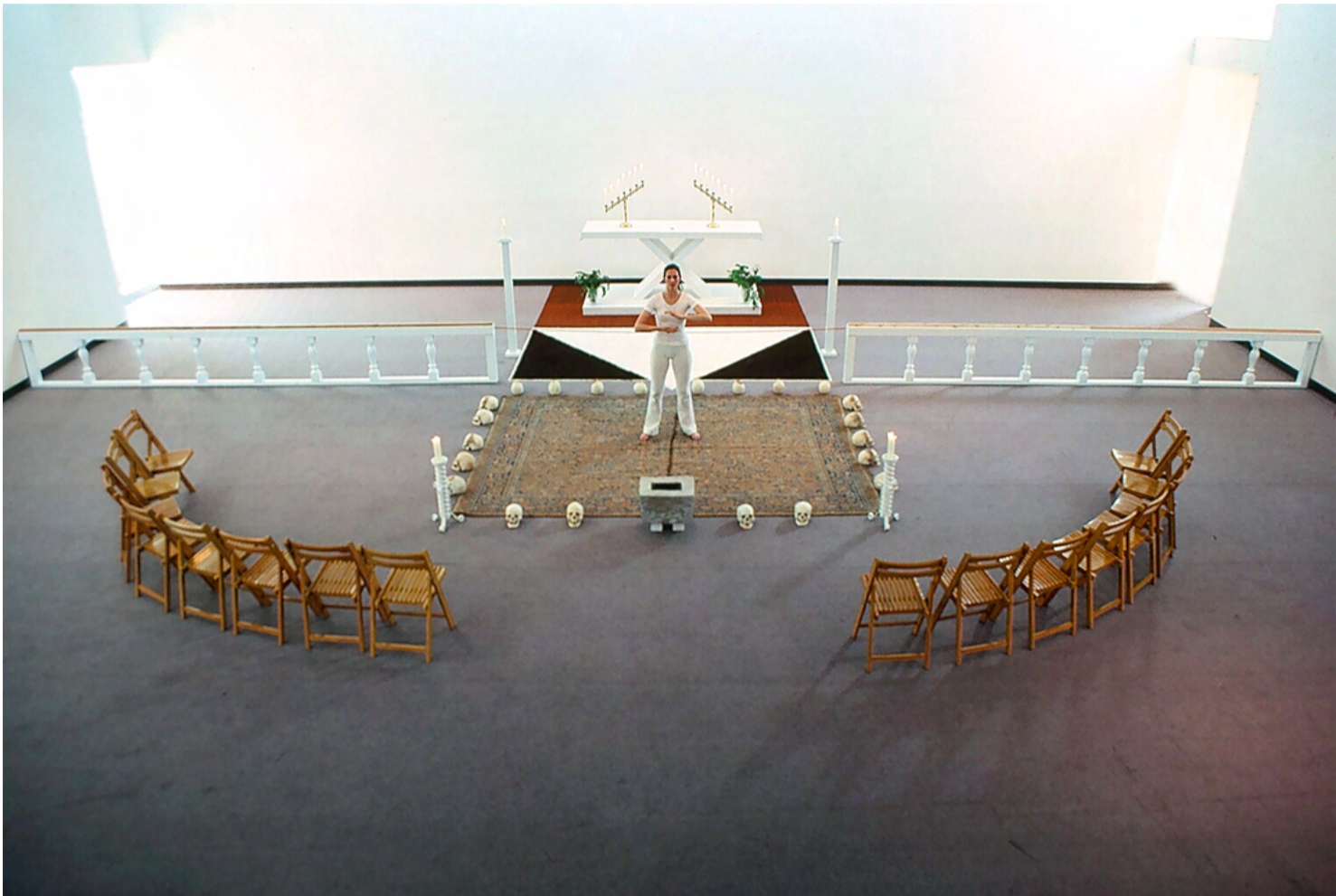
LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Untitled*, 1972, leather and stone, 28 x 29.2 x 25.4 x 28 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.  
RIGHT: Tim Whiten in his studio, Toronto, 1974, photograph by Eberhard Otto.

With colleague and artist Ted Bieler (b.1938)—a practising Buddhist who shared Whiten’s interest in the spiritual and who possessed advanced technical skills—Whiten created the sculpture program at York.<sup>10</sup> Like Katherine Ux, who was so influential to Whiten at Central Michigan University, Bieler had studied at the Cranbrook Academy of Art; he was also a former student of Jan Zach, who had taught him drawing as a teenager. Other notable colleagues at York included artists George Manupelli and Vera Frenkel (b.1938), and African scholar Zdenka Volavka, who understood the vital connection between Whiten’s studio practice and African sculpture.

Whiten taught at York for close to forty years, mentoring generations of Canadian artists. Starting as a sessional instructor, he achieved the rank of Professor in 1974 and Full Professor in 1990. During his tenure, he was Director of the Master of Fine Arts Program in Visual Arts (1974–76); and Chair of the Department of Visual Arts (1984–86; 2000–2001). He also became an Oxford-certified ESL instructor in 1993 to better serve the university’s increasingly diverse student population. Whiten received the Distinguished Leadership Award for Extraordinary Service to the Arts from the American Biographical Institute in 1989 and the Faculty of Fine Arts Dean’s Teaching Award in 2000. He retired from full-time teaching in 2007 and was appointed Professor Emeritus.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



Tim Whiten, with Julie Freeman, *Voler Volé*, 1979, ritual installation and performance with human skulls, variable dimensions, York University Fine Arts, Markham.

## INNOVATIONS IN DRAWING

During his early years teaching at York University, Whiten developed a large body of works on paper, employing drawing as a tool to expand consciousness and to facilitate perception of a world beyond the physical. At that time in Canada, drawing was considered a preparatory practice, a stage in the production of a painting or sculpture—simply put, a means to an end rather than an end in itself. The American art world held more progressive views.

Whiten's large, untitled graphite works on paper were included in a major drawing exhibition in 1970 at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, presented alongside works by notable contemporary American artists such as Claes Oldenburg (1929–2022) and Eva Hesse (1936–1970), who, like Whiten, engaged gestural processes of repetition. As Whiten recalls, "My gestural graphite works arose from both a phenomenal and numinal awareness, while operating as a residue of consciousness."<sup>11</sup> This exhibition captured the attention of esteemed American art critic and curator John Noel Chandler in his 1970 *artscanada* article, "Drawing Reconsidered."<sup>12</sup>

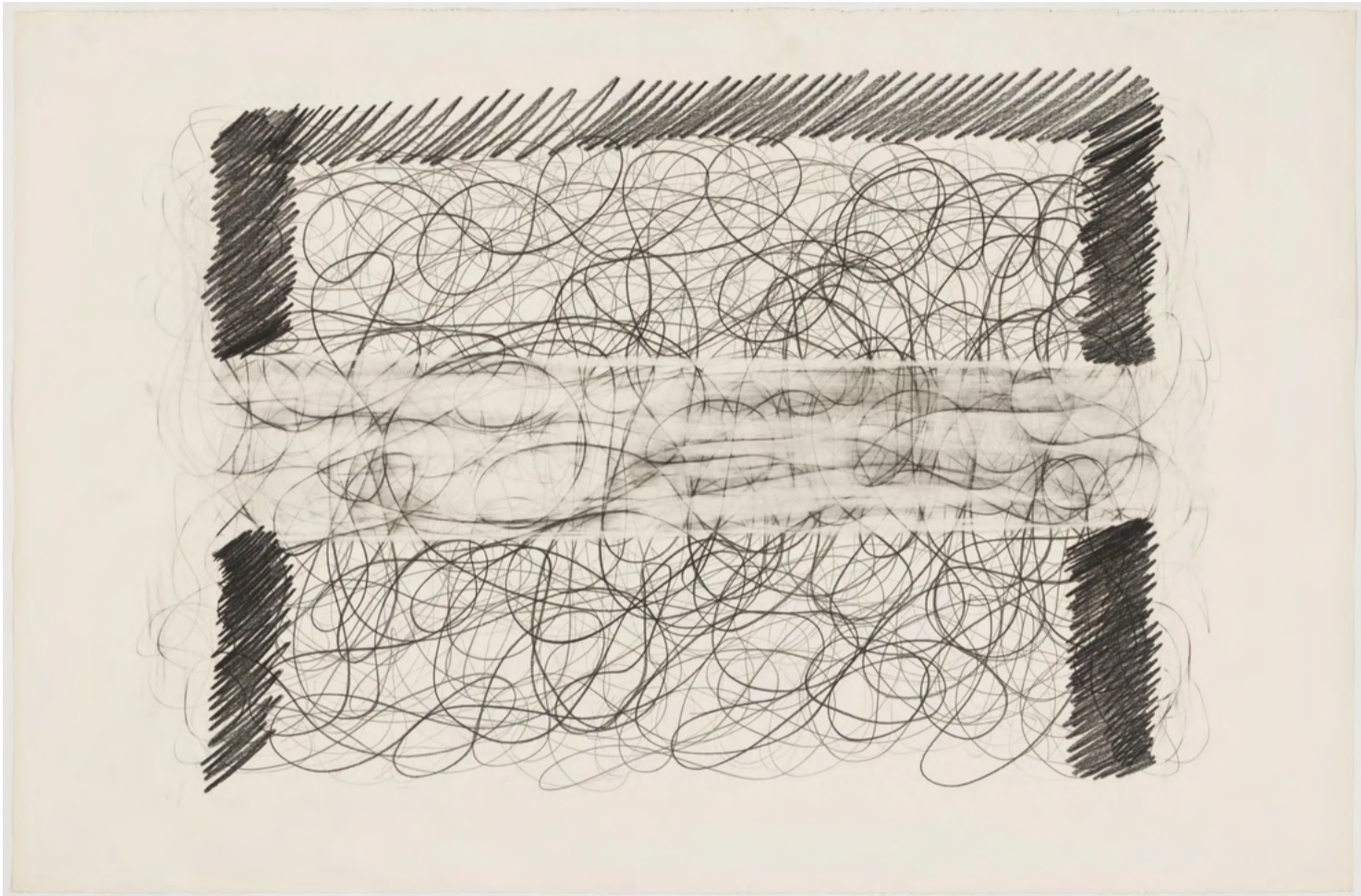


LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Void I*, 1970, jellied graphite on paper, 48.3 x 63.5 cm, University of Toronto Collection. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Long Silence*, 1971, graphite on paper, 63.5 x 96.5 cm, University of Toronto Collection.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

Later that year, Whiten's works on paper were featured in a two-person show in Toronto with painter Eric Cameron (b.1935) at the Nightingale Gallery. Whiten's inaugural solo show, *Meditation Metamorphosis and Psalm*, which also comprised his graphite drawings, was held at Erindale College, University of Toronto, in 1971. For the artist, "these works on paper refer to the experiences of another world. They form the detritus of knowledge, the image impressions of human memory."<sup>13</sup>



Tim Whiten, *Spanner*, 1975, graphite on paper, 63.5 x 96.5 cm, CU Art Museum, University of Colorado Boulder.

Whiten's first commercial representation was by the Jerrold Morris Gallery in Toronto, an affiliation launched in 1972 with an exhibition entitled *Tim Whiten: Sculpture and Drawings*, presented in collaboration with the Art Gallery of York University.<sup>14</sup> In the 1972 catalogue foreword, curator Michael Greenwood describes Whiten's work as possessing a "phenomenological rather than a symbolical or associational presence. We can exist in them, and with them, and through them, experiencing them like the fear of darkness or the sun's rays upon our skin. We can hear their silent music and sense their stirring beneath the cloak of stillness."<sup>15</sup>



# TIM WHITEN

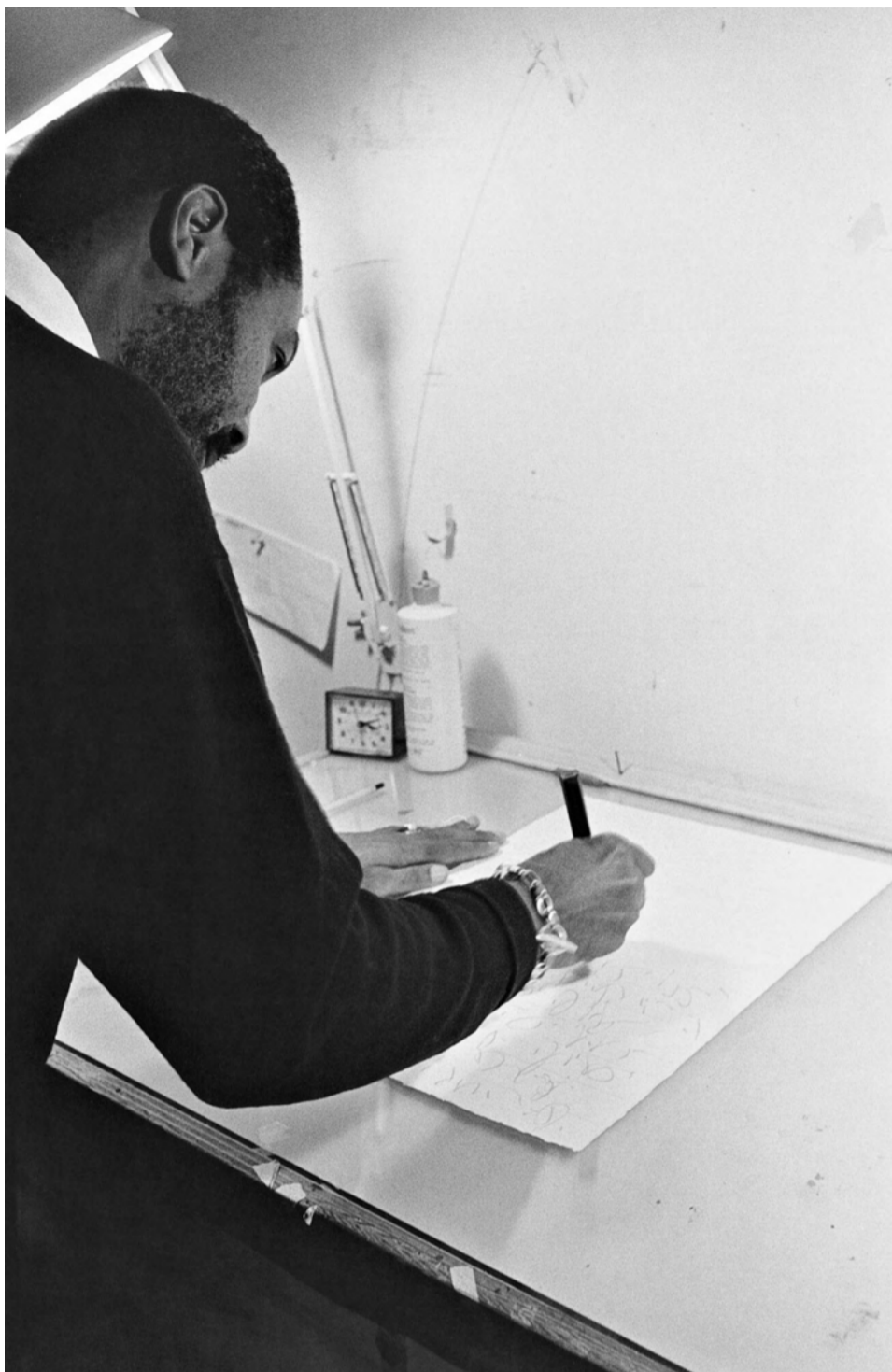
Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

Using graphite on paper, Whiten's heavily saturated surfaces perceptually change from black and white to colour, allowing one to see colour as the result of black and white: a direct phenomenal understanding of perceiving colour where there was none—an approach continued in his recent series *Saying His Name...*, 2017. In producing other drawings, such as *Untitled*, 1973, in the collection of the University of Toronto, Whiten erased the graphite surface, allowing the residue to create visual impressions. As the artist comments, "What is left is a memory, an eidetic experience, another aspect of consciousness, which is all things, including colour."<sup>16</sup>

Whiten's works, especially his two-dimensional works, continued to be exhibited across the United States, presented in venues in New York City, Boston, Buffalo, Atlanta, and Washington. Significant group exhibitions featuring his work include those at the Alternative Museum, New York City (*Post-Modernist Metaphors*, 1981); the Visual Arts Museum, New York City (*Sculptural Density*, 1981); and the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin (*Remains to be Seen*, 1983).

## A MATERIAL TURN

While maintaining his drawing practice, Whiten also began producing installations and ritual performances employing a variety of natural materials. In the 1970s and 1980s, his relationship with African cultural influences and materiality deepened. Human skulls, bones, branches, and animal hides became incorporated into his three-dimensional works. After Jerrold Morris retired in 1975, Whiten was represented by Paul Wong at Bau-Xi Gallery, with locations in Toronto as well as Vancouver. His first exhibition with Bau-Xi in 1976 included *Ark*, a work with fifty human skulls (purchased from a credited medical supplier) and presented in a large basket—a meditation on life, death, war, mortality, presence, and absence.



Tim Whiten signing a print by Jerry Shiner's studio, The Art Printer, Toronto, 1981, photograph by Michael Glassbourg.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

In 1980, Whiten presented *Metamorphosis* at Bau-Xi. In this ritual performance installation, the artist donned a bearskin pelt and then struggled to free himself without using his hands, a gesture of rebirth and transformation. *Stage II* of the *Metamorphosis* project, 1978-89, comprising the evidence of this ritual process, was later acquired by the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) and presented in *Toronto: Tributes + Tributaries, 1971-1989*, a major 2016 exhibition that featured more than one hundred artworks by sixty-five artists and collectives.

During this period, Whiten created several major outdoor projects.

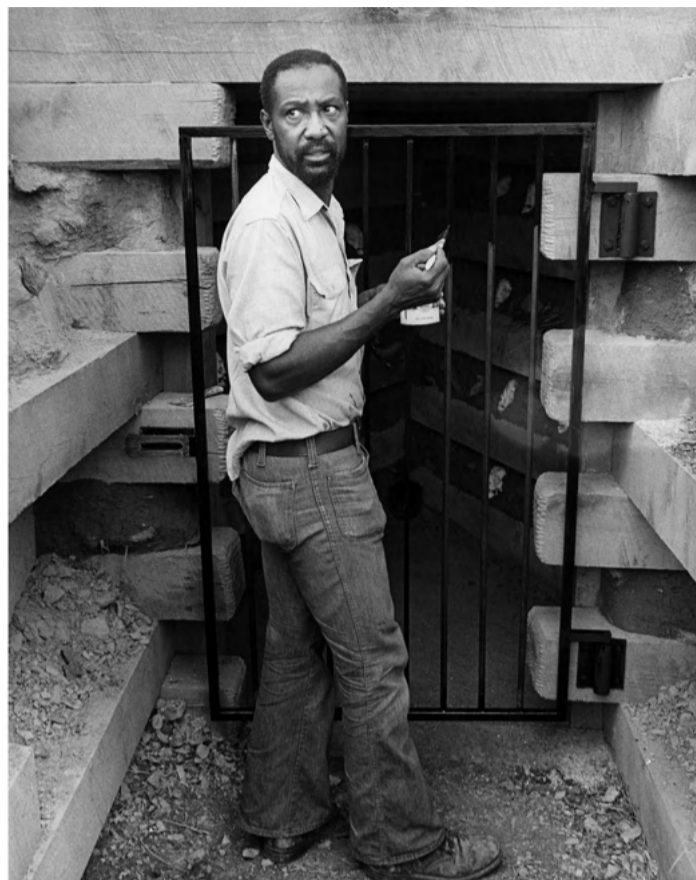
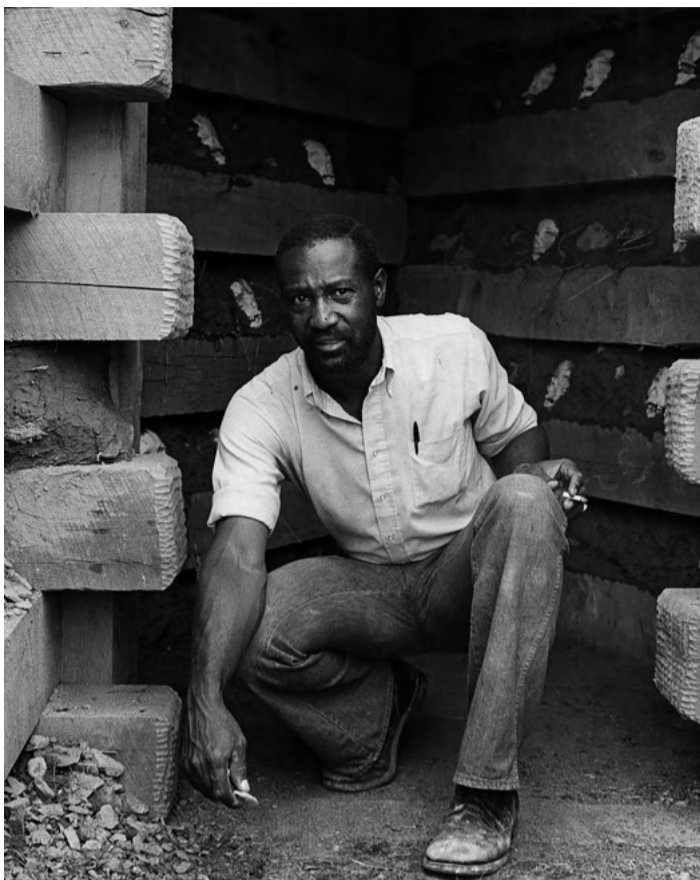
Using adobe, wood, human skulls, and other artifacts, he built structures to serve as sites for ritual processes while encouraging the experiential involvement of viewers. *Morada*, 1977, for which he received critical acclaim, was developed for Artpark in Lewiston, New York, and comprised a progressive series of stages or ritual stations, including an underground chamber with twenty-two human skulls embedded in its walls. As Whiten comments: "Each viewer will get his own meaning from the cave and the skulls but I'd like some, at least, to be reminded that there is a thread running from the past through the individual out into the timelessness of eternity, that life and death are really one continuum."<sup>17</sup> Garnering the attention of renowned American art critic Lucy Lippard (b.1937), a detailed description of this temporal project, including photographs, was featured in her seminal 1983 book, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*.<sup>18</sup>



Tim Whiten, *Metamorphosis (Stage II)*, 1980, ritual vessel (tanned bearskin, brass bells, cotton ties), grey pillow (cotton synthetic form), crushed eggshells, four glass votive containers and candles, four incense tiles, 254 x 254 cm installed, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Installation view of the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art, Permanent Collection Rotation, at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 2018.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



LEFT: Tim Whiten inside *Morada* at Artpark in Lewiston, New York, 1977, photograph by Andrew Stout. RIGHT: Tim Whiten inside *Morada* at Artpark in Lewiston, New York, 1977, photograph by Andrew Stout.

Whiten's interest in performance as an art form was fostered during his years at the University of Oregon (UO). As a graduate student, he was introduced by Jan Zach to the innovative American composer John Cage (1912-1992), who invited him to participate in two events. The first was an evening of new music sponsored by the Department of Music at the UO (*Encounter in Oregon: An Evening of New Music*, University of Oregon, School of Architecture and Allied Arts, 1965). Whiten helped produce three-dimensional objects from plaster and wood for Cage's performances. The second was *Lecture on the Weather*, 1975, written and directed by Cage and commissioned for the United States Bicentennial. It premiered at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo in 1976, with a subsequent presentation at the Music Gallery in Toronto in a program entitled *Four Worlds*. For *Lecture on the Weather*, Whiten contributed a vocal recitation of vowel sounds, exploring their vibratory range as corresponding to colour. Whiten not only performed in this work but, at Cage's request, wrote part of the score.

Feeling Whiten might benefit from different representation given his focus on ritual, Herbert (Herb) Sigman, Director of Bau-Xi Gallery in Toronto, introduced him to Olga Korper in 1986. Korper was familiar with Whiten's practice and had seen his work in *Ontario Now 2: A Survey of Contemporary Art* at the Art Gallery of Hamilton (AGH) in 1977, curated by AGH Director Glen E. Cumming. An enduring affiliation developed. Korper remains Whiten's commercial dealer and a close friend to this day.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



Tim Whiten, installation view of *Septem Septem*, 1979, ritual installation with human skulls, flour, live flame, variable dimensions, Factory 77, Toronto.

Whiten has long considered himself as an “image maker” rather than as an “artist.”<sup>19</sup> As he states, “What I make I consider to be cultural objects. The work that I do comes from awareness of my everyday experience.”<sup>20</sup> He recalls, “The relationship with Olga Korper Gallery began with me saying that I was never going to make Art and her reply, which was that she didn’t expect me to.”<sup>21</sup>

Whiten’s work was initially exhibited at Korper’s venue at 80 Spadina Avenue in Toronto, a fourth-floor loft space, until her gallery’s relocation in 1989 to a west-end industrial complex on Morrow Avenue. His first solo show with the Olga Korper Gallery, *Descendants of Parsifal*, 1986, featured eight human skulls wrapped with various skin-like coverings such as leather, talc, and chewing gum. The series was eventually integrated into *Elysium*, 2008, commissioned by the AGO for its 2008 exhibition *Transformation AGO*, and now held in its permanent collection.

Committed to the authenticity of his materials, Whiten has continued to incorporate human remains in his mixed-media works, harnessing the abject properties of these highly evocative materials. Human skulls appear in *Ram*, 1987, *Siege Perilous*, 1988, *Hearken to the Service of Emmanuel*, 1990, and *Canticle for Adrienne*, 1989, created for his young daughter. The artist’s use of human remains was not without contention. In the spring of 1990, a curator at the Italian Cultural Institute in Toronto removed the two skulls from the armrests of the white throne in *Siege Perilous*, on view in a group show, after concerns

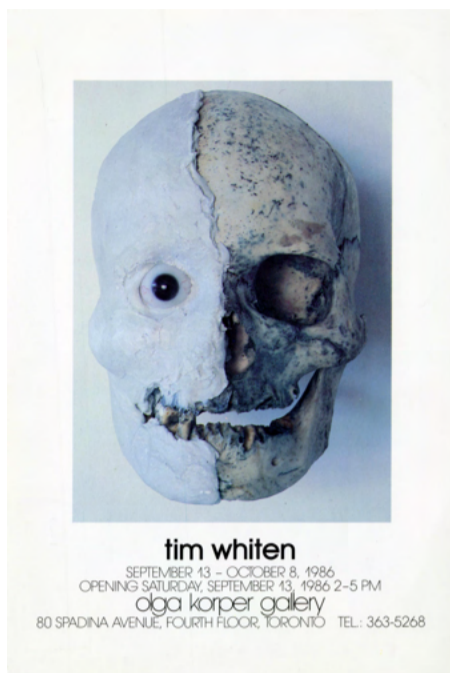
# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

were raised by a visitor about the ethical use of human remains. Public controversy followed. Whiten, however, could substantiate his legal procurement of the skulls with appropriate documentation. After Olga Korper threatened to sue the Institute, the skulls were reinstated.

Several of these pieces were acquired by the AGH, which holds a significant body of Whiten's works in their collection, including *Ram*, *Siege Perilous*, and *Canticle for Adrienne*.<sup>22</sup> Melissa Bennett, Curator of Contemporary Art at the AGH, comments, "Whiten's oldest work in the collection, *Magic Sticks*, 1970, is made of leather and wood, and is a vital foundation to his practice, in his engagement with the notions of ritual and magic and modes of understanding the world."<sup>23</sup>

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Whiten introduced human hair into his works, including *Ch-air*, 1992, *Elemental*, 1993, and *Courting the Caliph's Daughter*, 1993. Combining commonplace items (a chair, a frying pan, a cane, an umbrella, a bicycle wheel) with evocative symbols and material vestiges of the life force (hair, bones, teeth, skulls), he produces objects that exude a profound and unsettling presence. In later mixed-media works, human remains are absent; instead, self-reflexivity is generated by the artist's use of mirrored surfaces to engage and implicate the viewer, evident in *Oasis*, 1989, *Victor*, 1993, *Vault*, 1993, *Draw*, 1993, and *Snare*, 1996.<sup>24</sup>



LEFT: Announcement for the exhibition *Tim Whiten* at the Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto, September 13–October 8, 1986, Artist Documentation Files, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Canticle for Adrienne*, 1989, human skull, human hair, wood, talc, white glue, 127 x 61 x 114.3 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Elemental*, 1993, cast glass, human hair, cast iron, 40.6 x 38 x 38 cm, Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario.  
RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Ch-air*, 1992, human hair, chair, wheels, 112 x 69 x 84 cm, Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario.

## LATER WORK AND CRITICAL SUCCESS

I first met Whiten in 1993 at Olga Korper Gallery during his exhibition reception. We were introduced by artist June Clark (b.1941), whose work was the subject of a forthcoming solo exhibition I was curating for the Koffler Gallery in Toronto. Subsequent conversations led to Whiten's three-venue collaboration, *Messages from the Light*, which I organized for the Koffler Gallery in 1997, followed by presentations at the Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts (now SBC Gallery of Contemporary Art) in Montreal, curated by David Liss, and at Olga Korper Gallery, both in 1998.<sup>25</sup>

In 1998, Whiten was invited to create a site-specific work at the newly formed Tree Museum, an art park founded by artist EJ Lightman (b.1952) and located on a 200-acre wooded property on Ryde Lake in Muskoka. Sandblasted into the rocky slope of the Precambrian Shield, Whiten's project incorporated a series of skeletal figures and two constellations of roses—both enduring images in his practice. *Danse*, 1998-2000, took three summers to complete. For two decades, outdoor installations by Canadian and international artists were created at the Tree Museum during an annual program. While most were temporary, a number remain on view, including *Danse*.<sup>26</sup>



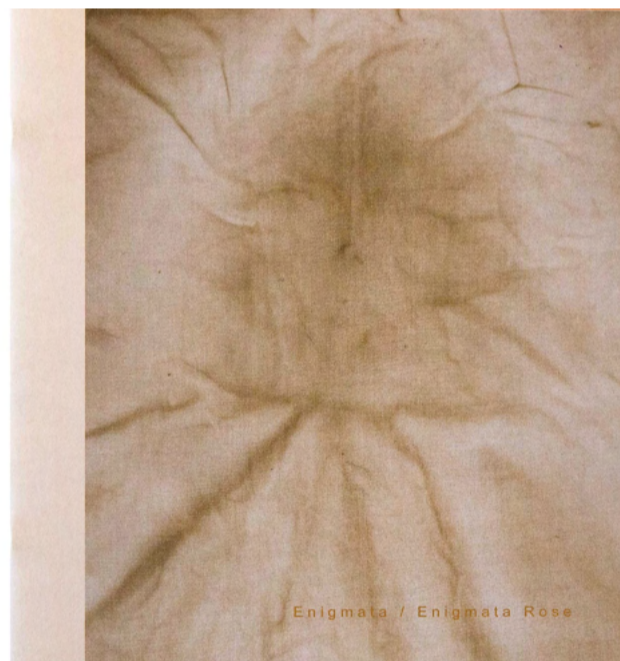
Installation views of the exhibition *Tim Whiten: Messages from the Light*, 1997, Koffler Gallery, Koffler Centre of the Arts, Toronto, photograph by Isaac Applebaum.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

After leaving her position as editor of *artscanada* in 1982, Anne Trueblood Brodzky returned to the west coast of the United States. She approached Whiten regarding a solo exhibition at the Meridian Gallery, a non-profit presentation and performance space in San Francisco, where she was the founding director. Whiten participated in three successive exhibitions at this venue, curated by Brodzky: *Enigmata/Rose*, 2001; *Working The Unseen*, 2004; and *Darker, ever darker; Deeper, always deeper: The Journey of Tim Whiten*, 2010.

Brodzky also facilitated his participation in the artist residency program at the now well-known Instituto Sacatar, a non-profit arts foundation in Itaparica, Brazil, from 2001 to 2002. During his time in Brazil, Whiten developed an outdoor site-specific work at the Quinta Pitanga and an indoor mixed-media installation for a group show with Brazilian artists. He also completed part three of his seminal Enigmata project, *Enigmata/Shower of Roses*, 2002. With a characteristic economy of means, Whiten employed coffee-stained hospital sheets to emulate cumulative saturations of bodily fluids, evidence of life's transmutations. At the centre of two of these series is an image of a rose, a symbol of spiritual love and sacrifice.



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Enigmata/Shower of Roses (5)*, 2002, coffee-stained hospital sheet, 190.5 x 223.5 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. RIGHT: Cover of *Tim Whiten: Enigmata / Enigmata Rose*, by Tim Whiten, Elizabeth Anthony, and Carolyn Bell Farrell (San Francisco: Meridian Gallery, 2001).

During his residency, Whiten immersed himself in Brazilian culture: its art, customs, language, food, music, and poetry. He also formed a deep connection with his African heritage, a kind of "homecoming" experience, especially poignant following the recent death of his mother and the separation from his wife. There, Whiten met Brazilian storyteller Regina Machado, with whom he began a long personal association. She introduced him to the Pierre Verger Foundation in Salvador, where he gained access to Verger's extensive library of images and ethnographical research of the African Diaspora. Whiten's interest lay not only in deepening his understanding of his ancestral roots but also in the healing properties of African medicinal plants, coming from a family of healers that included his Aunt Bea.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

Since 2002, Whiten's practice has focused on producing three-dimensional works using glass, recasting objects from daily life, including hand tools (*T After Tom*, 2002) and children's toys (*Lucky, Lucky, Lucky*, 2010, his blue glass rocking horse), as well as those drawn from mythic and religious spheres (*After Phaeton*, 2013, his glass chariot, and *Search Reach Release*, 2020, his prayer carpet composed of crushed coloured glass). Employed for its materiality and symbolic function, glass, like mirror, offered the artist a means to address the nature of consciousness and the human condition.



LEFT: Tim Whiten, installation view of *At the Third Point of the Triangle*, 2001-2, site-specific installation, 213.4 x 365.8 x 182.9 cm, Juracy Magalhaes Junior Gallery, Itaparica, Brazil. Whiten worked on *At the Third Point of the Triangle* during his residency at Instituto Sacatar in Itaparica from 2001 to 2002. RIGHT: Festa de Xangô, Sakété, Bénin, 1958, photograph by Pierre Verger, Fundação Pierre Verger, Salvador.

Artist and long-time York University colleague Vera Frenkel comments, "Even before I heard Tim Whiten speak about the complex nature and many qualities of glass, I loved the way it was used in all its states in his work—thick and thin, clear and frosted, hard and soft—evoking different aspects of the spirit. It's not surprising that his projects attract skilled craftspeople such as the uniquely gifted glass master Alfred Engerer, eager to help realize his vision."<sup>27</sup>

Whiten's practice has become the subject of several major exhibitions in Canada and the United States in recent years, including *Tools of Conveyance*, 2021, curated by Sandra Q. Firmin for the University of Colorado Art Museum in Boulder. In Ontario, a multi-venue collaboration highlighted fifty years of his practice with a focus on alchemy and its transformative processes. Historically, alchemists attempted to purify, mature, and perfect base metals, such as lead and copper, transforming them into noble metals, including gold and silver. Their allegorical pursuit of perfection of the human body and soul is also referred to as the "Great Work."



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



Installation view of the exhibition *Tim Whiten: Tools of Conveyance* at the CU Art Museum, University of Colorado Boulder, 2021, photograph by Wes Magyar.

The first of these four exhibitions was *Elemental: Ethereal*, 2022, curated by Pamela Edmonds for the McMaster Museum of Art in Hamilton. It featured Whiten's three-dimensional works from the late 1970s onward, reflecting his metaphysical interests with a focus on air, breath, and the spirit as captured in his glass works.<sup>28</sup> *Elemental: Oceanic*, 2022, which followed, was curated by Leila Timmins for The Robert McLaughlin Gallery in Oshawa. This exhibition presented sculptures and works on paper from the early 1970s to the present, representing Whiten's material explorations of ritual, embodiment, ancestral knowledge, and transcendence.<sup>29</sup> The third presentation, *Elemental: Earthen*, 2023, curated by Chiedza Pasipanodya for the Art Gallery of Peterborough, included early and recent works by Whiten, with antiquities loaned by the McMaster Museum of Art, to explore the element of earth and its associations with home, sustenance, power, transformation, and alchemy.<sup>30</sup>

The fourth and final exhibition, *Elemental: Fire*, 2023, curated by Liz Ikiriko for the Art Gallery of York University, brought together works on paper and those executed in glass, with a new crushed glass installation entitled *Ground Rules*, 2023, conflating a temple floorplan with the chalk outline from a game of hopscotch. The premise of *Elemental: Fire* considers "how the material transformations of fire appear in Whiten's works as forms of alchemy, risk, play, and energetic power. Often alluding to notions of time and faith through histories of storytelling and spirituality... Whiten's work returns us to consider primary questions of our bodies, our presence, and our value in this current moment."<sup>31</sup>

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

In recognition of his outstanding accomplishments, Whiten received the Gershon Iskowitz Prize at the AGO in 2022 and a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts for Artistic Achievement in 2023.<sup>32</sup>



Tim Whiten receiving a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts for Artistic Achievement from Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, in a ceremony at Rideau Hall, Ottawa, 2023, photograph by Sgt Anis Assari.



## KEY WORKS

Rich in material and symbolic properties, Tim Whiten's cultural objects and ritual performances are inspired by his African heritage and his childhood memories, as well as his in-depth understanding of mysticism, alchemy, religious traditions, classical myths, and legends. Exploring the nature of consciousness, spirituality, and transcendence, his practice traces his own pursuit of enlightenment. On this journey, he invites audiences to share in these processes of self-reflection.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## MORADA 1977



Tim Whiten, *Morada*, 1977

Site-specific installation and ritual performance, various media (oak and maple beams, 22 human skulls, cedar, roses, pine needles, copal rock, iron gate), 24.38 m long; chamber 213 x 213 x 213 cm

Artpark, Lewiston, New York

Whiten's early explorations in performance and installation art reflect a wider movement in the 1960s and 1970s, during which artists produced works involving bodily gestures and immersive environments that situated art within the context of everyday life. *Morada*, one of Whiten's first installations, was created in 1977 for Artpark, a 108-acre public park in Lewiston, New York, established in 1974 as an experimental forum for temporary outdoor projects concerned with environmental and conceptual issues. Participating artists at this venue included Nancy Holt (1938-2014), Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-1978), Alan Sonfist (b.1946), Alice Aycock (b.1946), Bill Vazan (b.1933), Jody Pinto (b.1942), and Dennis Oppenheim (1938-2011).

Whiten modelled and named his primitive stone and earth installation after the New Mexican adobe dwellings used by a sect of Catholic penitents in the early nineteenth century, drawing inspiration from those sacred sites in his reshaping of the physical environment.<sup>1</sup> *Morada* was conceived as a series of three ritual stations or experiential stages for the viewer to move through. The first stage

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

was a fire pit surrounded by a ring of boulders, referencing fire as a symbol of sacrifice and transformation. The second stage was a footpath, a 17-foot channel leading to a mound of earth, a tetrahedron above the third stage, which was a subterranean chamber.<sup>2</sup>

Packed between mud, straw, and stone, twenty-two human skulls were embedded into the earthen walls of this underground enclosure. The interior was painted white and framed by wooden beams. A garland of cedar, often used in relationship to purification, and twelve red roses, associated with spiritual passion, hung from the ceiling where the astrological signs of Capricorn and Cancer, representing ascent and descent respectively, were branded into the ceiling. The floor was covered with pine needles, believed to promote healing. A desiccated fish lay in the centre, suggesting rebirth. Copal incense burned inside of a ceramic urn. The entrance of the structure faced east, filling the small chamber with light in the morning, while shadows played across the walls as the day progressed.

During a ritual performance held on August 13, Whiten's birthday, visitors participated in a procession through Artpark. In a gesture of gratitude and community, they were given an offering of fire-roasted corn by the artist to nourish the soul, a symbol of the harvest and of death and renewal. Concluding the performance, the visitors descended into the chamber by candlelight.

Each morning during this summer residency, Whiten was visited by descendants of the Wendat (Huron) Peoples, contracted to build an "Indian village" nearby. Over coffee, they discussed the concepts informing *Morada*, the importance of honouring one's elders and the continued presence of our ancestors, who remain alive within our DNA, our rituals, and our social practices –by virtue of our existence, we participate in their immortality. Having developed a shared understanding of the project's significance, Whiten recalls that one morning when his work was aborted, these residents arrived with a crew and the equipment needed to help him finish the tasks at hand.



Tim Whiten, *Morada* (detail of interior), 1977, site-specific installation and ritual performance, various media (oak and maple beams, twenty-two human skulls, cedar, roses, pine needles, copal rock, iron gate), 24.38 m long; chamber 213 x 213 x 213 cm, Artpark, Lewiston, New York.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## METAMORPHOSIS 1978–89



Tim Whiten, *Metamorphosis*, 1978–89

Ritual performance; ritual vessel (tanned bearskin, brass bells, cotton ties), grey pillow (cotton synthetic form), crushed eggshells, four glass votive containers and candles, four incense tiles, 254 x 254 cm installed

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

The above images document various stages of the ritual process in *Metamorphosis (Stage I)*, 1978, photographs by Grant McLeod. Left: Tim Whiten, *Metamorphosis (Stage I)*, 1978, stage 1.15. Centre: Tim Whiten, *Metamorphosis (Stage I)*, 1978, stage 1.21. Right: Tim Whiten, *Metamorphosis (Stage I)*, 1978, stage 1.9. All photographs printed on Canson Baryta Photographique 310 paper, 61 x 45.7 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

*Metamorphosis* is Whiten's seminal ritual performance work, an evolving project with various manifestations developed and presented over the course of a decade. Its creation coincided with the growing prominence of performance art in the 1970s. Like German artist Joseph Beuys (1921–1986), Whiten shares in the exploration of ritual and the symbolic properties of materials in his performances.

*Stage I* of *Metamorphosis* took place in 1978, during which the artist was sewn into a bearskin pelt, fur side in, over a 4-hour period in a studio in Toronto by Grant McLeod, a professional taxidermist, and his assistant. In 1980, *Stage II* was presented at Bau-Xi Gallery in Vancouver, where Whiten exhibited the tanned bearskin on a bed of crushed eggshells. That same year, *Stage III* was presented at Bau-Xi Gallery in Toronto, with a ritual performance assisted by dancer and choreographer Terrill Maguire. Donning the bearskin pelt, Whiten once again became a living artifact. With tremendous effort, sweat, and tears, he struggled to free himself from his confines without using his hands. The performance lasted 45 minutes, accompanied by African drumming from which the artist drew his energy. For *Stage IV*, Whiten exhibited the pelt from *Metamorphosis* as a ritual artifact in a glass museum vitrine at Olga Korper Gallery in 1989.

*Stage II* was redisplayed at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2016 as part of the exhibition *Toronto: Tributes + Tributaries, 1971–1989*. There, the tanned bearskin with brass bells and cotton ties was laid on a rectangular, grey cotton

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

pillow on top of a large circular bed of crushed eggshells organized in concentric rings. A votive candle and an incense tile were placed at each of the four cardinal points marking this ritual vessel. Ceremoniously lit during the installation, they were left to burn until the end of the performance, with the odour permeating the space.<sup>1</sup>

For Whiten, this performance operates as a metaphor for spiritual rebirth and a transformation in consciousness. Being sutured within the pelt is akin to hibernation; one has to resist the desire to break free prematurely, as if nestled in a cocoon. In this state of immobility, the artist must overcome powerful feelings of claustrophobia and vulnerability and trust in those who care for him. Escaping from this vessel without using his hands parallels a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis or a baby bird hatching from its shell. The bearskin and attendant three-dimensional elements become the residue of this ritual act, evidence of the transformation. As the artist comments, "The piece is about birth and rebirth.... It's a remnant, a memory device."<sup>2</sup>

*Stage II* also points to the existence of different realities and states of being, as illuminated in the Taoist story by the Chinese philosopher Zhuang Zhou (c.369–286 BCE): "Once Chuang Chou dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Chuang Chou. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Chuang Chou. But he didn't know if he was Chuang Chou who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Chuang Chou. Between Chuang Chou and a butterfly there must be some distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things."<sup>3</sup>

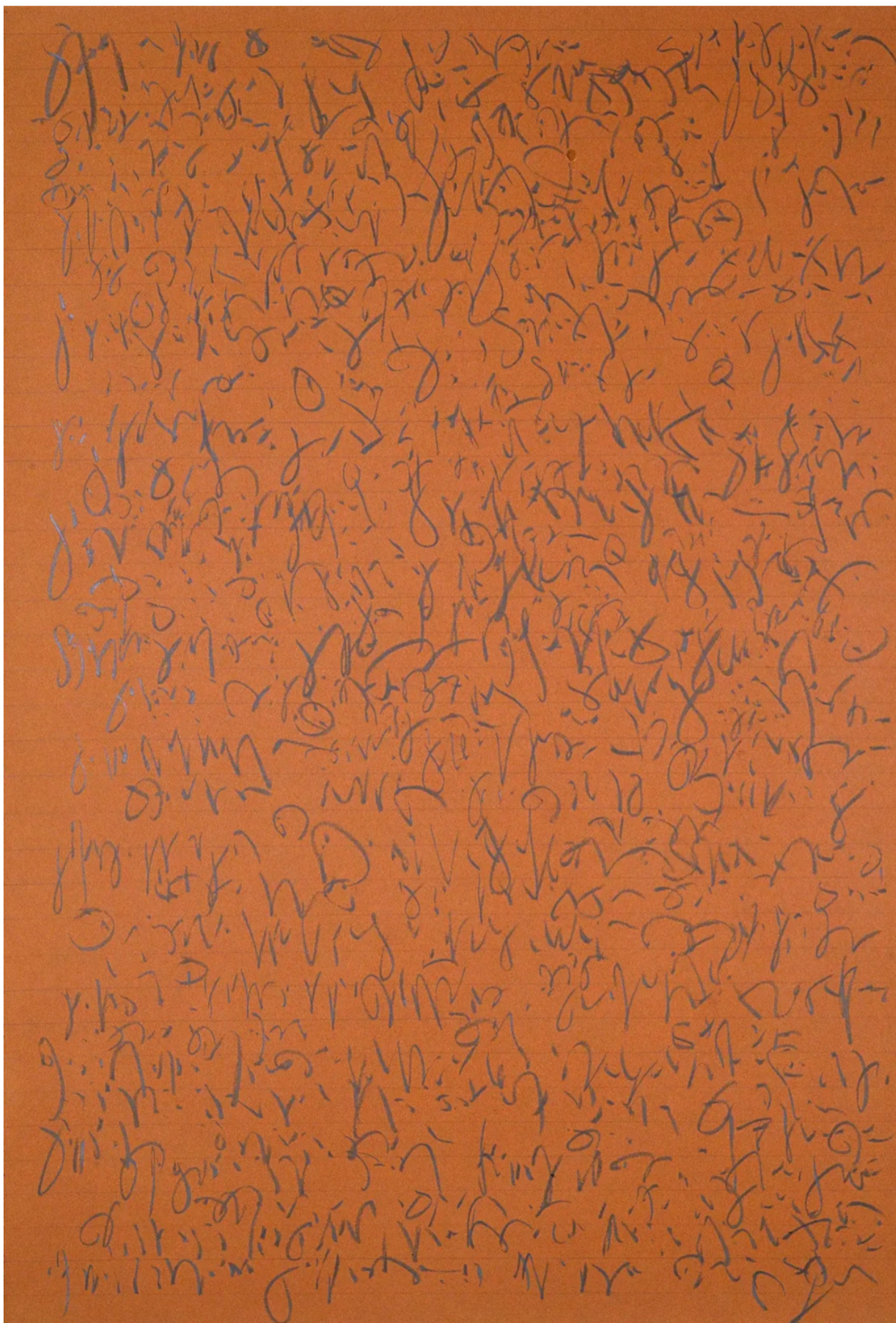


Tim Whiten, *Metamorphosis (Stage II)*, 1980, ritual vessel (tanned bearskin, brass bells, cotton ties), grey pillow (cotton synthetic form), crushed eggshells, four glass votive containers and candles, four incense tiles, 254 x 254 cm installed, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Installation view of the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art, Permanent Collection Rotation, at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 2018.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## MAGIC GESTURES: LITES AND INCANTATIONS (ORANGE) 1981



Tim Whiten, *Magic Gestures: Lites and Incantations (Orange)*, 1981  
Graphite stick over graphite pencil on paper toned with orange synthetic polymer paint  
(enamel spray paint), 111.8 x 76.8 cm  
CU Art Museum, University of Colorado Boulder



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

Since the 1970s, Whiten has maintained a daily drawing practice. Working with graphite and other natural materials, his gestural notations resemble abstract signs and symbols as well as cursive scripts, often covering the entire surface of the paper. A departure from his earlier untitled graphite drawings, *Magic Gestures: Lites and Incantations* is a series of nine works on paper by the artist, presented both individually and collectively.<sup>1</sup>

Composed of calligraphic marks rendered from right to left, as in Hebrew script, and bottom to top, each of the nine works in this series is produced on a different coloured ground. Here, Whiten references the nine colours of the mystical diagram of the Tree of Life: blue (unbounded love), green (growth, renewal), purple (victory, power, resilience), orange (surrender, acceptance), red (strength of boundaries), yellow (beauty, the sun's radiating light), black (wisdom), grey/silver (knowing), and white (the crown, joy).

A map of creation, the Tree of Life represents a series of divine emanations embracing the energies of all creation and flowing in its expressions from the infinite to the finite—an archetypal image that appears in other works by Whiten, including *Search Reach Release*, 2020, and *Ground Rules*, 2023. Denoting the spiritual path of ascent by humankind, the inverted tree charts the soul's journey of return to its origins through these spheres.

For Whiten, drawing is an extension of consciousness rather than a practice tied to illustration.

Privileging sensing his work over reading it, he avoids a legible script, adopting strategies that undermine an intellectual interpretation. Produced with rapid strokes in quick succession, his seemingly random mark-making resembles spontaneous writing, recalling the automatic drawing practices of André Masson (1896–1987), Joan Miró (1893–1983), Salvador Dalí (1904–1989), and other Surrealists.

As if channelling the energies of an unseen force, Whiten employs the act of drawing as a mode of transition between multiple worlds. The surface of the paper becomes a mutable boundary, a permeable barrier or veil between states of consciousness. While his three-dimensional works present evidence of his ritual activities, his works on paper trace his ritual gestures, registering his processes.



LEFT: Tim Whiten, installation view of *Magic Gestures: Lites and Incantations*, 1981, graphite stick over graphite pencil on paper, enamel spray paint, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Ground Rules*, 2023, crushed coloured glass, wood, 91 x 366 cm installed, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

In her catalogue essay from *Tim Whiten: Tools of Conveyance* (2022), curator Sandra Q. Firmin writes, "Whiten's lifelong fascination with consciousness and awareness of spiritual forces led him to the inexplicable and unknowable. What source determines the shape of an object, or the speed and rhythm of the markings on a blank sheet of paper? Out of nothing comes words, objects, inscriptions. Whiten invites us to sense a felt knowledge, unconstrained by verbalized concepts and written language."<sup>2</sup>

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## CLYCIEUN 1991



Tim Whiten, *Clycieun*, 1991  
Wood, bicycle wheel, and seat, 251.5 x 53.3 x 22.9 cm  
MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina

# TIM WHITEN

## Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Whiten began producing mixed-media works that reference everyday objects, quoting the vernacular in their respective forms. Many of these pieces embrace the notion of a journey, both physical and spiritual, embodying different modes of travel. The wheel, especially, is a common motif and appears in *Ram*, 1987, *Canticle for Adrienne*, 1989, *Hearken to the Service of Emmanuel*, 1990, and *Clycieun*.

*Clycieun* is a humorous sculptural work by Whiten. Resembling a unicycle, it comprises an attenuated wooden fork, a single wheel, and a bicycle seat. Associated with street performers, circuses, and festivals, the unicycle requires great skill, strength, and balance to navigate. The exaggerated height of Whiten's vehicle, however, makes it perilous to mount, while the absence of pedals makes it impossible to propel. The title, *Clycieun*, is an anagram for the word "unicycle," a nod to the artist's reordering of its classic elements.

The French artist Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) was a formative influence on Whiten. The latter's use of familiar artifacts finds comparison with Duchamp's readymades and, specifically, in the case of *Clycieun*, his iconic sculpture, *Bicycle Wheel*, 1913–17. Duchamp's first version of *Bicycle Wheel* from 1913 consists of a bicycle fork with the front wheel mounted upside down on a wooden stool; the tire is filled with air, but no peddles are apparent.



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Hearken to the Service of Emmanuel*, 1990, wood, bicycle wheel, and human skull, 101.6 x 203 x 203 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton. RIGHT: Marcel Duchamp, *Bicycle Wheel*, New York, 1951 (third version, after lost original of 1913), metal wheel mounted on a painted wooden stool, 129.5 x 63.5 x 41.9 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Association Marcel Duchamp / ADAGP, Paris / CARCC Ottawa 2024.

By contrast, *Clycieun* is upright. The saddle invites the rider to mount, yet the unicycle's precarious height makes this proposition unfeasible. Its single wheel denotes mobility, yet its lack of pedals would thwart our control over its motions. Our feet cannot propel us; the movement this work describes is not in concert with the way that we customarily navigate this earth. As S. Brent Plate observes in *Tim Whiten: Tools of Conveyance* (2022), Duchamp transformed the purpose of an object by restaging it within a new context, while Whiten alters the object's nature to engage the viewer in a transformational experience.<sup>1</sup>

*Clycieun*'s bicycle fork is constructed from a tall, slender sapling. The tree is a constant image for Whiten, whose first name, Grover, means "one who cares for the trees." Other works incorporating trees or branches include *Hearken to the Service of Emmanuel*, *Elysium*, 2008, and *Hallelujah (II)*, 2015. In *Clycieun*, the sapling signifies the Tree of Life, as well as the *axis mundi* or mythic world centre—the portal between heaven and earth, and the higher and lower realms of existence. *Clycieun*'s extreme verticality points to our aspirations to attain a higher order of understanding or state of being. Yet, our desired ascension exceeds our physical agency; the folly of our ambition is humorously brought to light.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## VICTOR 1993



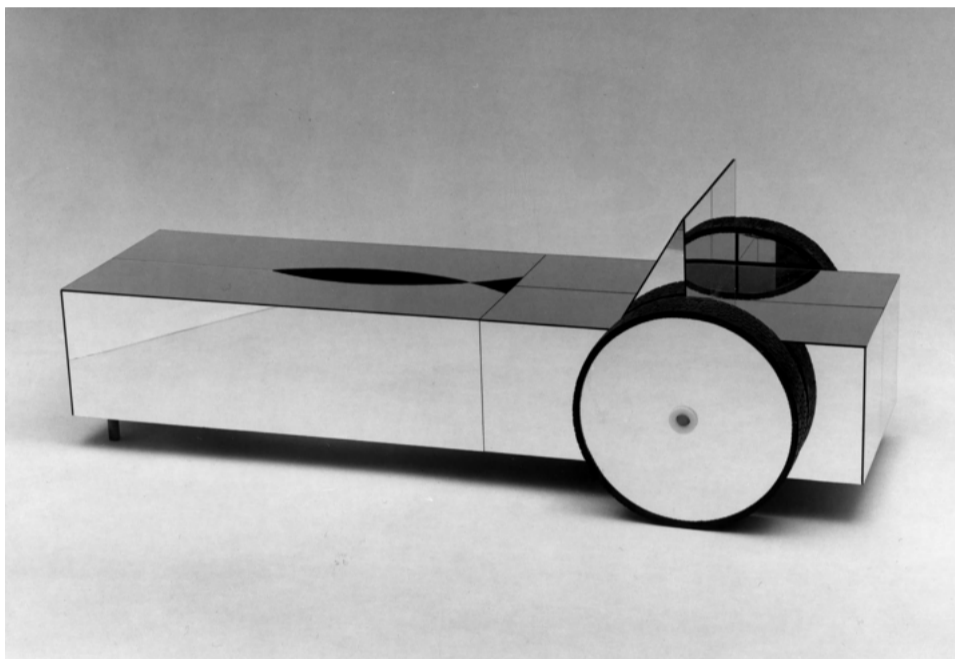
Tim Whiten, *Victor*, 1993  
Wood and mirror, 198.1 x 86.4 x 38.1 cm  
Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

In the 1990s, Whiten produced a series of three-dimensional works employing mirrors. In *Draw*, 1993, and *Vault*, 1993, mirrors serve to implicate the viewer by capturing their reflection in part or in full. By contrast, in *Victor*, the viewer's reflection is thwarted. Here, a full-length mirror is placed within a door-sized wooden frame. Within the frame is an opaque frontal image of a man standing on a raked threshold. The grey, painted surface of the figure is the back of a mirror; essentially, two mirrors face each other. Approaching the work, our own image merges with this silhouette, while the edges of the figure, rimmed in gold, seem to reverberate in infinite reflection, producing an intense field of visual energy.

In earlier works by Whiten, including *Ark*, 1976, and *Ch-air*, 1992, and series such as *Descendants of Parsifal*, 1986, the human figure is represented in absentia. Presence is conveyed through bodily traces and temporal imprints: skulls, bones, hair, teeth, chewing gum. In his other mirrored works, the human figure is introduced through the viewer's reflection. By contrast, the human figure in *Victor* is rendered as a life-size silhouette of the artist.



Tim Whiten, *Draw*, 1993, mirror over wood, rubber, 66 x 53.3 x 182.9 cm, Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario.

Given its scale, as we stand in front of this work, our encounter shifts from an intellectual approach to a physical experience. The door frame signifies an entrance, a portal—in this case to the unknown or unfamiliar, recalling Lewis Carroll's 1871 novel *Alice Through the Looking-Glass* and the fantasy world that lies behind the mirrored surface where everything is reversed.

The title *Victor* suggests mastery, success, overcoming an antagonist. The notion of prevailing in battle is implied. Yet, who is the victor? The figure rendered here suggests the "shadow self" in Jungian terms, the negative or unconscious self, which blocks self-perception—the self in the absence of light. The "victor" is revealed as the guardian of the threshold, the obstacle at the door tempering our pace.

In *Victor*, the mirror points to the conditions of consciousness, self-knowledge, and self-reflection. Gazing at its surfaces, we neither perceive nor experience our own reflection. Instead, we are absorbed within the flat, limited range of this dimensionless shadow. Confronting this self-image is the first point of entry on this journey of self-discovery.<sup>1</sup> As Whiten recalls from the New Testament: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."<sup>2</sup>

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## VAULT 1993



**Tim Whiten, *Vault*, 1993**  
**Wood, mirror, 198.1 x 243.8 x 182.9 cm**  
**Art Windsor-Essex**

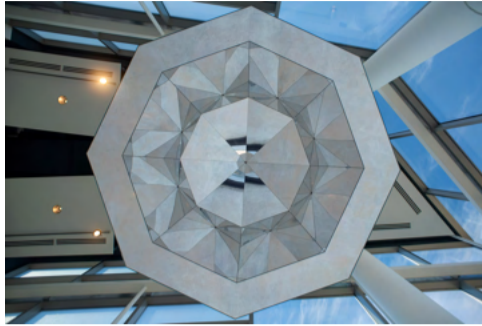
Since 1990, Whiten has employed mirrors in his mixed-media works to explore the nature of human perception, exemplified by *Draw*, 1993, *Victor*, 1993, and *Vault*, the largest of his mirrored works. Comprising an immense dome constructed of mirrors, *Vault* is intended to be hung shoulder height from the ceiling, resembling an enormous chandelier. Its angled exterior surfaces reflect the walls and ceilings of the surrounding environment. Similarly, the interior surface is lined with multifaceted mirrored planes. Standing within it, we become acutely aware of the limitations of our ordinary physical senses. Familiar sounds are muffled, truncated, transformed. We anticipate seeing our own reflection. Instead, our self-image is elusive, partially eclipsed; only fragments are captured.

*Vault* finds comparison with *Mirrored Room*, 1966, by Lucas Samaras (1936–2024), composed of a room-sized cube containing a mirrored table and chair, in the collection of the Buffalo AKG Art Museum (formerly the Albright-Knox Art Gallery). An exhibition wall label states: “The idea for the *Mirrored Room* came to Samaras as early as 1963, when he was writing a short story entitled ‘Killman.’”

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

His title character lived in a mirrored house surrounded by endless reflections and repetitions of himself.<sup>1</sup> In *Mirrored Room*, Samaras created a space in which the only images are “drawn” by the reflections of visitors.



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Vault* (interior view), 1993, wood, mirror, 198.1 x 243.8 x 182.9 cm, Art Windsor-Essex. RIGHT: Lucas Samaras, *Mirrored Room*, 1966, mirror on wood, 243.8 x 243.8 x 304.8 cm, Buffalo AKG Art Museum.

Similarly, Whiten is interested in creating an immersive experience for audiences with *Vault*, one that parallels a transcendental experience. Achieving spiritual transcendence suggests that one has moved beyond the ordinary limitations of physical reality as apprehended by the senses. Like *Victor*, we are unable to discern our own reflection in the mirrored surfaces of *Vault*. Unlike *Victor*, our engagement with this work moves us across the threshold from the finite into the realm of infinite reflections.

*Vault*, Whiten's “cosmic” dome, references the heavens as depicted in sacred architecture; specifically, the dome or vault of heaven in Islam and the stupa or dome-shaped sacred burial mounds in Buddhism housing the Buddha's relics. A symbol of perfection, of eternity, it denotes the meeting place of heaven and earth, and the entrance into eternal life. Like the cosmic umbrella or branches of the cosmic tree, the canopy of heaven offers shelter, warmth, and protection. It also becomes a portal to another dimension, where a sense of the individual merges with the universal, underscoring the interconnectedness of all things.<sup>2</sup>



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## ENIGMATA/ROSE (3) 1998



Tim Whiten, *Enigmata/Rose (3)*, 1998  
Coffee-stained hospital sheet, 218.4 x 198.1 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

*Enigmata/Rose (3)* is from Whiten's seminal three-part series comprised of *Enigmata*, 1994–96, *Enigmata/Rose*, 1996–98, and *Enigmata/Shower of Roses*, 2002.<sup>1</sup> All of the works in the *Enigmata* series are made from salvaged hospital sheets stained with coffee. The artist used white cotton percale sheets for *Enigmata* and *Enigmata/Rose*, made in Toronto, and unbleached muslin for *Enigmata/Shower of Roses*, produced in Brazil.<sup>2</sup> Incorporating found and natural materials, each piece in this series is intended to be wall-mounted, occupying a space between two and three dimensions. Like previous works by Whiten, the human figure here is represented in absentia, its presence denoted by the physical traces left on the hospital sheets.<sup>3</sup>

In the first two series, the hospital laundry stamp is visible, as are rips, repairs, and stains in the fabric. Like a burial shroud, we see emanations of a bodily presence and absence, the subtle permutations of life forces interwoven in the fabric—further marked by the rippling and striations left by the poured coffee, its coloration reminiscent of bodily fluids. A visual depression demarcates the position of the head. Operating between image and object, the visceral quality of the works, the unframed borders of the sheets, and the aroma of coffee held by the threads of the textiles invoke a somatic, unmediated experience.

Whiten's use of infirmary sheets reflects his continued exploration of themes underscoring the cycles of life, evident in works such as *Morada*, 1977, and *Metamorphosis*, 1978–89. Each bodily impression has its own cadence, conveying a personal history of events and interrelationships. Carrying the layered energy of lives lived, each reveals an indexical iconography of bodily fluids—manifestations of birth, death, sleep, suffering, illness, war, presence, and absence—as if bearing witness to life's physical transmutations.

Collectively, they unfold as maps of human experience.

The artist comments: "The marks on these *Enigmata* pieces documented an act of passage, which left a visceral imprint of that which was once present."<sup>4</sup> In this series, the immateriality and impermanence of Whiten's shrouds echo the provisional nature of the physical body as a temporal vessel. For the artist, "they represent the passing through the portal and provide an understanding of materiality as both vestige and vessel of the transcendental."<sup>5</sup>



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Enigmata (3)*, 1996, coffee-stained hospital sheet, 218.4 x 198.1 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Last Night, Night Before*, 1997, textiles, cast iron, magnet, 30.5 x 244 x 823 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa. Installation view from the exhibition *Elemental: Oceanic* at The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, 2022, photograph by Toni Hafkenscheid. In *Last Night, Night Before*, the human body is also made present by its absence, realized through its magnetic residues and discarded clothing.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

The series title, *Enigmata*, suggests that which is obscured; specifically, an esoteric understanding or knowledge that is outside of one's conscious grasp. In *Enigmata/Rose*, the imprint of a rose blossom stands in for the human heart. A complex symbol embracing earthly passion and heavenly perfection, it is also the centre point of the cross and of unity, a portal or aperture to the ineffable. Echoing the phrases of the Sufi poet Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī (1207-1273), this series begs the question: "What is the body? That shadow of a shadow of your love, that somehow contains the entire universe."<sup>6</sup>

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## DANSE 1998–2000



Tim Whiten, *Danse* (detail of drummer), 1998–2000  
Sandblasted stone, life-size  
Tree Museum, Gravenhurst, Ontario

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

Between 1998 and 2000, Whiten developed a sited work for the Tree Museum, a sprawling art park near Gravenhurst, Ontario. Established in 1997 by artist EJ Lightman (b.1952), a former student of Whiten's, the Tree Museum features installations by Canadian and international artists developed in situ with materials from this locale.<sup>1</sup> *Danse* was created by sandblasting images directly into the exposed surface of the Canadian Shield. It remains the only permanent outdoor work Whiten has produced to date.

The iconography of *Danse* includes the artist's familiar motifs: the rose and the skull. The rose embraces notions of spiritual attainment, perfection, completion, and of mortal existence giving way to eternal life. Here, twelve roses are arranged in two constellations. The composition also includes four larger-than-life-size skeletal figures. Each plays a different musical instrument: a drum, a trumpet, a bagpipe, and a xylophone.

Whiten's figures are rendered after a series of miniature woodblock etchings by Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/1498-1543) entitled *The Dance of Death*, c.1526. In each print, Death takes the form of a skeleton who indiscriminately snatches away souls from various walks of life: the rich and the poor, the pious and the irreverent.

Scaling the slope of this rocky terrain, we gradually uncover Whiten's skeletons, each one beckoning us along to the next. Deftly articulated, their jubilant gestures are further animated by the shifting play of light and shadow across the etched surfaces and by the crisscrossing veins of the granite that re-inscribe their silhouettes.

Embracing these elemental conditions, Whiten's imprints on the landscape echo spiritual practices extending back thousands of years, retracing the rituals behind the making of petroglyphs.<sup>2</sup> They are also reminiscent of fossilized forms embedded in the earth's surface, punctuated by the lichen and mosses now nestled in their crevices. Here, we embody the experience of time. The transitory nature of human life is reinforced by the brevity of music symbolized by the instruments carried by Whiten's skeletons, coupled with the image of an hourglass. This temporality is played out against the permanence of the shield and the imperceptible movements of geological time. The celestial configuration of roses sandblasted into the rock also underscores the cycle of seasons as well as the origins of life, reminding us that we, too, are made from "stardust."



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Danse* (detail of xylophone player), 1998-2000, sandblasted stone, life-size, Tree Museum, Gravenhurst, Ontario. RIGHT: Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Old Woman*, from the series *The Dance of Death*, c.1526, published 1538, woodcut on paper, 6.4 x 4.9 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

*Danse* is composed solely of Precambrian rock, the ancient geological core of North America. Stone symbolizes survival, immortality; as the "bones of the earth, the rocks remain both host and witness to the endless processes of regeneration."<sup>3</sup> They become the living embodiment of the layers of consciousness, the vibrational elements that perpetually call us back to a primordial state of being, that "once upon a time."<sup>4</sup>

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## ELYSIUM 2008



Tim Whiten, *Elysium*, 2008

Mixed-media installation with human skulls, glass eyes, chewing gum, talc, white glue, graphite, lilac staffs, umbrella and walking cane elements, used carpet, metal frame, rubber castors, wood, plastic mirror, engraved enamel pots, 304.8 x 259.1 x 259.1 cm  
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

*Elysium* combines elements from three prior works by Whiten: *Descendants of Parsifal*, 1986, a series of eight wrapped human skulls; *Magisterium Pardesh*, 1993, comprising seven walking sticks and three covered magic boxes; and *Temno IV*, 1995, constructed from carpets stacked at prayer height.

Commissioned by the Art Gallery of Ontario for the exhibition *Transformation AGO*, 2008, *Elysium* was intended to generate an intersection between work by contemporary, modern European, African, and other diverse cultures on view at the gallery. As the artist comments: "it's a combination of elements that create a relationship of energies from past to present, from historic to modern understandings, from the mythic to contemporary notions of life."<sup>1</sup> It is the only commission Whiten has undertaken.

The *Descendants of Parsifal* series is named after Parsifal (also Perceval), a Knight of the Round Table in Arthurian legend and an innocent seeker of truth in quest of the Holy Grail. The Grail, itself, is conceived of as a cup, a dish, or a stone with the power to bestow eternal youth and sustenance, held in the

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

custody of the wounded Fisher King. Parsifal heals the Fisher King by asking the question, "Whom does the Grail serve?" A symbol of grace and mystical union with God, the Grail was also believed to be the cup used by Christ at the Last Supper.

In *Elysium*, seven human skulls from this earlier series are covered with mixtures of talc, glue, chewing gum, glass, and graphite. Whiten applies layers of these materials to the skulls, much like skin, and introduces glass eyes.<sup>2</sup> The skulls, symbolizing our ancestral link to the Arthurian hero Parsifal, are wall-mounted at eye level between six tall, hand-whittled wooden staffs leaning against the wall.

The body of each staff is carved out of a lilac sapling from a grove near the artist's studio. The spring blossoms symbolize renewal, while the heartwood holds the hue of its flower. Evolving from sapling to supportive aid, each staff is crowned by a handle fashioned from an umbrella or walking cane. For the artist, "trees are the sentinels which guard the portals of another world; protecting our planet and providing the basic resources necessary for sustenance and future development,... trees are the immutable signs of our connection to something far beyond ourselves; guardians, protectors, resources for all our needs."<sup>3</sup>

The altar placed in front of the wall is comprised of stacked carpets, extended on either side by a wooden table. Each table supports an upright curved mirror. An enamel cooking pot is recessed into each table as a receptacle for the offering. The bottom of one pot is engraved inside with a single word, "vapour"; lift the lid of the second pot and the word "desire" is revealed.

In Greek mythology, Homer describes the Elysian Fields as a paradise for heroes bestowed with immortality by the Gods. As such, Elysium is considered the blessed dwelling place for life after death. This work represents the spiritual journey undertaken in the quest for truth, which begins with seeing every moment of life against the horizon of death.



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Magisterium Pardesh*, 1993, wood, fabric, mirror, 229.2 x 304.8 x 152.4 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Temno IV*, 1995, carpet, 40.6 x 190.5 x 70 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## LUCKY, LUCKY, LUCKY 2010



Tim Whiten, *Lucky, Lucky, Lucky*, 2010  
Handcrafted sandblasted glass, 58.4 x 109.2 x 33 cm  
Art Gallery of Hamilton

Since his first explorations with glass in 1983, Whiten has produced a considerable body of work using this material, drawn to its ability to assume various shapes, colours, and states and its capacity to transmit light. *Lucky, Lucky, Lucky* resembles a child's rocking horse and is part of a series of life-size objects cast in glass that recall children's toys, including the glass tricycle in *After Ethan's Wheels*, 2010, and the glass sleigh in *Travel Stik*, 2012. In these works, the artist underscores the power of play to transport us to other realms by engaging our imagination.

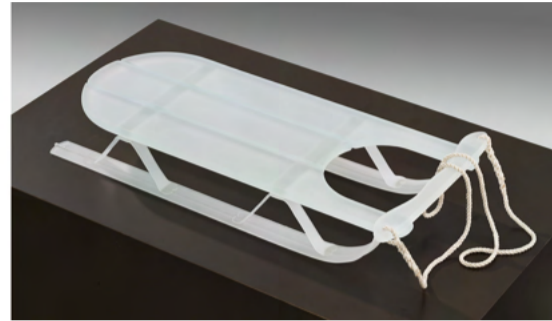
Whiten cites "The Rocking-Horse Winner" by D.H. Lawrence as his inspiration for *Lucky, Lucky, Lucky*. In this 1926 short story, a prescient child named Paul with uncanny blue eyes of "cold fire" was able to predict racehorse winners, gaining insight by riding a wooden rocking horse. Rocking is an archetypal motion: the rocking of a cradle or a chair—back and forth, active and passive, in and out—rephrases the gestures of breathing and of ritual. In Lawrence's tale, the rocking motion of the toy horse allows the child to enter another dimension where he can forecast which horses will win races, securing prize money to support his mother's social ambitions. Through these repetitive rhythmic movements, he

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

himself is transformed. Eventually, he succumbs to exhaustion while riding the rocking horse, falling victim to the pursuit of wealth.

*Lucky, Lucky, Lucky* is resonant with symbolism. Epitomizing swift passage, the horse is often conceived as the bodily vehicle while the rider is the spirit; in other traditions, these roles are reversed.<sup>1</sup> Whiten's rocking horse is constructed from blue glass, a colour associated with truth, intellect, and revelation. Here, the blue glass recalls the child's eyes and the act of seeing. Glass, itself, is a vehicle of transmission, allowing light to pass through. Transformed by fire, it is a material capable of assuming various states. Whiten's blue glass rocking horse divests this "toy" of its practical application and bestows upon it a sense of magic—in this context, Paul's powers of divination. As a symbol, the child is an embodiment of potentiality as well as innocence. He also points to the transformation of the individual, reborn into perfection.<sup>2</sup> As the artist comments, "Children who can imagine are the key to consciousness."<sup>3</sup>



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *After Ethan's Wheels*, 2010, handcrafted crystal-clear glass, brass, 50.8 x 53.3 x 66 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Travel Stik*, 2012, handcrafted crystal-clear glass, acrylic and rayon cord, 15.24 x 38.1 x 81.91 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## AFTER PHAETON 2013



Tim Whiten, *After Phaeton*, 2013

Handcrafted crystal-sandblasted glass, ionized glass, brass fittings, 167.6 x 243.8 x 58.4 cm

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

For Whiten, glass isn't just a sculptural medium—it is a transcendental material, capable of transmitting light in varying degrees as if facilitating passage between two worlds. *After Phaeton*, the artist's luminous two-wheeled chariot, is constructed of crystal-sandblasted glass and adorned with brass fittings. Whiten reduced the size of the chariot twice before arriving at a solution that would allow the weight of the carriage to be supported by the axle yet ensure that the vehicle remained human scale. A slender disk mounted at the top represents the sun. Sandwiched between layers of crystal-clear glass, the colours in the disk—orange, green, purple, blue—appear and disappear according to the light and the perspective of the viewer, paralleling our perception of the sun. Decorative patterns of wings embellish the surface of the chariot, pictorially conveying a sense of movement. A signature rose appears above the lanyard, just beneath the sun.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

In Greek mythology, Phaeton (Phaëthon) is the son of Helios, god of the sun, and a nymph/woman believed to be named Clymene; as such, he is half mortal and half divine.<sup>1</sup> According to Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, Books I-II, desiring to prove his divine paternity, the young Phaeton begged to drive his father's chariot of the sun through the heavens for a single day. Helios eventually conceded, but Phaeton was unable to command the immortal steeds and the chariot veered out of control. Coming too close to the earth, he scorched it. To avoid further damage, Zeus hurled a thunderbolt at Phaeton, killing him.



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *After Phaeton* (detail), 2013, handcrafted crystal-sandblasted glass, ionized glass, brass fittings, 167.6 x 243.8 x 58.4 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.  
RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *After Phaeton* (detail), 2013, handcrafted crystal-sandblasted glass, ionized glass, brass fittings, 167.6 x 243.8 x 58.4 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Greek and Roman mythological subjects were common in Renaissance painting, as illustrated by *The Fall of Phaeton*, c.1604/1605, by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640).<sup>2</sup> Operating outside the canon of Western art history, Whiten's interpretation reveals an empty chariot; in the absence of figurative rendering, the viewer is implicated, as if a character in this narrative.<sup>3</sup> In this classic Greek myth, the son of Helios was not ready to drive his father's chariot; like Paul, the young boy in D.H. Lawrence's story that inspired *Lucky, Lucky, Lucky*, 2010, Phaeton was unable to harness the magical forces at hand. Like *Clycieun*, 1991, Whiten's attenuated unicycle, *After Phaeton* points to our blind ambition to reach a higher order without the proper preparation and sacrifice this journey toward illumination entails.<sup>4</sup>

## SEARCH REACH RELEASE 2020



Tim Whiten, *Search Reach Release*, 2020  
Crushed recycled glass, wood, glass eye, 15.2 x 88.9 x 119.4 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto

Whiten's artistic explorations with glass as a medium have led to a body of work executed in coloured crushed glass, including *Arisearose*, 2018, *Respite*, 2019, *Ground Rules*, 2023 (first shown in *Elemental: Fire*, 2023), and *Court*, 2023 (created for an exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa). *Search Reach Release* forms part of this series.

A prayer carpet composed of recycled glass shards, *Search Reach Release* reveals a pattern with the inverted Tree of Life—an archetypal image referenced in other works by Whiten, including *Magic Gestures: Lites and Incantations*, 1981—reaching down from heaven, flanked by white wings. An otherworldly blue rose appears at its roots with an “all-seeing eye” and white clouds above. Coloured glass, especially cobalt-blue glass, is difficult to procure. For this piece, Whiten purchased glass items from eBay and restaurant suppliers, broke them up, and then applied a heavy acrylic gel medium to bind the shards.

The tradition of using cobalt-blue glass, handed down from generation to generation, came from the Kingdom of Kongo, where cobalt continues to be mined. In the African Diaspora, particularly in the southern United States,

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

African Americans hung cobalt-blue glass bottles upside down on trees to entice and capture evil spirits.<sup>1</sup> Blue glass beads, bottles, and pottery shards, among other articles needed in the next life, have also been found on slave graves.<sup>2</sup>

Cobalt-infused glass is associated with curative properties: it preserves the essence of its contents and keeps it pure and, given time, the contents stored inside also become stronger.<sup>3</sup> As such, it was often used for the storage of pharmaceuticals and perfume, which Whiten knew from his experience working for a pharmacist as a teenager. For example, *Soir de Paris* (Evening in Paris), a floral perfume by Bourjois for women launched in 1928, was sold in a signature blue glass bottle.

As a carpet, *Search Reach Release* references the making of textiles and the rhythmic gestures of weaving. Symbolically, the warp, the vertical yarn on a threaded loom, is the vertical plane of existence; it is the immutable, unchanging essence of all things, comparable to the light of the sun. By contrast, the weft, the horizontal yarn, is the horizontal plane; it is the contingent, temporal, human sphere and symbolizes the reflected light of the moon. The intersecting cross represents the union of opposites.

Carpets are also endowed with magical properties in various cultures: Prince Husain has a flying carpet in *One Thousand and One Nights*; Solomon has one in the Old Testament. They are believed to facilitate the instant transportation of the passenger to another destination, including heaven. *Search Reach Release* is a prayer carpet; while its undulating curves suggest motion, it speaks to prayer as a spiritual technology to aid in our passage to another dimension.<sup>4</sup>

The presence of the prayer carpet connotes an act of supplication, a gesture common to other works by Whiten. *Ram*, 1987, comprises a long pole on wheels supporting a human skull. The aperture at the front of this battering ram holds a tiny mirror. To gaze into the aperture and see our reflection requires that we kneel down in a position of humility. Like *Ram*, *Search Reach Release* underscores the conditions of transformation. The act of kneeling down on crushed glass points not only to the act of supplication but to the pain and sacrifice necessary to attain revelation.



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Respite*, 2019, crushed resourced glass, wood, gel medium, Aqua-Resin, acrylic paint, 25.4 x 76.2 x 30.5 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Arisearose*, 2018, handcrafted crystal-clear glass, crushed resourced glass, wood, gel medium, Aqua-Resin, acrylic paint, metal, 138.4 x 73.7 x 78.7 cm, McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton.



# SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

Over the past fifty years, Tim Whiten has pursued an in-depth understanding of the human condition and its transformative potential. Drawing on a wide spectrum of influences, from European modernist abstraction to his Central African heritage, he produces powerful, enigmatic images, objects, and ritual performances that engage the human imagination. Whiten's outstanding commitment to teaching, to nurturing emerging artists, and to supporting diverse artistic practices have earned him the highest regard in Canadian society.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## DIVERSE ARTISTIC INFLUENCES

Whiten has developed a rigorous artistic practice devoted to exploring the relationship between psychic and physical reality. Employing commonplace items—chairs, canes, umbrellas, tools, toys—his mixed-media works signify everyday experiences. Altered and given an extended life, they represent human potential and states of being. Numerous works, including *Descendants of Parsifal*, 1986, *Canticle for Adrienne*, 1989, and *Horus Negotiating the Waters*, 2017, incorporate evocative materials, ritualistic symbols, and vestiges of the life force—human skulls, bones, teeth, hair—eliciting a visceral response in the viewer and a confrontation with mortality. The skull and the rose remain enduring images in the artist's practice, their symbolic properties and associations signifying life, death, and rebirth. The skull, particularly, connotes the essence of what survives, embodying our ancestral legacy.

In other works, such as *Victor*, 1993, *Vault*, 1993, and *Snare*, 1996, Whiten uses mirror and glass to create experiential situations for heightened self-reflection and self-awareness, generating a dialectic between presence and absence, concealment and revelation. Through these self-reflexive gestures, he invites audiences to become active participants in these works. Simultaneously, his cultural objects operate as the residue, the abiding evidence, of his personal journey toward spiritual enlightenment.



Tim Whiten, *Horus Negotiating the Waters* (detail), 2017, textiles, leather-covered human skull, 25.4 x 162.6 x 45.7 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



Tim Whiten, *Vault* (interior view), 1993, wood and mirror, 198.1 x 243.8 x 182.9 cm, Art Windsor-Essex.

Whiten's early practice reflects the influences of European modernist abstraction, sharing an exploration of the spiritual in art with Constantin Brâncuși (1876-1957), Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), and Mark Rothko (1903-1970), among others. Rather than produce discrete objects for aesthetic contemplation, Whiten creates enigmatic mixed-media works that spark curiosity and invite further inquiry. Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) remains a formative influence on Whiten, who similarly employs strategies of inversion, reversal, and self-reflexivity in his artworks. The reordered elements of Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel*, 1913-17, for example, finds comparison with Whiten's attenuated unicycle, *Clycieun*, 1991. Like the presentation of Duchamp's readymades, Whiten's restaging of the vernacular challenges conventional definitions of the art object, yet his familiar commodities are altered to reflect the human condition.

Whiten's practice shares concerns with his post-minimalist contemporaries and the related art movements of the 1970s. His outdoor site-specific installations, including *Morada*, 1977, and *Danse*, 1998-2000, can be compared with the earthworks and land art by artists such as Robert Smithson (1938-1973), Walter de Maria (1935-2013), and Nancy Holt (1938-2014)—particularly those that embrace the durational elements of a changing environment, notably Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, a 1,500-foot-long spiral built on the northeastern shore of the Great Salt Lake in Utah with mud, salt crystals, and basalt rocks.



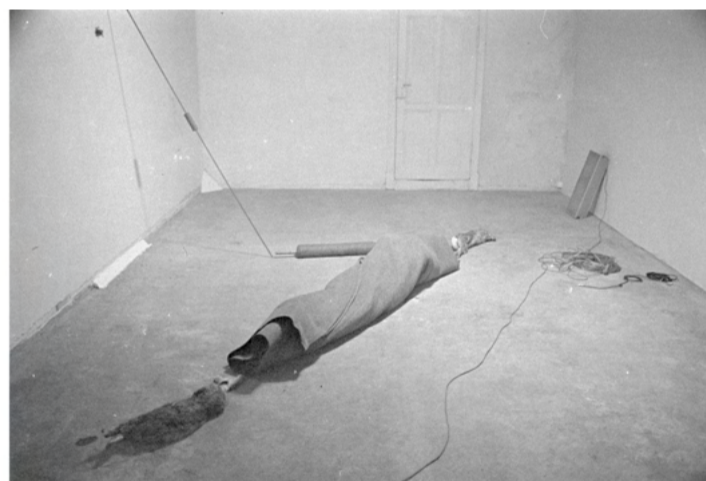
Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, Rozel Point, Great Salt Lake, Utah, earthwork with mud, precipitated salt crystals, rocks, water, 457.2 m long x 4.6 m wide, Dia Art Foundation. © Holt/Smithson Foundation and Dia Art Foundation / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY / CARCC Ottawa 2024.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

The use of humble, ephemeral materials to contest notions of the heroic, the monumental, and the permanent by Italian artists associated with Arte Povera—including Mario Merz (1925–2003), Giuseppe Penone (b.1947), and Jannis Kounellis (1936–2017)—also find parallels with Whiten’s works; particularly evident is his *Enigmata* series, 1994–2002, which traces the residues of human life through hospital sheets stained with coffee. Furthermore, Whiten’s drawing practice—exemplified in his 1981 series *Magic Gestures: Lites and Incantations*—shares themes of repetition and progression that underscore the process-based works of artists such as Eva Hesse (1936–1970), particularly known for her works on paper as well as her sculptures using industrial latex.

Like artists Marina Abramović (b.1946) and Joseph Beuys (1921–1986), Whiten’s approach to artmaking is essentially performative. Beuys’s early performance work with Fluxus espoused an artistic practice that transcended traditional categorizations and institutional frameworks by bringing art into the realm of the everyday. In his later solo performances, Beuys adopted a kind of shamanist role, employing materials such as honey, gold leaf, iron, copper, and felt for their symbolic properties to facilitate passage between different physical and spiritual states. In *The Chief - Fluxus Chant*, first presented in Copenhagen between 1963 and 1964, he wrapped himself in a large felt blanket, holding this position for nine hours, while his breathing and other muffled sounds, captured by a microphone under the heavy blanket, were amplified across the room—a physically demanding performance much like Whiten’s *Metamorphosis*, 1978–89.



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Metamorphosis (Stage I)*, 1978, documentation of the ritual process, stage 1.21, Canson Baryta Photographique 310 paper print, 45.7 x 61 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Joseph Beuys, *The Chief - Fluxus Chant*, 1963–64, performance, Galerie René Block, Berlin. © Estate of Joseph Beuys / Bild-Kunst, Bonn / CARCC Ottawa 2024.

During the 1960s and 1970s, artists such as Chris Burden (1946–2015), Judy Chicago (b.1939), and Barbara Kruger (b.1945) pursued politically-engaged art practices influenced by the Vietnam War (1955–75), the civil rights movement, and the rise of feminism and gay rights, contributing to the development of more socially aware and subjective investigations. Emanating from deeply personal memories, Whiten’s works recall a childhood framed by racism, austerity, and self-sufficiency, as well as his later military service in Vietnam. Yet his inspirations largely derive from outside of Western art historical conventions, systems of thought, and discourse on current social structures.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

Whiten's African heritage and the rituals handed down to him by his parents inform his artistic vision of the African Diaspora, evident in his drawing *His Presence Has Always Been Known to Me*, 1988, and his installation *Elysium*, 2008. Augmenting his ancestral roots, he draws from a spectrum of cultural and spiritual sources, embracing Jungian archetypes, alchemy, classical myths, literature, parables, and historical legends, which have inspired works such as *Siege Perilous*, 1988, *Lucky, Lucky, Lucky*, 2010, and *After Phaeton*, 2013. His in-depth understanding of Christianity, Sufism, Zen Buddhism, and the Kabbalah suffuses his work, as does his interest in psychology, phenomenology, structuralism, semiotics, and Platonic thought.

The impressions gleaned from his travels to other countries to understand the historical importance of various cultures have contributed to his artistic pursuits. For example, in 1981, Whiten studied Zen Buddhism at Zuihō-in, a historic sub-temple of Daitoku-ji, a Zen monastery in Kyoto, Japan, where he was exposed to the arts of tea and flower arranging, as well as breathing. Informed by his study of mysticism and philosophy, his creative and spiritual practices are intertwined, reflecting timeless questions around human existence and consciousness.



Zuihō-in, a sub-temple of Daitoku-ji, Kyoto, 2008, photograph by Olivier Lejade.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



Tim Whiten, *Hallelujah (II)*, 2015, handcrafted crystal-clear glass, lilac branches, brass fittings, 152.4 x 213.4 x 48.3 cm, McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## ART AND RITUAL

In his artistic practice, Whiten delves into ancient forms of consciousness, seeking to understand the world in sacred terms and to uncover the latent echoes of ancestral teachings and memories. In this approach, he echoes the insights of Robert Smithson conveyed in a 1968 text entitled "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects": "Floating in this temporal river are the remnants of art history, yet the 'present' cannot support the cultures of Europe, or even the archaic or primitive civilizations; it must instead explore the pre- and post-historic mind; it must go into the places where remote futures meet remote pasts."<sup>1</sup>

Eschewing the term "artwork," Whiten favours "cultural object" instead when describing his work, embracing its historical associations and ritual heritage. Curator David Liss elaborates: "Tim creates timeless objects and images that, through their presence and embodied narratives, activate energies that resonate along a continuum; the ancient overtones that pulse through the present and into the future. His images are constellations that connect the physical, terrestrial, and celestial realms that define the human spirit."<sup>2</sup>

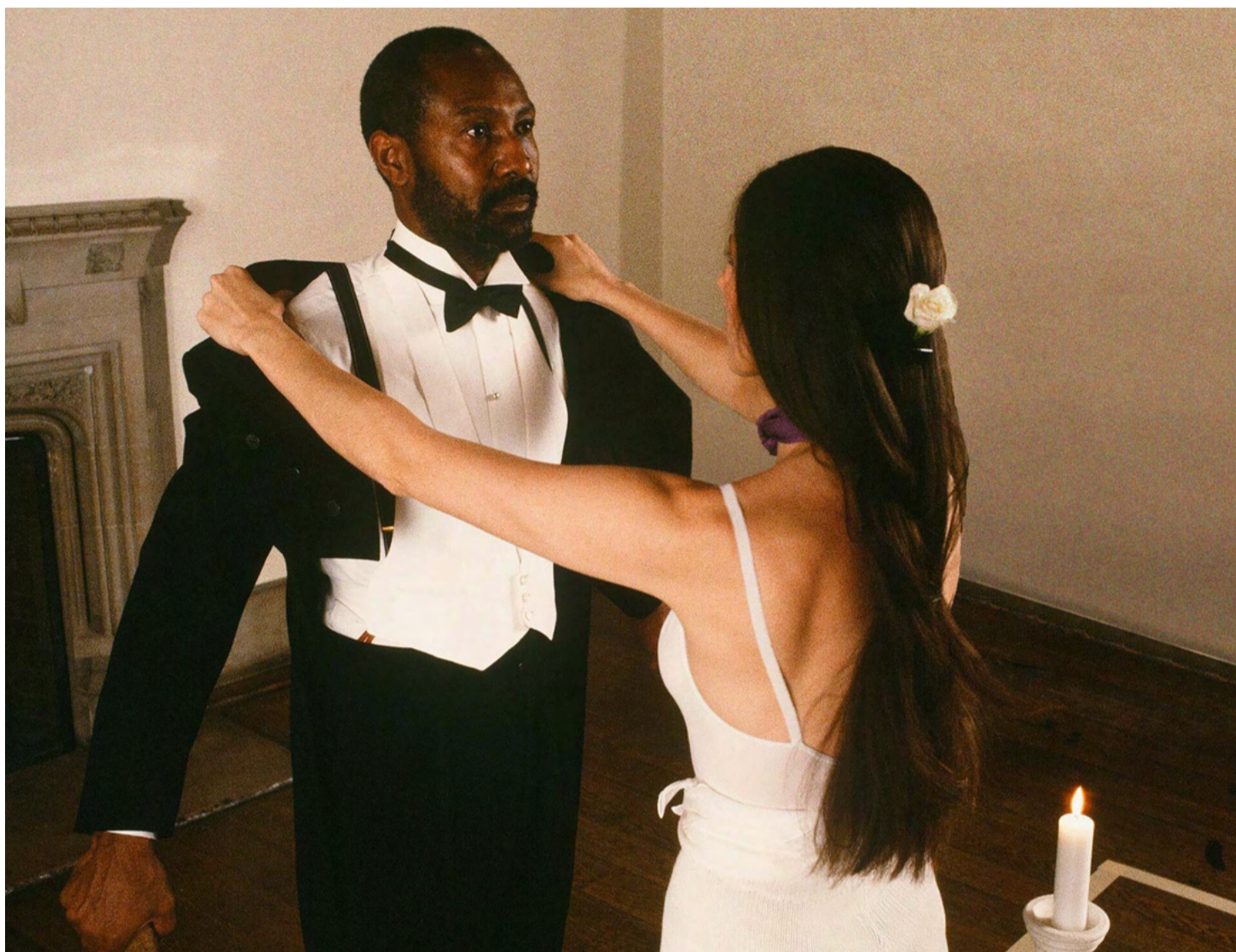


LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Kanopi*, 2008, handcrafted and slumped glass, brass, 91.4 x 135.9 cm diameter, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. RIGHT: Leo Touchet, *Jazz Funeral, New Orleans, Louisiana, No. 4*, 1969, silver gelatin print.

Striving to awaken the mythic imagination, Whiten rekindles these ancient memories through ritual acts of repetition, restoration, and renewal, participating in what American artist and educator Suzi Gablik (1934–2022) describes as a "remythologizing of consciousness through art and ritual."<sup>3</sup> In *The Reenchantment of Art* (1995), Gablik observes, "One of the peculiar developments in our Western world is that we are losing our sense of the divine side of life, of the power of the imagination, myth, dream and vision. The particular structure of modern consciousness, centered in a rationalizing, abstracting and controlling ego, determines the world we live in and how we perceive and understand it; without the magical sense of perception, we do not live in a magical world. We no longer have the ability to shift mindsets and thus to perceive other realities—to move between the worlds, as ancient shamans did."<sup>4</sup> Through his ritual actions, demonstrated by his performance works *Metamorphosis*, 1978–89, and *Matrix*, 1982, Whiten endeavours to reintegrate art into the mythic as a temporal presence. In so doing, he contributes to shaping a living mythology.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



Tim Whiten, with Julie Freeman, *Post Trigon III*, 1983, ritual installation and performance with human skulls, Hart House, University of Toronto.

The origin of art derives from ritual. In his seminal 1935 essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) wrote: "We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual—first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function. In other words, the unique value of the 'authentic' work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value."<sup>5</sup> Whiten seeks to reinstate this purpose, this "use value" of art in contemporary society and art's function as a symbolic intermediary. His cultural objects can be understood as by-products of ritual. Material traces of his own personal quest for meaning, these performative works embody gestures that can be re-enacted by the viewer.

Whiten is committed to fostering the intuitive faculties of perception in viewers, "inviting experiences and encouraging 'sensing' over 'reading.'"<sup>6</sup> Rather than produce autonomous artworks for aesthetic contemplation, he creates cultural objects that reveal compelling propositions for audiences—exemplified by *Courting the Caliph's Daughter*, 1993, his mirrored-top billiard table lined with human hair, and its confounding notions of play. The powerful aura that his artworks exude, their profound psychological presence, material specificity, and symbolic properties all invite opportunities for self-discovery. Countering the contemporary art object's emancipation from ritual, Whiten creates dynamic conditions for restaging transformational moments.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

In his 1974 essay "The Artist as Shaman," American art historian Jack Burnham (1931-2019) describes the healing role of the artist as shaman: to "draw people away from substitute objects and back toward the ancient memories of life and productivity."<sup>7</sup> Whiten is often described as a healer, an alchemist, and a shaman by his contemporaries. Artist Francis LeBouthillier (b.1962) characterizes him as "an elemental alchemist who employs an incredibly sophisticated understanding of materiality, alongside his astute knowledge of how objects function as cultural and social signifiers."<sup>8</sup> His long-time dealer Olga Korper comments, "Tim Whiten is a Shaman. His glass brooms have swept evil and darkness out of corners in my life for years."<sup>9</sup>

For Whiten, art is a tool serving a cultural purpose and a social praxis of healing through revelatory experiences. He states: "As a human race we've lost our contact with the spiritual concerns of life. The churches are less full than before. People aren't committed to something that's beyond themselves, and they're treating each other horribly. I think ultimately the nature of spirituality is to recognize the human community as one. And the reminder of that is part of what I'm dealing with—to say, 'Hey, let's not leave this behind; let's get this together and keep this moving as a species.' I'm trying to give people that understanding in a way they can experience rather than as something theoretical."<sup>10</sup>



Tim Whiten, *One, One, One*, 2005, third edition, cast, rolled and sandblasted glass, 157.5 x 20.3 x 7.6 cm, Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery, Waterloo.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



Installation view of the exhibition *Elemental: Fire* at the Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, 2023, photograph by Toni Hafkenscheid.

## A SINGULAR APPROACH

For five decades, Whiten has exhibited his ritual performances and two- and three-dimensional works throughout North America, as well as in South America and Asia. His early projects, such as *Morada*, 1977, attracted the attention of acclaimed American art critic Lucy Lippard (b.1937) and renowned American composer John Cage (1912-1992), and his cultural objects are now held in the collections of the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the Art Gallery of Hamilton, among others.

During this time, he has continued to work outside the linear prescriptions of Western art historical trends, embracing diverse ideological and cultural practices, and delving into his personal experiences and familial lineage, as can be seen in his use of cobalt-blue glass shards in *Search Reach Release*, 2020, and *Court*, 2023. As art historian Robert Farris Thompson (1932-2021) wrote regarding Whiten's practice, "Back-home ritual, combined with the aesthetics of Japan, plus mark-making, and the control of technology, identify an artist who is both universalizing and loyal to his culture. Visual ancestry triumphs over all."<sup>11</sup>

The impact of Whiten's practice is profound. African Canadian artist June Clark (b.1941) comments, "When I'm in the presence of Tim Whiten's work I feel a visceral resonance as my ancestors whisper to me, 'know it, know us and remember.' I experience and am privy to the gift of an unspecified but known entity that is completely recognizable within the work. As well, I know that I'm in the presence of a primal intuition that gives rise to, and abundantly feeds, the creative imagination."<sup>12</sup>



Tim Whiten, *Court*, 2023, crushed resourced glass, wood, 16 x 214 cm diameter, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

Yet the evocative power of Whiten's cultural objects, such as *Magic Sticks*, 1970, *Hallelujah* (II), 2015, and *Arisearose*, 2018, their esoteric underpinnings, and their cultural specificity, have also challenged audiences and mainstream art critics alike. While his works have been exhibited internationally and are held in major public and corporate collections, Whiten's practice has only garnered broad exposure in recent years, in tandem with the growing appreciation of diasporic arts and the contributions of Black artists to Canadian culture. For example, his works on paper were featured in the prominent 2005 exhibition *Tribute: The Art of African Canadians*, presented by the Art Gallery of Peel in Brampton and the Art Gallery of Mississauga. Large abstract drawings from his 1991 Constellation series were presented with works by artists Jim Adams (b.1943), Hollis Baptiste (b.1962), Michael Chambers, Grace Channer (b.1959), June Clark, Neville Clarke (b.1959), Dorsey James (b.1945), and Dionne Simpson (b.1972).



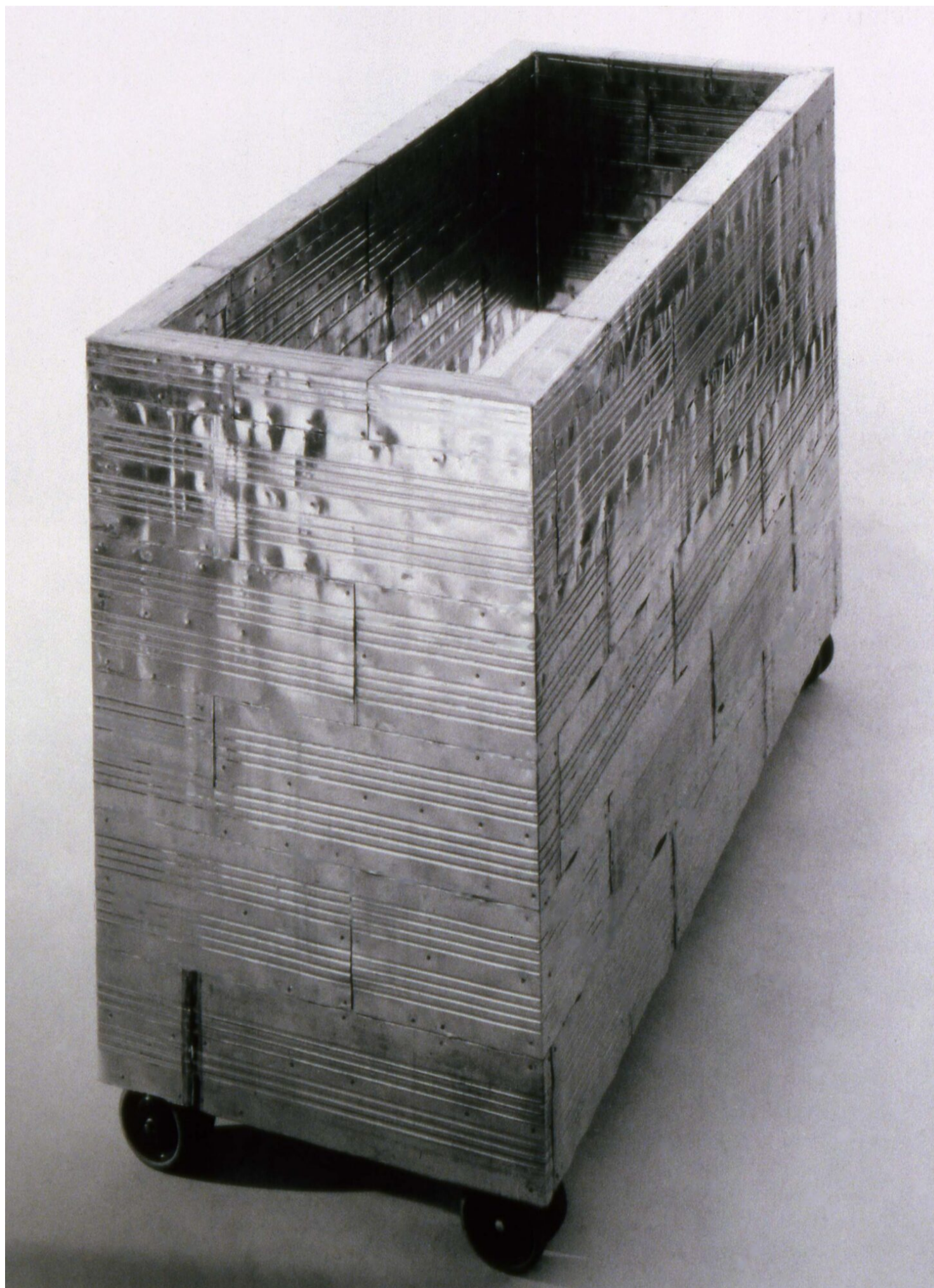
LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Magic Sticks*, 1970, leather thongs over wood, 89 x 2.5 x 2.5 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Untitled*, from the Constellation series, 1991, pencil and graphite on Stonehenge paper, 127 x 96.5 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.

Whiten has veered away from producing work based on current trends and orthodoxies, while also eluding the commercialism of the contemporary art world. Instead, he has undertaken a highly individualist journey. As artist Sandra Brewster (b.1973) observes, "He's really an artist who practices beyond those walls, with no interest in being about the conversation of the day yet very capable of engaging in it."<sup>13</sup> Artist Lyn Carter (b.1954) concurs: "Tim has stuck to his path and the art world has come around."<sup>14</sup>

Long-time colleague and artist Ron Shuebrook (b.1943) further notes that Whiten emerged as "a rare creator of great complexity and integrity who seemed motivated by an expansive, spiritual vision that had no regard for the seductions of art world fashion and the then dominant, often prescriptive, academic theories."<sup>15</sup> Shuebrook cites the example of *Oasis*, 1989, a "furniture-like construction [that] magically illuminated the surrounding space with reflected light... This ineffable, allegorical object strikes me as being beyond any absolute interpretation, yet it seems to be an embodiment of human ingenuity, feeling, and wonder."<sup>16</sup>

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



Tim Whiten, *Oasis*, 1989, metal over wood, mirror, baby carriage wheels, 101.6 x 152.4 x 58.4 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## LEGACY AS AN EDUCATOR

As an artist and an educator, Whiten has shaped the course of artmaking in this country while opening doors for artists engaged with diverse cultural, aesthetic and material orientations. Whiten taught visual art at York University (York) in Toronto for thirty-nine years, retiring in 2007. He was instrumental in founding and building the university's Department of Visual Arts, particularly the sculpture program, offering students both a practical and theoretical foundation in visual arts studio. Among his former students are numerous accomplished artists, including Sandra Brewster, Lyn Carter, Michael Chambers, June Clark, Michael Davey (b.1948), Bonnie Devine (b.1952), Shabnam K.Ghazi (b.1971), Dorsey James, Shelagh Keeley (b.1954), Francis LeBouthillier, Laura Moore (b.1979), Larry Towell (b.1953), and Frances Thomas (b.1949).

Whiten's approach to teaching was characterized by the same rigour that he applies to his artistic practice. Rather than share examples of his artwork to set a standard for production, he encouraged his students to find and express their own unique

artistic essence.<sup>17</sup> Artist Shabnam K.Ghazi recalls, "On the first day of class, he asked us a few questions about the colours of the floor and the wall outside our classroom. No one remembered them. I realized how oblivious I had been to my surroundings. The next thing he did was to ask us to close our eyes and breathe in and out slowly, like meditation. He explained that drawing is not only the physical movement of your hands and drawing tools on paper. You should also draw with your body and mind; for this, your mind should be ready, and your breath is a vehicle to get you inside your body."<sup>18</sup>



LEFT: Michael Chambers, *Blinders*, 1994, silver gelatin print, 81 x 71.1 cm. RIGHT: June Clark, *Dirge*, 2003, oxidized metal on canvas, 94 x 160 x 1.8 cm overall, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Whiten was one of few visual artists of colour teaching in Canada in the 1970s and 1980s. He was committed to fostering the growth of emerging artists, especially racialized artists and women artists, in what was largely a white-male-dominated arena, circumscribed by male-identified, Western art practices.<sup>19</sup> When Whiten started teaching at York, the standard art history textbook at the time was H. W. Janson's *History of Art* (1963), in which women artists were notably absent. As a leading Black artist, Whiten has become a significant role model for emerging BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of colour) artists, bridging racial, social, and cultural divides and supporting visual art practices that explore identity, ritual, and spirituality; critiques of Western art historical traditions and thought processes; and decolonializing strategies.<sup>20</sup>

Artist and former student Frances Thomas writes: "In this life we need to find teachers who can take us to places previously not known or imagined in the fearless pursuit of truth. Tim Whiten's influence? It is like trying to catch lightning in a bottle. Anyone who is serious about examining existence and consciousness will have crossed paths with Tim, will have come under the spell of his authenticity. Tim shows us porosity, the unreserved desire to connect self to all that exists, to quell self-doubt and give oneself over to the void and

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

translate through form, marks or traces the collective and the personal. His life and work don't just inform a moment but galvanize one's spirit, propelling all those brave enough on a life-long pilgrimage that goes beyond the surface of things, a search for the transformative, for that which endures."<sup>21</sup>



Tim Whiten, *Last Night, Night Before*, 1997, textiles, cast iron, magnet, 30.5 x 244 x 823 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa. Installation view from the exhibition *Elemental: Oceanic* at The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, 2022, photograph by Toni Hafkenscheid.

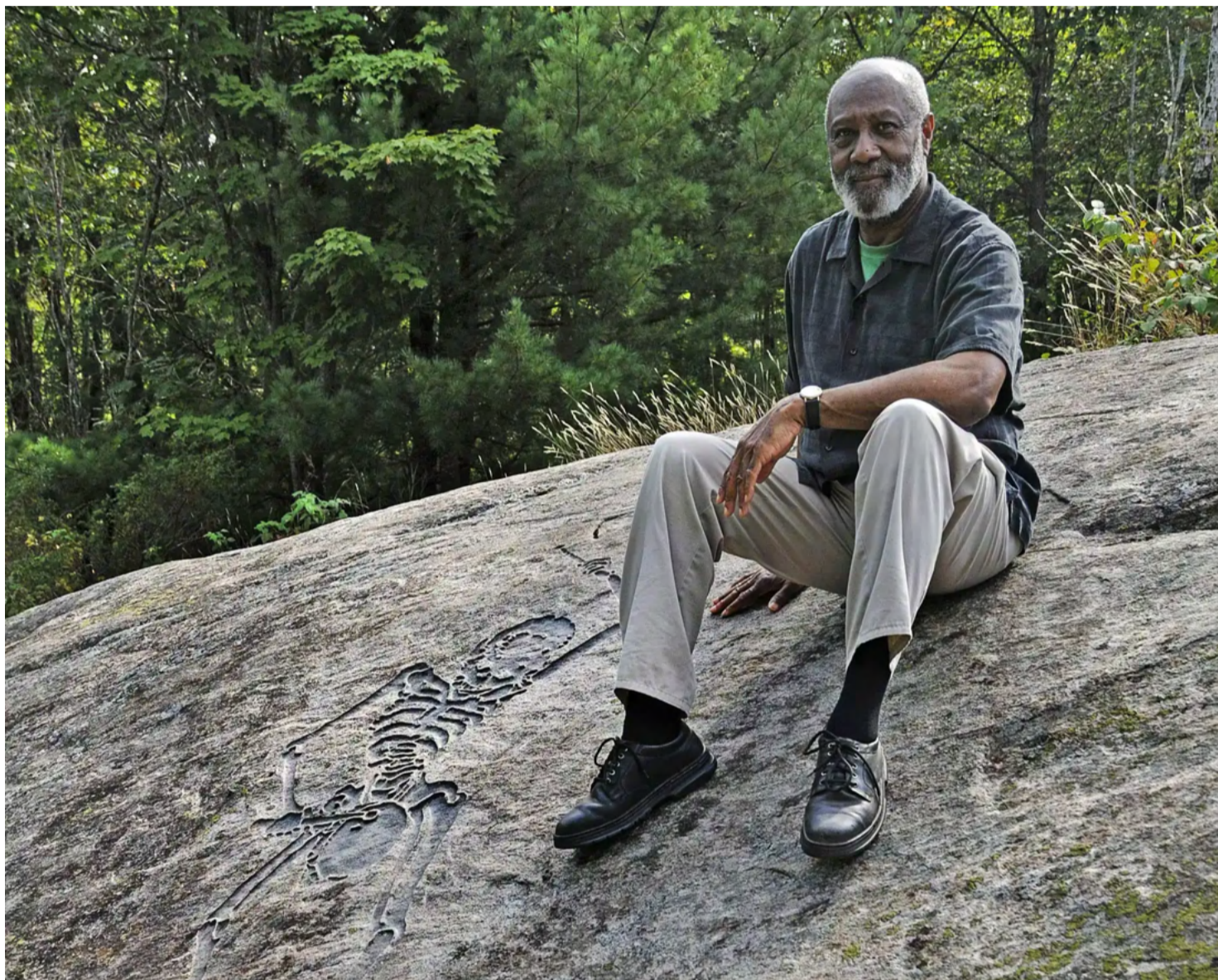
For Whiten, making art and teaching are reciprocal and intertwined practices. He comments, "Both are ways of giving. The value of teaching is to pass on the historic understanding of what it means to be human. There is no separation. Teaching and making art are the same."<sup>22</sup> As curator Virginia Eichhorn observes, "Tim Whiten has provided a legacy that has left an indelible imprint on the contemporary art world, leading with conviction where others may have been afraid to tread. In doing so, he has empowered his students to create work with authenticity and conviction."<sup>23</sup> Curator Pamela Edmonds adds, "Tim has continued to make profound works that reflect on life and death through a sacred lens, though he does not focus on any one faith or religion. This gives his work a wide scope that can speak to a broad diversity of audiences."<sup>24</sup>

Whiten's contemporaries, students, and colleagues have described him in different ways. As an artist, teacher, and individual, he is known for his wisdom, intelligence, inquisitiveness, innate dignity, and depth of character. He is a natural leader; a multi-talented artist of creative complexity and integrity; a generous, respectful collaborator; an empathetic, inspiring teacher of exceptional knowledge;<sup>25</sup> and a strong principled creator,<sup>26</sup> possessing gentle strength, honest solidity, and a steadfast nature.<sup>27</sup> He is a war veteran

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

who produces work that absorbs suffering without affect or reference to the self.<sup>28</sup> He has a magnetic presence and a fierce intelligence but isn't caught up in ego or a cult of personality.<sup>29</sup> He is as unknowable as the deep dark sea and as translucent as his glass sculptures.<sup>30</sup>



Tim Whiten, 2022, installation view of *Danse* (detail of drummer), 1998-2000, sandblasted stone, life-size, Tree Museum, Gravenhurst, Ontario, photograph by Mehraban Mehrabani.

A white, intricately carved wooden structure, possibly a miniature shrine or a decorative box, with a pointed top and ornate carvings. A human skull is visible through a circular opening in the center of the front panel. The text "STYLE & TECHNIQUE" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

# STYLE & TECHNIQUE

To produce his cultural objects, Tim Whiten relies on natural materials such as wood, stone, glass, brass, iron, gold leaf, talc, adobe, cloth, leather, fur, hair, bone, teeth, and chewing gum. Often temporal, they are subject to decay. Their inherent qualities inform the essence, character, and meaning of his work. In addition to those informing properties and the handling of the materials—hammering, carving, casting, burning—the artist’s considerations include the historical, cultural, and symbolic references; the presentational context; and the impact of the work on his audiences. The result is a deeply resonant compression of form, colour, material, and meaning.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## DRAWING: RITUALIZED GESTURES OF MARK-MAKING

Since the early 1970s, Whiten has held a daily drawing practice. Culled from the rhythmic actions of the body, his repetitive strokes echo the mundane labours of daily life (washing the floor, sweeping with a broom) and the fundamental act of breathing (inhaling, exhaling). Exuding a pronounced sensuality, his tactile surfaces register the gestures made by rubbing, erasing, rolling, and wrapping. For example, the early graphite drawing *Untitled*, 1972, reveals traces left by erasure marks that cover the entire surface.

Whiten's compositions present us with a lexicon of graphic expressions—cursive scripts, musical vibrations and notations, stellar constellations, esoteric symbols, recitations, and incantations—often forming a dense aggregate of marks. Leaning on a kind of spiritual diction, his iconography is transformed into poetic meditations. Each work possesses the durational quality of a performance and a syntax embodying the full consonance of corporeal gestures—exemplified by his 1981 series *Magic Gestures: Lites and Incantations*.

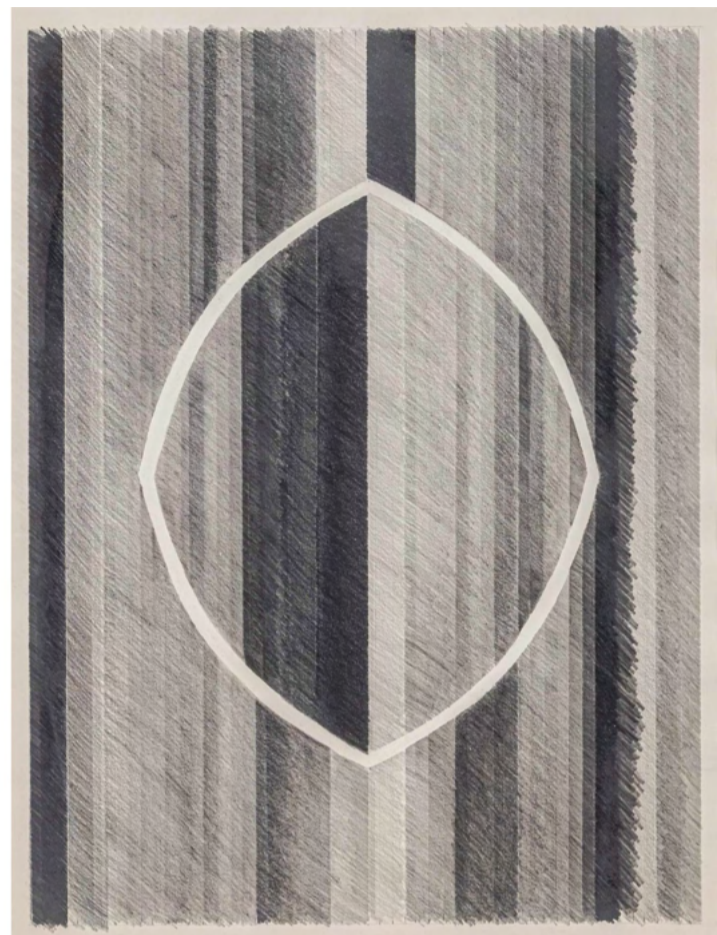
Whiten employs various media: graphite, charcoal, spray paint, pencil whittlings, sutures, and stitches. Lemon and other fruit juices, coffee, spices such as turmeric, and distilled rose essence imbue his works with a lingering aroma and a redolent somatic presence. His palette is comprised of earthen materials and pigments, such as the red brick dust originally swept across the thresholds of private homes by his ancestors to ward off evil spirits, evident in the drawing *His Presence Has Always Been Known to Me*, 1988.<sup>1</sup> Colour is rarely additive; instead, colour is born from the natural materials, subject to the flux of ambient conditions. For example, in his recent series of works on paper *Saying His Name...*, 2017, vertical ribbons of cross-hatched black pencil marks appear to shift in hue depending on the angle of perception; the intense saturation of graphite unfolds from the monochromatic to embrace a spectrum of colour.<sup>2</sup>



Tim Whiten, *Untitled*, 1972, graphite on Dessein paper, 109 x 145 cm, private collection.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *His Presence Has Always Been Known to Me*, 1988, graphite stick, graphite pencil and brick dust on wove paper, 127 x 97.8 cm, CU Art Museum, University of Colorado Boulder. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Saying His Name, At the Portal*, 2017, graphite pencil on Canson antique white paper, 99.7 x 70 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.

Whiten uses gestural mark-making to summon the subtle faculties of perception, both within himself and within the viewer. Approaching drawing as a child might, he suspends artistic or intellectual judgements. Akin to the mystical rituals believed to be the source of the Paleolithic cave paintings of Lascaux, drawing is a means of accessing other worlds, a way of stepping through the portal into new and unfamiliar territory. Encountering the artist's 1991 Constellation drawings in the 2005 exhibition *Tribute: The Art of African Canadians*, curator Pamela Edmonds comments: "I recall being astounded by these mysterious enigmatic wall works that felt otherworldly yet intimately human. They seemed ancient yet very contemporary."<sup>3</sup>

Eluding a static reading, Whiten's dynamic compositions refute closure. His complex articulations disperse and coalesce, ordered by an innate rhythmic pulse, before mounting to a crescendo. Light captured on the surface of the paper appears fleeting, transitory. As points of illumination, they punctuate the visual field, suggesting epiphanies, portals, or apertures to the ineffable.



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

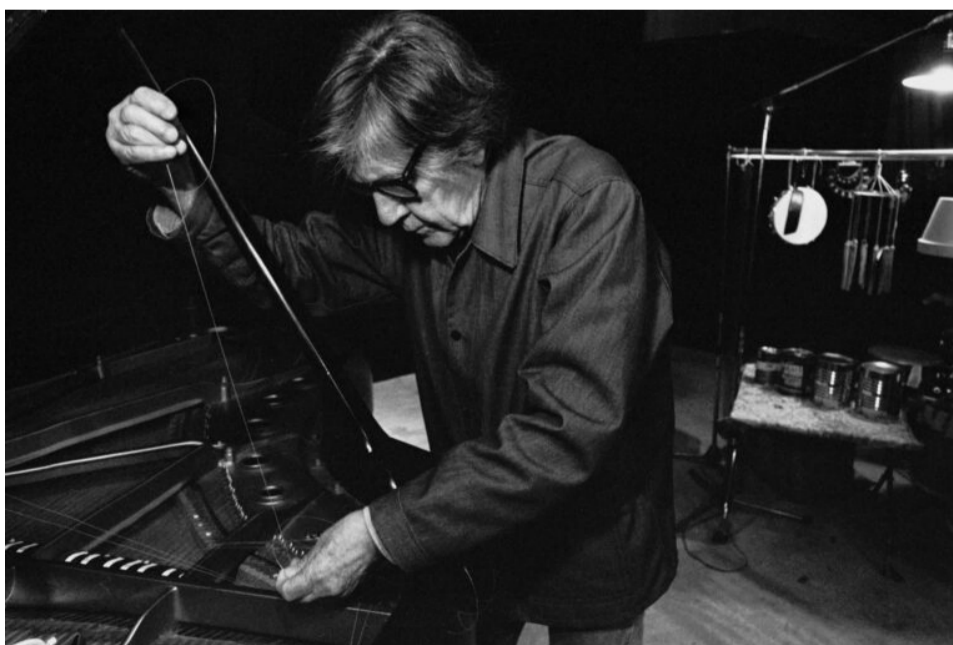


Tim Whiten, *Untitled*, 1973, graphite on paper, 63.5 x 96.5 cm, Art Museum at the University of Toronto.

## PERFORMANCE: RITUALIZED BEHAVIOURS

Ritual is traditionally understood as acts of repetition and renewal governed by a religious authority and conforming to an orthodoxy of set rules and behaviours. Whiten's interest lies not in ritual but in ritualized behaviours or gestures, the conscious repetition of simple acts that lead to human understanding. These gestures need not be large; they can be basic and embrace everyday experiences, from breathing to chewing gum. As he states: "It's the recognition of its importance that matters."<sup>4</sup>

The avant-garde composer, musician, and philosopher John Cage (1912-1992) was a formative influence on Whiten. Cage's practice was also a stimulus for the development of the Fluxus movement in North America, which focused on art within the small, repetitive gestures of daily life. Given Whiten's interest in ritual, Cage invited Whiten to participate in his 1976 performance *Lecture on the Weather*, 1975, at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo with other collaborators James Tenney (1934-2006), George Manupelli



Irene Haupt, *John Cage in Buffalo*, c.1987, gelatin silver print, 8.5 x 12.5 cm.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

(1931–2014), David Rosenboom (b.1947), and Casey Sokol (b.1948). Each participant was asked by Cage to contribute a text, either to be read or sung, simultaneously providing seven different voices. None of the individual texts were discernible; instead, when experienced together, they resembled a Ramayana Monkey Chant (also known as Kecak). Whiten's contribution to this performance focused on seven different vowel sounds related to colour, exploring how sounds manifest in the physical world as vibrations.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Whiten produced several major performance installations. In 1977, he created *Morada* for Artpark in Lewiston, New York, an outdoor installation in which he invited viewers to move through a series of ritual stations, descending into and ascending from an underground chamber that held symbolic elements: twenty-two human skulls, a garland of cedar, twelve roses, pine needles, and copal rock. During his ritual performance *Metamorphosis (Stage III)*, 1980, the artist donned a bearskin pelt and then struggled to free himself without using his hands, a gesture of rebirth and transformation. In subsequent manifestations of this work, Whiten displayed the evidence—the residues—of this ritual act.

In 1982, Whiten produced *Matrix*, a performance combining the elements of fire and water, held in an underground cave in New York City's Central Park. Whiten was dressed half in white and half in black, while his partner Julie Freeman was dressed in the opposite, their left and right hands bound together by ropes—a gesture symbolizing the uniting of opposites. As the artists advanced to an adobe urn to light a fire, a simultaneous explosion occurred in the stream outside the cave. Assuming a supine position on a large stone altar, they waited for the flames to subside. Rising together, they exited the cave, crossing the stream that separates the cave from the land. Two skulls remained in their place, witness to this ritual process of transformation and renewal.



Tim Whiten, *Matrix*, 1982, site-specific installation and ritual performance with human skulls, fire and water explosion, variable dimensions, Art Across the Park, Central Park, New York City.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## THE HUMAN SKULL: PRESENCE AND ABSENCE

Since the 1970s, the human skull has figured prominently in Whiten's performance installations, including *Morada*, 1977, and *Matrix*, 1982, as well as in his cultural objects. For example, his 1976 exhibition at Bau-Xi Gallery in Toronto featured a work with fifty human skulls displayed in a large basket (*Ark*, 1976). In later works, human skulls are tethered to objects on wheels: a battering ram (*Ram*, 1987); a child's wagon (*Canticle for Adrienne*, 1989); and a bicycle wheel (*Hearken to the Service of Emmanuel*, 1990).



Tim Whiten, *Ram*, 1987, human skull, wood, talc, white glue, baby carriage wheels, 36.8 x 274.3 x 30.5 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

The gesture of wrapping or covering human skulls is also common to Whiten's practice. In *Descendants of Parsifal*, 1986, eight human skulls are layered with chewing gum, leather, talc, and glue, some featuring glass eyes in the sockets. In *Rebis II*, 2010, a leather-covered skull is placed in a wall-mounted glass boat, while in *Horus Negotiating the Waters*, 2017, a leather-bound skull is slung in a fabric hammock. Leather pulled taut over forms conveys that which is hidden under the surface: the act of wrapping, of covering, both conceals and reveals. A precursor to his use of human skulls, in the early 1970s, the artist sutured stones into leather coverings, yielding forms that were simultaneously visible yet invisible, present yet absent.

Art historically, the depiction of the human skull belongs to *vanitas* iconography. A *memento mori*, its portrayal is a reminder of the transience of life. For Whiten, the skull is symbolic of life, death, potentiality, transformation, and transcendence. It is the container of knowledge, the seat of psychic memory, and the basis from which we spring, possessing both residual energies and ancestral lineages in its DNA, as present in chewing gum as it is in human hair or bones.<sup>5</sup> For the artist, the skull is also a link to the bone graves of Central Africa and the boneyards of the Black communities in the southern United States. Continuing this African American ritualized activity, the descendants of enslaved Black people living in his Michigan hometown built an animal boneyard in the woods near his childhood home. Given that his mother was a butcher, bones were commonplace in the artist's familial environment.



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Reliquaire*, 2012, handcrafted crystal-clear glass, human skull, gold leaf, 47 x 40.6 x 30.5 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.  
RIGHT: Harmen Steenwijck, *Still Life: An Allegory of the Vanities of Human Life*, c.1640, oil on oak panel, 39.2 x 50.7 cm, National Gallery, London.

Whiten's artistic choices have been shaped by other early influences, including a comic-book character from his youth. He recalls, "The Phantom, Lee Falk's popular superhero, used the mark of the skull to psychologically outwit his enemies. He dwelt in a cave configured as a skull, sat in a stone throne with a skull mounted at the upper part of the armrest and wore a ring in the configuration of the human skull."<sup>6</sup> These early impressions gave rise to the sculptural piece *Siege Perilous*, 1988. Here, a white wooden throne, supporting a human skull at each armrest, denotes the seat at King Arthur's table reserved for the knight who seeks the Holy Grail, the knight who makes the necessary sacrifices in his arduous quest for self-knowledge. As the artist comments, "Every piece with a skull is about sacrifice."<sup>7</sup>

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



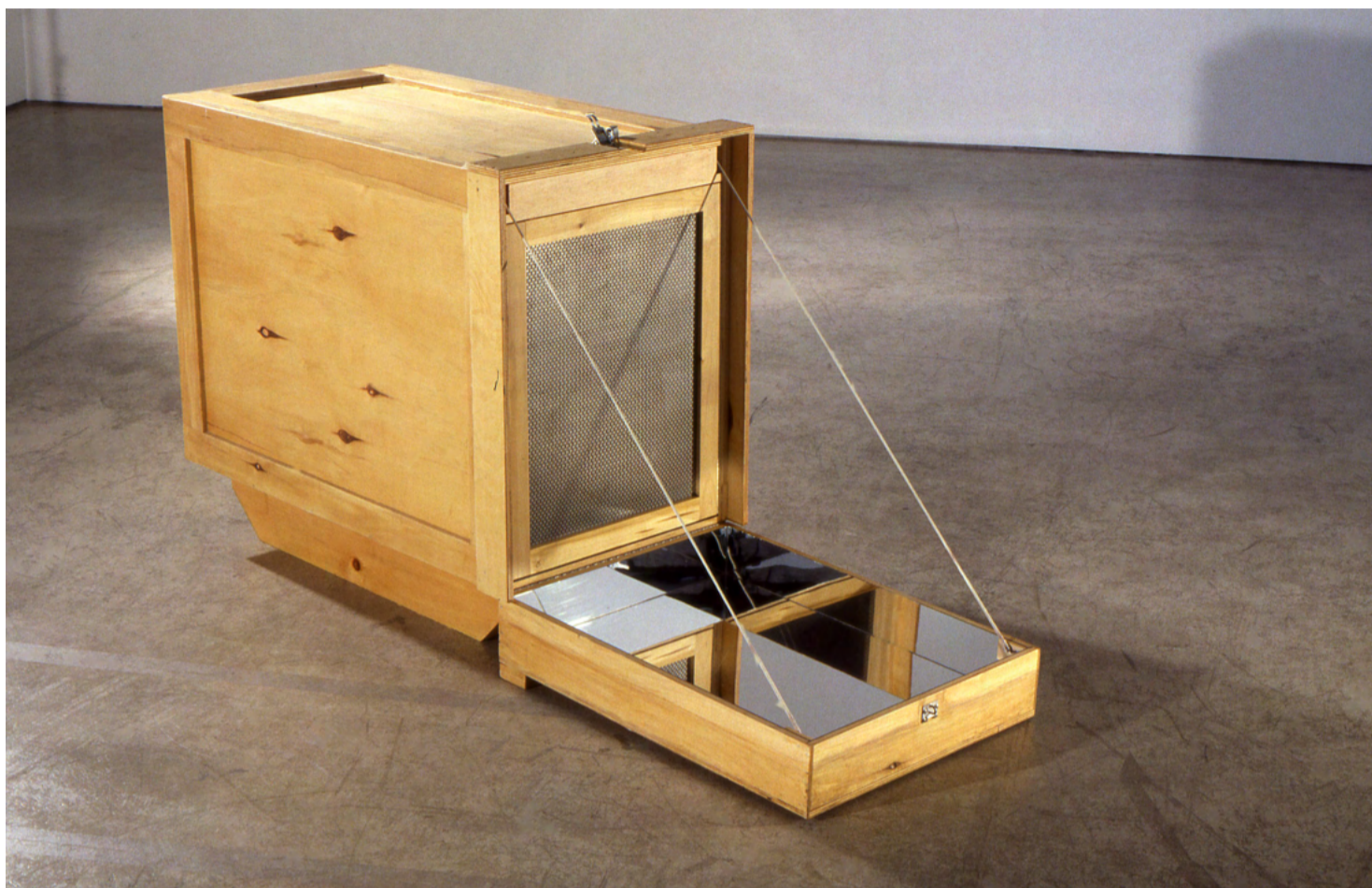
Tim Whiten, *Siege Perilous*, 1988, human skulls, wood, talc, white glue, 86.4 x 101.6 x 101.6 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton.

## MIRRORING: CONCEALING AND REVEALING

In the early 1990s, Whiten began producing three-dimensional works employing mirrors as metaphors for the nature of human consciousness. In works such as *Vault*, 1993, *Draw*, 1993, *Courting the Caliph's Daughter*, 1993, and *Snare*, 1996, mirrors intentionally capture the viewer's reflection, in full or part, implicating the viewer in the work. Whiten's use of mirrors references mystical traditions in which the soul is envisioned as an inner mirror, heart, or organ of perception, necessitating the repetitive rituals of cleansing, polishing, and purification to be able to receive and reflect divine light. Furthermore, as art historian Robert Farris Thompson (1932-2021) observes, Whiten draws on the Kongolesse belief that the mirror can provide a portal to another world, mediating between the visible and the invisible.<sup>8</sup>

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



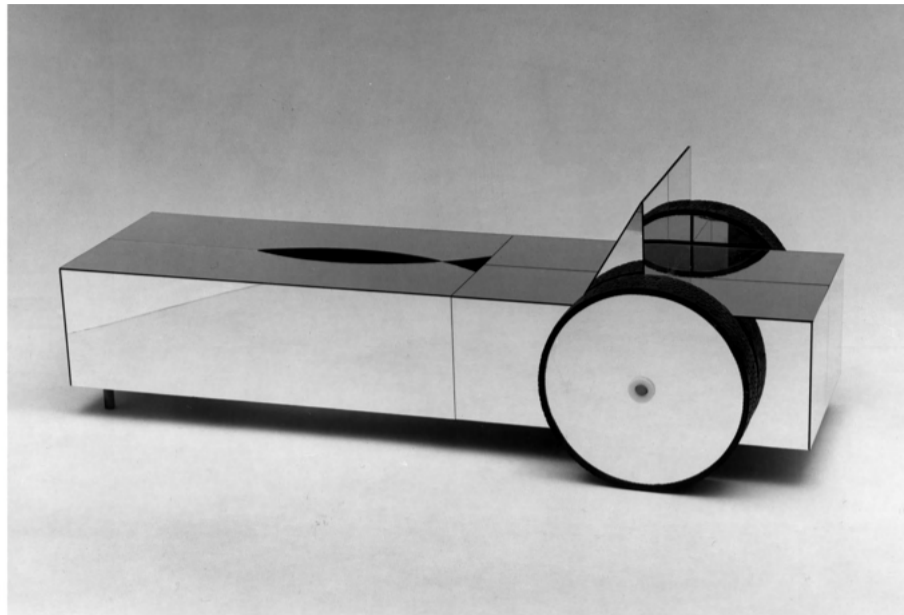
Tim Whiten, *Snare*, 1996, wood crate, mirror, 124.5 x 81 x 157.5 cm, City of Toronto / MOCCA Collection.

Adopting the antics of the mythological Trickster, Whiten uses contradiction, subversion, and humour to destabilize our habitual patterns of thought and perception. Reflected in the mirrored planes of *Victor*, 1993, and *Vault*, our self-image is obstructed, our gaze hindered. *Snare*, the artist's mirror-lined wooden crate, invites us to retreat into its interior space of infinite reflection. Once the drawbridge door is pulled up, our vision is lost within this mirrored container. *Draw*, Whiten's mirror-surfaced go-cart, possesses only rear wheels and no visible means to steer; its implied mobility is curtailed, much like *Clycieun*, 1991, Whiten's attenuated unicycle.

In *Courting the Caliph's Daughter*, Whiten presents us with a mirrored-top billiard table that reflects the ceiling above. No pockets are visible; instead, the inner perimeter is lined with human hair. The table supports a single red stone ball and a six-foot-long cue stick. The usual conditions of play are absent, confounding our expectations; its function evades logic. Instead, the artist requires that we suspend the rational operations of our mind and rest in the paradox, allowing the disparity between form and function to co-exist. To court the Caliph's daughter is to seek a union leading to a higher order, requiring different faculties of perception to take the reins.<sup>9</sup>

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Courting the Caliph's Daughter*, 1993, wood, mirror, stone, human hair, 165.1 x 83.8 x 86.4 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Draw*, 1993, mirror over wood, rubber, 66 x 53.3 x 182.9 cm, Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario.

The principle of mirroring is embedded in all of Whiten's works; his works are, in fact, mirrors. The artist writes, "I believe my work to be a continuous response to being in the world; the results of an active self-reflective principle."<sup>10</sup> For Whiten, consciousness is viewed as the mirror of reality triggered in the act of reflection.

## GLASS WORKS: THE CONDITIONS OF LIGHT

In 1983, Whiten led a series of design workshops for students in the glass program at Sheridan College in Oakville. In exchange, he was given the opportunity to use their facilities, supported by their glass experts Peter Kehoe and Daniel Crichton. With fabrication assistance from technicians and glass masters such as Libor Furbacher and Alfred Engerer, Whiten has since produced an extensive body of work in glass.

Enlisted as a sculptural medium for its inherent physical properties, glass is versatile; it can assume numerous colours, shapes, and states (from liquid to solid); and it is capable of transmitting light in varying degrees.

Whiten's oeuvre embraces the transformation of quotidian objects. While each item retains a semblance of its utilitarian prototype—in size, form, and implied action—its material constitution, function, and symbolic resonance are radically altered. One series of glass objects emulates the contours of ordinary hand tools used by his parents to perform their daily tasks. Human-scaled, they generate a continuum between lived experience on the physical plane and the spiritual realm.



LEFT: Tim Whiten working on *Arisearose*, 2017, photograph by Margherita Matera. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Who-Man/Amen*, 2016, handcrafted crystal-clear glass, mixed media with human skeleton, 40.6 x 163.8 x 66 cm, Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

*One, One, One*, 2002, a life-size replica of a straw broom with a long wooden handle, recalls his mother's employment as a domestic servant in Michigan. This ghostly apparition leaning against the wall conjures the ritual processes of purification and spiritual cleansing. Furthermore, transformed by fire, its fabrication necessitated burning away the original organic materials during the casting process, leaving only this rarified shell.

*Mary's Permeating Sign*, 2006, also pays tribute to the artist's mother. Here, a sandblasted, cast glass reproduction of a wooden rolling pin that his father made for his mother as a wedding gift is placed on a lace pillow. Numbers derived from her birthdate—November 26, 1914—are etched into a "magic square."<sup>11</sup> For Whiten, the rolling pin celebrates the importance of sharing food in African American families and the love that goes into this labour. On a personal level, it commemorates the life of his mother "as her imprint carries on in the DNA and memories of future generations."<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, *T After Tom*, 2002, honours the artist's father: a carpenter, brick layer, and Mason. Constructed from glass, it constitutes a partial brick wall and a series of tools: a carpenter's square, a level, and a plumb bob (a spade, a divider, and a pickaxe were added later). Whiten's spectral instruments were inspired by a dream in which the artist's father appeared to him saying, "Don't forget to take care of the tools, Tim."<sup>13</sup> These are the symbolic tools required to build the temple within and a strong spiritual foundation.



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *T After Tom (Pickaxe)*, 2010, cast crystal glass, 88.9 x 53.34 x 7 cm, Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *T After Tom: Phase II (Divider)*, 2006, handcrafted etched glass and brass, 89 x 26 x 1.5 cm, Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa.

Whiten comments, "Tools are the way in which we can materialize things; they become the means by which we can take things from an idea to a physical reality. They're almost a means of transcendence that way."<sup>14</sup> Toys are tools. As imparted in the narrative that inspired his blue glass rocking horse, *Lucky, Lucky, Lucky*, 2010, Whiten observes that "when children play with toys, they are available to another world."<sup>15</sup> In the artist's hands, ordinary objects made of wood, metal, or straw translated into glass become elevated in stature. Each becomes a subtle technology intended for spiritual purposes, just as the body becomes the tool of the soul.

Whiten's ritualistic vision also transforms artifacts of religious devotion. Calling to mind the artist's Baptist upbringing as well as the belief systems of other cultures, his glass works trace the contours of sacred objects such as altars, reliquaries, caskets, prayer carpets, and illuminated manuscripts. For example, *Book of Light: Containing Poetry from the Heart of God*, 2016, comprises a large glass book placed on a wooden lectern, its facing pages spread open to reveal



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

burnt and torn drawings. An allusion to sacred scripture, this book is fixed; its pages cannot be turned, its sentences cannot be read. Without a cipher, a textual interpretation remains elusive. Instead, we are faced with the question of how to “read” light. Artist and long-time colleague Vera Frenkel (b.1938) comments, “One gazes into the half-clear, half-frosted book form, wondering about its contents which, as so many of Tim’s pieces do, invite us to enter another world. Everything about *Book of Light*—the choice of materials, the shape and proportion of the stand and what it contains, what we can see and what we must imagine—all combine to take us to a realm that Tim knows well and where he leads us.”<sup>16</sup>



Tim Whiten, *Book of Light: Containing Poetry from the Heart of God*, 2016, handcrafted crystal-clear glass, drawings (coffee and pencil on handmade paper), wood (oak), 119.4 x 71.1 x 38.1 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.

For Whiten, glass not only embodies the conditions of perception; it is a transcendental material, mediating the visible and invisible, allowing passage from one world to another. One of the artist’s favourite verses from the Qur’an (24:35) describes glass as a vessel for divine illumination: “God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. His Light is like this: there is a niche, and in it a lamp, the lamp inside a glass, a glass like a glittering star, fueled from a blessed olive tree from neither east nor west, whose oil almost gives light even when no fire touches it—light upon light—God guides whoever He will to his Light.”<sup>17</sup>

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## THE MATERIAL CONDITIONS OF BEING

*I have pursued expressions of being in the world as a series of passages, perceiving mortality itself as threshold, giving form to transcendent moments by tracing the contours of the ineffable.*

–Tim Whiten<sup>18</sup>

Questions around the nature of existence and human consciousness are central to Whiten's artistic practice and are reflected in the evolution of his material choices. In 1983, Whiten created his first glass skull, *Cosmos*. Thirty years later, he produced *Perceval*, 2013, a rose-coloured glass skull, uniting two enduring images: the rose, emblematic of spiritual passion; and the human skull, signifying potentiality. While the skull is anonymous, the title of the artwork identifies it as a rendering of the Arthurian knight in quest of the Holy Grail; it can also be viewed as a self-portrait by the artist. Conceived in glass, its translucency denotes a receptiveness to the presence of a luminous, transcendent "Other."



LEFT: Tim Whiten, *Cosmos*, 1983, cast glass, 24 x 11.4 x 21.6 cm, courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. RIGHT: Tim Whiten, *Perceval*, 2013, lead crystal glass, 17.8 x 15.2 x 22.9 cm, Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario.

Whiten's planning is exhaustive, embracing a critical and abiding level of care, coupled with a strict austerity of gesture and inflection. As his technical associate Srebrenka Bogović comments, "Tim's approach extols the final result over the means used to achieve it, demonstrated especially in his three-dimensional objects, by concealing the extensive planning and effort in creating a perfect object with a complex message. Such undertaking frees his art from being admired for technical prowess, demanding instead our spiritual, perceptual, and philosophical engagement. The choice of unforgiving materials further contributes to the viewer's intricate emotional reactions."<sup>19</sup> As artist Bonnie Devine (b.1952) comments, "He is always aware of the limits and capacity of things, questioning 'What does the material afford?'"<sup>20</sup>

Drawing from a rich repository of archetypal narratives and images, Whiten transforms everyday materials into exquisitely rendered symbolic objects, re-engaging the ritual function of art. His artistic and spiritual pursuits are intertwined: his technical processes open into his spiritual practice; his spiritual practice is his technical process. For him, "Making art is not a vocation, it's a way of being, a spiritual calling. It's a commitment to Life, real Life."<sup>21</sup>

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

The various stages of Whiten's artistic production over the past fifty years, reflected in his material choices, can be read as the evidence of his own spiritual journey. From the opacity of human remains to the translucency of glass, his material choices trace a spiritual passage from flesh to spirit, darkness to light, the finite to the infinite—a transformative path he illuminates for the viewer to follow. In an artist statement from 1980, Whiten writes, "The work in its material aspect exists as 'signs' marking a path taken by their author, at times revealed as corresponding very clearly to that travelled by others, but in other instances, seemingly the notations of unfamiliar territory, less travelled, and therefore more difficult to define and read." Ultimately, his cultural objects function as spiritual tools engaged to transform both the maker as well as his audience. As the artist comments, "The work is about what we can become."<sup>22</sup>



Tim Whiten, 2001, photograph by Jaroslaw Rodycz.

A photograph of three objects on a light-colored wooden floor against a dark brown wall. On the left, a broom with a long wooden handle and a head of dried grass is partially inside a shallow, dark, bowl-shaped object. On the right, a dark, rounded jug with a small handle sits on the floor. The text 'WHERE TO SEE' is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font in the center of the image.

# WHERE TO SEE

The works by Tim Whiten are held in public and private collections in Canada and internationally. Although the following institutions hold the works listed below, they may not always be on view.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## ART GALLERY OF HAMILTON

123 King Street West  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
905-527-6610  
artgalleryofhamilton.com



**Tim Whiten, *Magic Sticks*, 1970**  
Leather thongs over wood  
89 x 2.5 x 2.5 cm

---



**Tim Whiten, *Ram*, 1987**  
Human skull, wood, talc, white glue, baby carriage wheels  
36.8 x 274.3 x 30.5 cm

---



**Tim Whiten, *Siege Perilous*, 1988**  
Human skulls, wood, talc, white glue  
86.4 x 101.6 x 101.6 cm

---



**Tim Whiten, *Canticle for Adrienne*, 1989**  
Human skull, human hair, wood, talc, white glue  
127 x 61 x 114.3 cm

---



**Tim Whiten, *Hearken to the Service of Emmanuel*, 1990**  
Wood, bicycle wheel, human skull  
101.6 x 203 x 203 cm

---



**Tim Whiten, *Mary's Permeating Sign*, 2006, edition 2/2**  
Cast and sandblasted glass  
61 x 11.4 x 11.4 cm

---



**Tim Whiten, *Lucky, Lucky, Lucky*, 2010**  
Handcrafted sandblasted glass  
58.4 x 109.2 x 33 cm

---

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

317 Dundas Street West  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
1-877-225-4246  
ago.ca



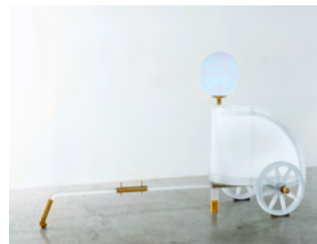
**Tim Whiten, *Metamorphosis*, 1978-89**

Ritual performance; ritual vessel (tanned bearskin, brass bells, cotton ties), grey pillow (cotton synthetic form), crushed eggshells, four glass votive containers and candles, four incense tiles  
254 x 254 cm installed



**Tim Whiten, *Elysium*, 2008**

Mixed-media installation with human skulls, glass eyes, chewing gum, talc, white glue, graphite, lilac staffs, umbrella and walking cane elements, used carpet, metal frame, rubber castors, wood, plastic mirror, engraved enamel pots  
304.8 x 259.1 x 259.1 cm



**Tim Whiten, *After Phaeton*, 2013**

Handcrafted crystal-sandblasted glass, ionized glass, brass fittings  
167.6 x 243.8 x 58.4 cm

---

## ART MUSEUM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

7 Hart House Circle  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
416-978-1838  
artmuseum.utoronto.ca



**Tim Whiten, *Void I*, 1970**

Jellied graphite on paper  
48.3 x 63.5 cm



**Tim Whiten, *Long Silence*, 1971**

Graphite on paper  
63.5 x 96.5 cm



**Tim Whiten, *Untitled*, 1973**

Graphite on paper  
63.5 x 96.5 cm

---

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## ART WINDSOR-ESSEX

401 Riverside Drive West  
Windsor, Ontario, Canada  
artwindsor-essex.ca



**Tim Whiten, *Vault*, 1993**

Wood, mirror  
198.1 x 243.8 x 182.9 cm

---

## CANADA COUNCIL ART BANK

921 St. Laurent Boulevard  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
613-566-4414  
artbank.ca



**Tim Whiten, *T After Tom: Phase II (Divider)*, 2006**

Handcrafted etched glass and  
brass  
89 x 26 x 1.5 cm

---

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## CANADIAN CLAY & GLASS GALLERY

25 Caroline Street North  
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada  
519-746-1882  
theclayandglass.ca



**Tim Whiten, *One, One, One*, 2005, third edition**

Cast, rolled, and sandblasted  
glass  
157.5 x 20.3 x 7.6 cm

---

## CITY OF TORONTO / MOCCA COLLECTION

Second Floor, St. Lawrence Market  
95 Front Street East  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
416-392-7604  
<https://www.toronto.ca/explore-enjoy/history-art-culture/museums/market-gallery/>



**Tim Whiten, *Snare*, 1996**

Wood crate, mirror  
124.5 x 81 x 157.5 cm

---



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## MACKENZIE ART GALLERY

3475 Albert Street  
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada  
306-584-4250  
mackenzie.art



**Tim Whiten, *Clycieun*, 1991**

Wood, bicycle wheel, seat  
251.5 x 53.3 x 22.9 cm

---

## MCMASTER MUSEUM OF ART

McMaster University, 1280 Main Street West  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
905-525-9140 ext. 23081  
museum.mcmaster.ca



**Tim Whiten, *Hallelujah (II)*, 2015**

Handcrafted crystal-clear glass,  
lilac branches, brass fittings  
152.4 x 213.4 x 48.3 cm



**Tim Whiten, *Arisearose*, 2018**

Handcrafted crystal-clear glass,  
crushed resourced glass, wood,  
gel medium, Aqua-Resin, acrylic  
paint, metal  
138.4 x 73.7 x 78.7 cm

---

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

380 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
1-800-319-2787  
gallery.ca



**Tim Whiten, *Court*, 2023**  
Crushed resourced glass, wood  
16 x 214 cm diameter

---

## THE ROBERT MCLAUGHLIN GALLERY

72 Queen Street, Civic Centre  
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada  
905-576-3000  
rmg.on.ca



**Tim Whiten, *Last Night, Night Before*, 1997**  
Textiles, cast iron, magnet  
30.5 x 244 x 823 cm

---

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

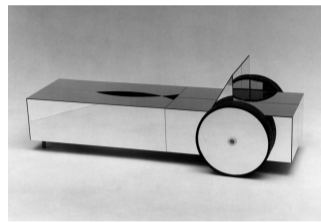
## TOM THOMSON ART GALLERY

840 1st Avenue West  
Owen Sound, Ontario, Canada  
519-376-1932  
tomthomson.org



**Tim Whiten, *Ch-air*, 1992**  
Human hair, chair, wheels  
112 x 69 x 84 cm

---



**Tim Whiten, *Draw*, 1993**  
Mirror over wood, rubber  
66 x 53.3 x 182.9 cm

---



**Tim Whiten, *Elemental*, 1993**  
Cast glass, human hair, cast iron  
40.6 x 38 x 38 cm

---



**Tim Whiten, *Victor*, 1993**  
Wood, mirror  
198.1 x 86.4 x 38.1 cm

---



**Tim Whiten, *T After Tom (Pickaxe)*, 2010**  
Cast crystal glass  
88.9 x 53.3 x 7 cm

---



**Tim Whiten, *Perceval*, 2013**  
Lead crystal glass  
17.8 x 15.2 x 22.9 cm

---



**Tim Whiten, *Who-Man/Amen*, 2016**  
Handcrafted crystal-clear glass, mixed media with human skeleton  
40.6 x 163.8 x 66 cm

---

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## TREE MUSEUM

1634 Doe Lake Road / Muskoka Road 6  
Gravenhurst, Ontario, Canada  
705-687-6008  
thetreemuseum.ca



**Tim Whiten, *Danse*, 1998-2000**  
Sandblasted stone  
Life-size

---



**Tim Whiten, *Danse* (detail of the constellation of roses), 2000**  
Sandblasted stone

---

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## NOTES

### BIOGRAPHY

1. The author gratefully acknowledges Tim Whiten's contributions throughout this section, drawn from interviews held between September 2021 and July 2023 and his "Autobiography" (unpublished manuscript, Toronto, 2020). The quote by Whiten in this introductory paragraph is from an interview with the author, July 26, 2023.
2. Whiten, "Autobiography," 2.
3. Whiten, "Autobiography," 2.
4. Whiten, "Autobiography," 2.
5. Tim Whiten, personal interview, October 21, 2021.
6. Whiten, "Autobiography," 10.
7. Tim Whiten, personal interview, July 26, 2023.
8. Tim Whiten, personal interview, July 26, 2023.
9. The Faculty of Fine Arts at York University was established in 1969, with courses offered the following year. Faculty members included Ronald Bloore, Ted Heinrich, and Tim Whiten, later joined by Ted Bieler, Arne Wolfe, Anthony Benjamin, Doug Morton, Eugenio Téllez, Larry Wiseman, George Manupelli, Vera Frenkel, and Zdenka Volavka.
10. Tim Whiten, personal interview, October 14, 2021; and Ted Bieler, personal interview, April 26, 2022.
11. Tim Whiten, personal interview, July 26, 2023.
12. John Noel Chandler, "Drawing Reconsidered," *artscanada* 27, no. 5 (October/November 1970).
13. Tim Whiten, personal interview, July 26, 2023.
14. One large graphite drawing from this exhibition is in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, and one is in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.
15. Michael Greenwood, *Tim Whiten: Sculpture and Drawings* (Toronto: Art Gallery of York University, 1972).
16. Tim Whiten, personal interview, July 26, 2023.
17. Tim Whiten quoted in an interview in the *Buffalo Evening News*, August 6, 1977.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

18. Lucy R. Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 206-7.
19. Tim Whiten, "Artist Talk | Tim Whiten," Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto, online exhibition description, Fall/Winter 2018, <https://moca.ca/events/artist-talk-tim-whiten/>.
20. Tim Whiten quoted in "Portrait of Tim Whiten, #GGArts2023 winner," 2023 Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts (Ottawa: Canada Council for the Arts, 2023), YouTube video, 2 min. and 18 sec.
21. Whiten, "Autobiography," 35.
22. In 2010, *Siege Perilous*, *Ram*, and *Canticle for Adrienne*, from the Art Gallery of Hamilton collection, were showcased in the exhibition *Ritual Evidence*, organized by Melissa Bennett for the AGH. Subsequent AGH acquisitions include *Mary's Permeating Sign*, 2006; *Lucky, Lucky, Lucky*, 2010; *Reliquaire (II)*, 2015, a handcrafted glass shrine holding a human skull covered in gold leaf; *Awk*, 1989, a sleeveless leather dress with a shark jaw inserted into the bodice; and *Magic Sticks*, 1970.
23. Melissa Bennett, personal communication, September 22, 2022.
24. *Ch-air*, *Elemental*, *Victor*, and *Draw* are held in the collection of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound.
25. Our shared interests in religion and philosophy, mysticism, and myth, as well as contemporary visual art, led me to write essays for the Tree Museum near Gravenhurst, Ontario, in 2000, which featured Tim Whiten's project *Danse* and his *Enigmata* series for the Meridian Gallery, San Francisco, California, in 2001.
26. The Tree Museum, Gravenhurst, Ontario, <https://www.thetreemuseum.ca/>.
27. Vera Frenkel, personal interview, September 28, 2022.
28. Pamela Edmonds quoted in "Tim Whiten, *Elemental: Ethereal* at McMaster Museum of Art" (Hamilton: McMaster Museum of Art, 2023), YouTube video, 3 min. and 26 sec.
29. Leila Timmins, "Tim Whiten: *Elemental: Oceanic*," The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, online exhibition description, Spring/Summer 2022, <https://rmg.on.ca/exhibitions/elemental-oceanic-2/>.
30. Chiedza Pasipanodya, "Tim Whiten: *Elemental: Earthen*," Art Gallery of Peterborough, online exhibition description, Winter/Spring 2023, <https://agp.on.ca/exhibitions/elemental-earthen/>.
31. Liz Ikiriko, "Tim Whiten: *Elemental: Fire*," Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, online exhibition description, Fall/Winter 2023, <https://agy.uart/project/tim-whiten/>.

# TIM WHITEN

## Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

32. Tim Whiten received the Gershon Iskowitz Prize in 2022 at a reception held on February 22, 2023, hosted by the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, and the Governor General's Award in Visual Art and Media Arts for Artistic Achievement in 2023, presented during a ceremony held at Rideau Hall in Ottawa on December 8, 2023.

### KEY WORKS: MORADA

1. *Morada* is a Spanish word that means "dwelling" or "residence," and particularly refers to the meeting house of the Penitentes.

2. The tetrahedron, a triangular pyramid, denotes change and transmutation, representing the triad of sulphur, mercury, and salt in alchemical traditions. It also signifies the sacred mountain or *axis mundi*, mediator between earth and sky, while marking the entrance to the underworld.

### KEY WORKS: METAMORPHOSIS

1. The description of these stages was provided by Tim Whiten during an interview with the author, April 21, 2022.

2. *Metamorphosis* as described on the AGO's website. See "Art pick of the week: Metamorphosis," Art Gallery of Ontario (website), December 3, 2019, <https://ago.ca/agoinsider/art-pick-week-metamorphosis>.

3. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 49.

### KEY WORKS: MAGIC GESTURES: LITES AND INCANTATIONS (ORANGE)

1. This series of nine works was also produced as an edition of three serigraphs.

2. Sandra Q. Firmin, "Tim Whiten: Tools of Conveyance," Sandra Q. Firmin, Jarrett Earnest and S. Brent Plate, *Tim Whiten: Tools of Conveyance* (Boulder: University of Colorado Art Museum, 2021), 60.

### KEY WORKS: CLYCIEUN

1. S. Brent Plate, "Glass and Stone, Books and Bone: Tim Whiten's Spiritual Technologies," in *Tim Whiten: Tools of Conveyance*, 42.

### KEY WORKS: VICTOR

1. Carolyn Bell Farrell, "The Mountain Within," in *Tim Whiten: Messages from the Light* (Toronto and Montreal: Koffler Centre for the Arts and Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts, 1997), 51, 53.

2. 1 Cor. 13:12 (King James Version).

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## KEY WORKS: VAULT

1. See the exhibition label for *Mirrored Room*, presented in *Lucas Samaras: Reflections*, June 21, 2014–January 4, 2015, at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo: <https://buffaloakg.org/artworks/k196615-mirrored-room>. The wall label continues: “He later wrote that with this work he was engaging with the entire history of mirrors, from their appearance in fairy tales to fun houses. He felt the end result created a space, an environment, a fantasy, a world of artificiality, a complicated panorama.”

2. Acquired by Glen E. Cumming, Director of the Art Gallery of Windsor, from 2001 to 2004 (renamed Art Windsor-Essex), *Vault* was featured in the gallery’s 2020 exhibition *Detroit, We Love You*. As a child, Whiten and his family often went to Windsor, given its proximity to Detroit; a second home, it occupies a formative place in the artist’s memories.

## KEY WORKS: ENIGMATA/ROSE (3)

1. The term “shower of roses” refers to a sign of the immanent piety and holiness of the female saint, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, a French Catholic Discalced Carmelite nun also known as the “Little Flower of Jesus” or the “Little Flower.”

2. In this series, Whiten used coffee and a natural dye from the fruit of the Jenipapo tree.

3. The series was first presented at the Meridian Gallery, San Francisco, in 2001. The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco’s M. H. de Young Memorial Museum (currently the de Young Museum) acquired a piece from this exhibition. Two works from each of the three series are also held in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

4. Tim Whiten, from correspondence with the Meridian Gallery, July 22, 2004.

5. Tim Whiten, from correspondence with Anne Trueblood Brodzky, May 13, 2003.

6. *Rumi: Selected Poems*, trans. Coleman Barks (London: Penguin Random House, 2015), 44.



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## KEY WORKS: DANSE

1. See EJ Lightman and Anne O'Callaghan, "Background/History," The Tree Museum (website), accessed May 20, 2024, <https://www.threetreemuseum.ca/pages/history.php>.
2. This ritual practice of rock carving or engraving dates back 20,000 years, and examples are found internationally. In Ontario, Petroglyphs Provincial Park is a historical-class provincial park northeast of Peterborough with a collection of 1,200 carvings believed to have been created by Algonquian- or Iroquoian-speaking people between 900 and 1100 CE. They represent aspects of Indigenous spirituality, including images of shamans, animals, and reptiles. "Petroglyphs," TRC-Bobcaygeon (website), accessed June 23, 2024, <https://trcbobcaygeon.org/petroglyphs/>.
3. Carolyn Bell Farrell, "Axis of Time," in *The Tree Museum: Site-Specific Installations* (Gravenhurst, ON: The Tree Museum, 2000), 19.
4. Stone symbolizes survival, immortality, *petra genetrix* (Latin for "fecund rock") or "generative stone"; in alchemy, it is the *prima materia*, the original bedrock.

## KEY WORKS: ELYSIUM

1. Tim Whiten quoted in an interview with Leah Sandals, "Return to the Spiritual: Tim Whiten at the new Art Gallery of Ontario," (online) and "Across the Great Divide," *National Post*, AL 12, November 13, 2008.
2. "Return to the Spiritual: Tim Whiten at the new Art Gallery of Ontario," November 13, 2008.
3. Excerpt from an unpublished artist statement by Whiten, "Standards, on Trees," Toronto, May 11, 2017.

## KEY WORKS: LUCKY, LUCKY, LUCKY

1. For example, in Greek mythology, the winged horse Pegasus depicts the passage from one plane to another, carrying the thunderbolt of Zeus.
2. Alchemy can be understood as consciousness and a process of transmutation, with the goal of uniting with the divine or original form. In alchemy, a crowned child represents the philosopher's stone, the mythic alchemical substance capable of turning base metals into refined materials, as well as a symbol of rejuvenation and immortality.
3. Tim Whiten, personal interview, September 23, 2021.

## KEY WORKS: AFTER PHAETON

1. Whiten's title for the work references the phaeton, an open carriage drawn by one or two horses, as well as Phaëthon in Greek mythology. Phaëthon comes from the word *phaethô* meaning "to shine," "the shining," or "radiant one."
2. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Fall of Phaeton*, c.1604/1605, oil on canvas, 98.4 x 131.2 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

3. The fiery chariot ascending to the heavens appears in the mythologies of diverse cultures and describes the soul's journey from darkness to light.

4. *After Phaeton* premiered in Whiten's 2013 solo exhibition *CIRCUIT* inside at Olga Korper Gallery. It was also featured in the 2018 group show *BELIEVE* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Toronto. It was acquired by the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2022.

## KEY WORKS: SEARCH REACH RELEASE

1. See "Blue Bottle Trees," South Carolina Lowcountry Tourism Commission (website), accessed May 20, 2024, <https://southcarolinalowcountry.com/blue-bottle-trees/>.

2. See "African Burial Customs in America, A Story," African American Registry (website), accessed May 20, 2024, <https://aaregistry.org/story/slaves-brought-burial-customs-from-africa-to-the-united-states/>. Also see <http://users.clas.ufl.edu/davidson/arch%20of%20death/Week%2013/Jamieson%201995.pdf>.

3. As Whiten comments, "Cobalt blue glass acts as a conduit, extending across two levels of experiential conditions." Tim Whiten, personal interview, April 7, 2022.

4. Cobalt blue also symbolizes the higher end of the colour spectrum, echoing the religious iconography of Whiten's carpet design as well as the blue rose.

## SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

1. See the section titled "The Value of Time" in Robert Smithson, "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects," *Artforum* 7, no. 1 (September 1968): 82-91. The essay can also be found on the Holt/Smithson Foundation website: <https://holtsmithsonfoundation.org/sedimentation-mind-earth-projects>.

2. David Liss, former Artistic Director and Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto, personal communication, May 14, 2022.

3. Suzi Gablik writes, "The remythologizing of consciousness through art and ritual is one way that our culture can regain a sense of enchantment." See Suzi Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 48.

4. Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art*, 42.

5. See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 223-24.

6. Tim Whiten quoted in his artist profile, "Tim Whiten," Olga Korper Gallery (website), accessed May 20, 2024, <https://www.olgakorpergallery.com/artists/tim-whiten/>.

7. Jack Burnham, "The Artist as Shaman," in *Great Western Salt Works: Essays on the Meaning of Post-Formalist Art* (New York: George Braziller, 1974), 144.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

8. Francis LeBouthillier, personal communication, June 24, 2022.
9. Olga Korper, personal communication, April 28, 2022.
10. Tim Whiten, "Return to the Spiritual: Tim Whiten at the new Art Gallery of Ontario," interview by Leah Sandals, Unedit My Heart (blog), November 13, 2008, <https://neditpasmoncoeur.blogspot.com/2008/11/return-to-spiritual-tim-whiten-at-new.html>.
11. Robert Farris Thompson, "The Art of Tim Whiten," in *Darker, ever darker; Deeper, always deeper: The Journey of Tim Whiten* (San Francisco: Meridian Gallery, 2010), 32.
12. June Clark, personal communication, April 22, 2022.
13. Sandra Brewster, personal interview, July 13, 2022.
14. Lyn Carter, personal interview, October 3, 2022.
15. Ron Shuebrook, personal communication, May 2, 2022.
16. Ron Shuebrook, personal communication, May 2, 2022.
17. Shelagh Keeley, personal interview, April 18, 2022.
18. Shabnam K.Ghazi, personal interview, June 30, 2022.
19. Shelagh Keeley, personal interview, April 18, 2022.
20. Bonnie Devine, personal interview, May 19, 2022.
21. Frances Thomas, personal communication, May 11, 2022.
22. Tim Whiten, personal interview, July 26, 2023.
23. Virginia Eichhorn, personal communication, May 17, 2001.
24. Pamela Edmonds, personal interview, April 16, 2022.
25. Ron Shuebrook, personal communication, May 2, 2022.
26. Sandra Brewster, personal interview, July 13, 2022.
27. Lyn Carter, personal interview, October 3, 2022.
28. Bonnie Devine, personal interview, May 19, 2022.
29. Pamela Edmonds, personal interview, April 16, 2022.
30. Olga Korper, personal communication, April 28, 2022.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## STYLE & TECHNIQUE

1. Art historian Robert Farris Thompson notes that powdered cayenne pepper was originally used in the Kingdom of Kongo. See Robert Farris Thompson, "The Art of Tim Whiten," in *Darker, ever darker; Deeper, always deeper: The Journey of Tim Whiten* (San Francisco: Meridian Gallery, 2010), 13.
2. A comparison can be made with Ad Reinhardt's black square oil paintings produced between 1957 and 1967, which reveal chromatic tinges of dark blue, red, and green.
3. Pamela Edmonds, personal interview, April 16, 2022.
4. Tim Whiten, personal interview, July 26, 2023.
5. In alchemy, the skull represents the first stage of the lesser work; blackening and mortification, dying to the world, of earth to earth.
6. Tim Whiten, personal interview, September 30, 2021.
7. Tim Whiten, personal interview, September 30, 2021.
8. Thompson, "The Art of Tim Whiten," 23.
9. Carolyn Bell Farrell, in *Tim Whiten: Messages from the Light* (Toronto and Montreal: Koffler Gallery, Koffler Centre of the Arts and the Liane and Danny Taran Gallery, Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts, 1997), 29-30.
10. Tim Whiten, artist statement published by Bau-Xi Gallery, Toronto, 1980. He continues: "My work on the content level allows for the mediation of material and idea by reflective consciousness, for I believe the condition 'Art' to be truly about consciousness while consciousness itself being that reflective principle which fosters its own aim; that is, to know and perpetuate itself by examination, revelation, and redefinition."
11. Magic squares were used as tools for divination and charms for protection, particularly in the Chinese and Arabic worlds.
12. Whiten's artist statement in an extended label for *Mary's Permeating Sign*, Olga Korper Gallery, 2006.
13. Tim Whiten, personal interview, October 14, 2021.
14. Tim Whiten, "Return to the Spiritual: Tim Whiten at the new Art Gallery of Ontario," interview by Leah Sandals, Unedit My Heart (blog), November 13, 2008, <https://neditpasmoncoeur.blogspot.com/2008/11/return-to-spiritual-tim-whiten-at-new.html>.
15. Tim Whiten, personal interview, September 23, 2021.
16. Vera Frenkel, personal interview, September 28, 2022.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

17. Translation from Arabic to English by Muhammad A.S. Abdel Haleem.

18. Tim Whiten quoted in "Two more Black Canadian artists celebrated in updated Senate exhibit," *SenCAplus Magazine* (online journal), December 7, 2021, <https://sencanada.ca/en/sencaplus/how-why/two-more-black-canadian-artists-celebrated-in-updated-senate-exhibit/>.

19. Srebrenka Bogović, personal interview, July 7, 2022.

20. Bonnie Devine, personal interview, May 19, 2022.

21. Tim Whiten, personal interview, July 12, 2023.

22. Tim Whiten quoted in an interview with Lori Starr, "Interview: Tim Whiten," *ArtSync*, February 4, 2010, Vimeo video, 11 min. 48 sec.

### GLOSSARY

#### **abstract art**

Also called nonfigurative or nonrepresentational art, abstract art uses form, colour, line, and gestural marks in compositions that do not attempt to represent images of visible reality. Abstract art may interpret reality in an altered form or depart from it entirely.

#### **Abstract Expressionism**

A style that flourished in New York in the 1940s and 1950s and is defined by its combination of formal abstraction and expression of the subconscious mind. The term describes a wide variety of work. Among the most famous Abstract Expressionists are Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Willem de Kooning.

#### **Arte Povera**

An Italian avant-garde art movement spanning the late 1960s to the early 1970s. The term “arte povera,” meaning “impoverished art,” was coined by critic Germano Celant in 1967. The movement embraced the use of found and humble materials, notably in sculptures, assemblages, and performance art. Arte Povera reacted against the commercial gallery world and American Minimalism by using natural and industrial materials. Major Arte Povera artists include Giovanni Anselmo, Giuseppe Penone, and Michelangelo Pistoletto.

#### **Art Gallery of Hamilton**

The largest public art museum in southwestern Ontario, the Art Gallery of Hamilton (AGH) was founded in 1914 and consists of a permanent collection of over 10,000 works by historical and contemporary Canadian and international artists. Occupying a 75,000-square-foot space on King Street, the AGH was redesigned by architect Bruce Kuwabara from 2003 to 2005.

#### **Art Gallery of Ontario**

Founded in 1900 as the Art Museum of Toronto, and later named the Art Gallery of Toronto, the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) is a major collecting institution, holding close to 95,000 works by Canadian and international artists. The AGO has undergone several expansions, including one completed in 2008 by architect Frank Gehry.

#### **automatism**

A physiological term first applied to art by the Surrealists to refer to processes such as free association and spontaneous writing, drawing, and painting that allow access to the subconscious without the interference of planning or controlled thought. Leading proponents include artists André Masson, Hans Arp, and Joan Miró.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## **avant-garde**

From the French for “vanguard” or “advance guard.” Avant-garde entered discussions about art in the early nineteenth-century work of the socialist thinker Henri de Saint-Simon, who believed that artists had a role to play in building a new society. The meaning of “avant-garde” has shifted over the years, referring to artists in relation to their times rather than to a particular group of artists working at a specific time in history. It connotes radicalism and rejection of the status quo and is often associated with work that is provocative and confrontational.

## **Beuys, Joseph (German, 1921–1986)**

A versatile visual artist, performer, educator, and political activist whose “expanded concept of art,” as he put it, held that every individual could act creatively, and that creativity could infuse every aspect of life. Animals are an important theme in Joseph Beuys’s frequently Symbolist and expressionistic works. He also made use of felt and fat in his artworks, as these materials held deep significance for him.

## **Bieler, Ted (Canadian, b.1938)**

A Kingston, Ontario-born sculptor and educator, currently based in Pickering, Ontario. Ted Bieler is known for his large-scale, public artworks on display throughout Canada and internationally, including *Triad*, 1984, installed on Toronto’s Front Street. Bieler taught at the Albright-Knox Art School at the University of Buffalo, the University of Toronto, and York University in the Department of Visual Arts and Art History, School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design, where he is now Professor Emeritus.

## **Bloore, Ronald (Canadian, 1925–2009)**

A founding member of the painting group the Regina Five, Ronald Bloore was an abstract painter and educator. Seeking a transcendental quality he saw in the architecture of ancient Greece, Turkey, and Egypt, Bloore destroyed his earlier work and began explorations in black and white, employing bold, organic shapes. Architecture continued to inform his practice. Eventually he incorporated the discipline into his work, making small, three-dimensional maquettes before creating full-scale versions.

## **Brewster, Sandra (Canadian, b.1973)**

A Toronto artist who foregrounds Black diasporic experience in her multidisciplinary practice, encompassing photography, video, drawing, and painting. Born to parents who emigrated from Guyana to Toronto in the late 1960s, Sandra Brewster conveys the intricate relationship between identity and movement, at times guiding the viewer through a metaphorical journey.

## **Brodzky (later Brodzky Williams), Anne Trueblood (American, 1932–2018)**

An Oregon-born editor, curator, and educator who lived in Canada from 1965 to 1982, and from 2016 to 2018. Anne Trueblood Brodzky was curator of education at the London Regional Art Gallery from 1965 to 1967; editor of *artscanada*, a prominent Canadian art magazine, from 1967 to 1982; and director of the Meridian Art Gallery, a non-profit exhibition and performance space in San Francisco from 1985 to 2015, which she founded with her husband, Anthony Williams.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## **Brâncuși, Constantin (Romanian, 1876–1957)**

An abstract sculptor working in wood, stone, and bronze, Constantin Brâncuși used simple geometric lines and shapes to create expressions of natural forms. Active for most of his life in Paris, he became known in the United States following his inclusion in the Armory Show, the 1913 International Exhibition of Modern Art. Brâncuși was a significant influence on artists Isamu Noguchi, Henry Moore, and Barbara Hepworth, and the Minimalist movement of the 1960s.

## **Cage, John (American, 1912–1992)**

An avant-garde composer, John Cage worked from principles of randomness and indeterminacy, his influence extending beyond minimalist and electronic music to conceptual and performance art. His best-known piece is *4'33"*, a work in three movements, during which a performer remains silent on stage, often seated at a piano, for the specified time of 4 minutes and 33 seconds. Other works relied on the *I Ching* to generate structure or were composed for a prepared piano—"prepared" in that objects were inserted into the strings, altering the sounds. Cage had a long collaboration with modern dance pioneer Merce Cunningham, his partner in life and art.

## **Cameron, Eric (British/Canadian, b.1935)**

An English-born, Calgary-based artist known for his "thick paintings," in which he applies thousands of thin coats of acrylic paint to everyday objects. Eric Cameron's work is held in the collections of major Canadian institutions, including Ottawa's National Gallery of Canada and Calgary's Glenbow Museum. He was the recipient of the 1994 Gershon Iskowitz Prize and the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts in 2004.

## **Canadian Art**

A quarterly national visual arts periodical published in Toronto. Focusing on contemporary Canadian art, its format included feature articles, interviews, editorials, art news, profiles of artists, and exhibition reviews. *Canadian Art* underwent several name changes after it was established in 1943. Between 1968 and 1983, it was known as *artscanada*, after which it became *Canadian Art* again. The magazine ceased operations in 2021.

## **Carter, Lyn (Canadian, b.1954)**

An artist and educator based near Grand Valley, Ontario, whose sculptures and drawings have been exhibited across North America and in Australia, Britain, Spain, and China. Educated at York University and the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University) in Toronto, Lyn Carter has maintained a studio practice for over forty years and often incorporates textiles in her three-dimensional works.

## **Chambers, Michael (Jamaican/Canadian)**

A Jamaican-born, Toronto-based artist who explores the diversity of the human form—particularly the Black body—in his black and white photography and gum bichromate images. Michael Chambers was the subject of the touring solo exhibition *Shadows to Silver: A 25 Year Retrospective*, 2017–19. He earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) at Toronto's York University. Chambers has mentored young artists at Don Mills Collegiate Institute for over two decades and served as an art instructor at the University of Toronto's Camera Club.



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## **Clark, June (American/Canadian, b.1941)**

A Harlem-raised, Toronto-based artist whose often-autobiographical work crosses the boundaries between photography, sculpture, and collage. June Clark has maintained a studio practice since the 1970s. Having earned international recognition, her work has been featured in exhibitions in North America, South America, and Europe, and is held in the collections of the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto and the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa.

## **Constructivism**

Constructivism was an artistic movement founded in Russia in 1915 by artists Vladimir Tatlin and Alexander Rodchenko. Associated with Soviet Socialism, it championed a materialist, utilitarian approach to art and linked art to design, industry, and social purpose. The term continues to be used generally to describe abstract art that employs lines, planes, and other visual elements in composing geometric images of a precise and impersonal nature.

## **Dalí, Salvador (Spanish, 1904–1989)**

A Spanish artist and influential member of the Surrealist movement, Salvador Dalí is best known for his provocative, heavily symbolic, dreamlike imagery drawn from the subconscious mind as well as his meticulous attention to detail. *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931, by Dalí, with its melting clock faces, remains one of the twentieth century's most parodied artworks.

## **Devine, Bonnie (Canada, b.1952)**

A mixed-media installation artist, writer, and curator of Anishinaabe/Ojibwe descent, acclaimed for her critical explorations of Ojibwe traditions and colonial legacies. Bonnie Devine has used video, sculpture, painting, and storytelling to interrogate complicated issues of land, treaties, and Indigenous-settler contact. She is an Associate Professor Emerita and founding chair of the Indigenous Visual Culture program at OCAD University in Toronto.

## **Duchamp, Marcel (French/American, 1887–1968)**

One of the most significant artist-thinkers of the twentieth century, Marcel Duchamp influenced Conceptual, Pop, and Minimal art. Best known for the sensational painting *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, 1912, he is also recognized for his readymade sculptures, among them *Fountain*, 1917 (a urinal), and his "desecrated" *Mona Lisa* print, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919.

## **Fluxus**

An international collective of artists active in the 1960s and 1970s working in visual art, theatre, music, design, and poetry. Street art, festivals, and events (also called "Happenings") figured prominently in Fluxus activities, which embraced process and experimentation over product, and strove to integrate art within everyday life. Influenced by John Cage and Marcel Duchamp, leading proponents of Fluxus include founder George Maciunas, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Ken Friedman, Nam June Paik, Yoko Ono, and Joseph Beuys.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## **Frenkel, Vera (Czech/Canadian, b.1938)**

Internationally recognized, Bratislava-born, Toronto-based multidisciplinary artist and writer. Prominent first for her work in printmaking and sculpture, Vera Frenkel has been at the forefront of contemporary media art since the 1970s. Her work has been presented at major museums and festivals throughout the world. She is a Professor Emerita at York University in the Department of Visual Arts and Art History, School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design. Frenkel is a recipient of major honours, including the Governor General's Award for Visual and Media Arts in 2005.

## **Hesse, Eva (German/American, 1936–1970)**

A sculptor known for her innovative use of materials including fiberglass, latex, and plastics. Hesse's sculptures often take on organic shapes, reflecting on the physicality and vulnerability of the human body, and are characterized by a focus on texture and pliability. Despite her short career due to her untimely death, Hesse is a seminal figure in Post-Minimal art.

## **installation art**

Installations are generally three-dimensional artworks often constructed in relationship to a given site. Hybrid art forms, they can include a variety of media such as painting, sculpture, sound, video, and performance. They may be temporary or permanent. Installation art emerged in the 1960s, and marked a shift away from the production of discrete, aesthetic art objects to the creation of experiential, interactive, and immersive environments.

## **Kandinsky, Wassily (Russian, 1866–1944)**

A Russian painter and theorist who settled in Germany and later in France, Wassily Kandinsky was central to the development of abstract art. Much of his work conveys his interest in colour, sound, and emotion. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1910), his famous treatise on abstraction, explores the psychology of colour and the language of form and composition while emphasizing expressions of the artist's inner life.

## **Keeley, Shelagh (Canadian, b.1954)**

An Oakville-born, Toronto-based artist known for her expanded drawing practice, often producing large-scale temporary, site-specific installations. Rising to prominence in the 1980s, Shelagh Keeley has maintained an international career, having lived in Paris and New York for twenty-two years. Her work is held in major public collections, including the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. She received the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts in 2017.

## **K.Ghazi, Shabnam (Iranian/Canadian, b.1971)**

A Tehran-born, Toronto-based artist whose paintings, sculptures, and ceramics have been widely exhibited in Canada and internationally. Shabnam K.Ghazi completed apprenticeships in these media in Iran in the 1990s, before moving to Toronto in 2001 and earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Toronto's York University in 2009.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## **Klee, Paul (Swiss/German, 1879–1940)**

A Swiss-born German artist with a highly individualist style and a vibrant imagination, influenced by Surrealism and Expressionism. Paul Klee was an accomplished painter, draftsman, printmaker, and colour theorist who produced over 10,000 artworks. He taught at the Bauhaus school of art, design, and architecture from 1921 to 1931 and at the Düsseldorf Academy from 1931 to 1933 in Germany.

## **land art**

An art form in which works are created in and from the land, and are often monumental in scale, site-specific, and comprised of locally found natural materials. Land art emerged in the 1960s out of the wider conceptual art movement and was mainly based in the United States and Great Britain. Sometimes known as environmental art or “earthworks,” these projects embraced concepts of temporality, natural erosion, and the ecological movement, while rejecting the commodification of the art object and the conventional gallery setting. Major proponents include artists Richard Long, Nancy Holt, Walter de Maria, and Robert Smithson.

## **LeBouthillier, Francis (Canadian, b.1962)**

A Toronto-based artist, educator, and researcher who has been a professor in the Faculty of Art at OCAD University since 1989. Francis LeBouthillier’s multidisciplinary practice involves creating technologically-infused installations that address issues related to the environment, gender, and power hierarchies. He also designs surgical simulators for research and medical education.

## **Lightman, EJ (Canadian, b.1952)**

A Toronto-based artist and curator known for founding the Tree Museum in Gravenhurst, Ontario, in 1997. The museum features an outdoor collection of site-specific artworks, including installations by Noel Harding, Ed Pien, Tim Whiten, and others. EJ Lightman also curated exhibitions at Toronto’s Workscene Gallery in the 1980s and has exhibited her own mixed-media artworks internationally.

## **Manupelli, George (American, 1931–2014)**

A Boston-born filmmaker and curator who founded Michigan’s Ann Arbor Film Festival in 1963, which he brought to prominence as an independent, experimental festival. Over a four-decade career as an educator, George Manupelli taught at the University of Michigan and York University in Toronto and served as Dean of the San Francisco Art Institute.

## **Miró, Joan (Spanish, 1893–1983)**

A prolific artist and important figure in the history of twentieth-century abstract art, Joan Miró engaged with painting, sculpting, printmaking, and decorative arts. Throughout his long career, Miró sustained a thematic interest in his native landscape. French Surrealism also influenced his work, although he is recognized to have developed his own deeply personal style.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## **Mondrian, Piet (Dutch, 1872–1944)**

A Dutch painter and theorist, Piet Mondrian was known for his “grid” paintings comprised of straight black lines and squares of primary colours. An influential figure in contemporary visual art, he heralded the change from figuration to geometric abstraction. Piet Mondrian co-founded the Dutch art movement De Stijl in 1917 with Theo van Doesburg, setting forth the principles of Neo-Plasticism, a nonrepresentational style conceived of as a pure plastic expression of universal values and aesthetics.

## **National Gallery of Canada**

Established in 1880, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa holds the most extensive collection of Canadian art in the country as well as works by prominent international artists. Spearheaded by the Marquis of Lorne (Canada’s Governor General from 1878 to 1883), the gallery was created to strengthen a specifically Canadian brand of artistic culture and identity and to build a national collection of art that would match the level of other British Empire institutions. Since 1988, the gallery has been located on Sussex Drive in a building designed by Moshe Safdie.

## **Nightingale Gallery**

A Toronto gallery founded in 1968 by Chris Youngs, an American expatriate. An important site for experimental and conceptual art, its seminal 1970 group exhibition *Concept 70*, curated by Youngs and Robert Bowers, featured works by Ian Carr-Harris, Stephen Cruise, John McEwen, Dennis Oppenheim, and General Idea. In 1971, Nightingale Gallery became A Space, an artist-run centre.

## **Oldenburg, Claes (Swedish/American, 1929–2022)**

A Swedish-born American sculptor who spent the majority of his career based in New York City. Oldenburg is best known for his experimental soft sculptures, as well as his monumental public art installations that often present everyday, mundane objects on a massive scale. Considered a major figure in the Pop art movement, a large number of his public works were created in collaboration with his wife, fellow artist Coosje van Bruggen (1942–2009).

## **performance art**

A visual art form in which artworks are created through actions or gestures by the artist or other participants, and presented live or through recorded documentation. Performance art originated in the early twentieth century with movements like Dada and Futurism and found a wider audience in the 1960s and 1970s after the decline of modernism. Common themes of performance art concern life experiences, the human body, and social criticism. Leading proponents include artists Carolee Schneeman, Marina Abramović, Ana Mendieta, and Chris Burden.

## **phenomenology**

Phenomenology is a philosophical movement founded by Austrian-German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) in the early twentieth century, in which meaning, significance, and value are derived from lived human experience, specifically the subjective experience of phenomena.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## **Post-Minimalism**

A term used to refer to artwork created after the rise of Minimalism in the 1960s, and in reaction to the austere, self-contained, and impersonal aesthetics favoured by the Minimalist movement. Post-Minimalist art often utilizes organic and unconventional materials rather than industrial ones, while emphasizing the process of creation over the physicality of the finished artwork.

## **readymade**

A “readymade” is an artwork composed of ordinary, manufactured everyday objects that may have been slightly altered in their presentation. French artist Marcel Duchamp first used the term to describe his own now famous works, including *Bicycle Wheel*, 1913 (a wheel mounted on a wooden stool) and *In Advance of the Broken Arm*, 1915 (a snow shovel bearing the title). Through the presentation of readymades as art objects, Duchamp challenged the conventional understanding and status of the art object as well as the nature of the creative act.

## **Rothko, Mark (Latvian/American, 1903–1970)**

A leading figure of Abstract Expressionism, Mark Rothko began his career as an illustrator and watercolourist. In the late 1940s, he developed the style that would come to define his career, creating intense colour-field oil paintings. Comprising architectonic structures of rectangular blocks of complementary colours, they express his continuing interests in the mysteries of life, spirituality, and transcendence.

## **Rubens, Peter Paul (Flemish, 1577–1640)**

The Baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens was known for his religious and mythological compositions. Influenced in his early career by the painters of the Venetian Renaissance, Rubens’s style evolved to typify the sensuousness and movement of Baroque painting, with a looser painting technique evident in his later works. He supervised a large studio to produce his work and served as an important diplomat for the Netherlands in Europe.

## **semiotics**

The study and interpretation of signs and symbols, and the process by which they produce and convey meaning within society. The modern field of semiotics emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through the theoretical work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and American polymath Charles Sanders Peirce.

## **Shuebrook, Ron (American/Canadian, b.1943)**

An artist, educator, and administrator based in Guelph, Ontario, known for his large-scale, abstract works on paper and canvas, which have been widely exhibited in Canada. Ron Shuebrook taught at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, the University of Guelph, York University, and OCAD University. He was also president of the latter institution from 2000 to 2005.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## **Smithson, Robert (American, 1938–1973)**

A New Jersey-born artist recognized as a leading figure in the land art movement, Robert Smithson studied painting and drawing at the Art Students League of New York and the Brooklyn Museum Art School before gravitating to installation and sculpture. His most well-known work is *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, a 1,500-foot-long spiral made from mud, salt crystals, and rocks, installed on the shore of the Great Salt Lake in Utah.

## **Structuralism**

A school of thought that originated in Europe in the 1900s, which holds that all aspects of human experience and culture can be interpreted through their relationship to a larger structure or system of recurrent patterns or motifs—such as the model of a universal narrative structure in literature. French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss was one of the most prominent scholars associated with this intellectual mode of reasoning.

## **Surrealism**

An early twentieth-century literary and artistic movement that began in Paris, Surrealism aimed to express the workings of the unconscious, free of convention and reason, and was characterized by fantastic images and incongruous juxtapositions. The movement spread globally, influencing visual art as well as film, theatre, and music. Leading proponents include artists Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, and Man Ray.

## **The Robert McLaughlin Gallery**

A public art gallery established in Oshawa, Ontario, in 1967 with funds and artworks donated by Ewart McLaughlin and his wife Alexandra Luke, a founding member of Painters Eleven. The Robert McLaughlin Gallery focuses mainly on contemporary Canadian art and holds the largest collection of Painters Eleven works in Canada.

## **Thomas, Frances (Canadian, b.1949)**

A Parry Sound, Ontario-born painter and printmaker currently based in Barrie, Ontario. Frances Thomas is known for her abstract, gestural paintings exploring psychological states and the nature of existence. She was educated at Toronto's York University, where she received a Bachelor and Master of Fine Arts.

## **vanitas**

Derived from the Latin word for “vanity,” a *vanitas* is a style of still life associated with seventeenth-century Dutch art. Combining items symbolic of ephemeral earthly achievements or pleasures (books, musical instruments, luxurious objects) and items symbolizing death (skulls, rotting food, dying flowers), *vanitas* paintings call on viewers to contemplate their own mortality, reject worldly indulgence, and embrace repentance. The style's popularity was closely associated with the contemporaneous rise of Calvinism and its rigid moral view.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## **Vazan, Bill (Canadian, b.1933)**

A Toronto-born artist known for his land art installations, stone sculptures, and conceptual photographs that explore how cosmology and geography inform our understanding of the world. Bill Vazan studied visual art at the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University) in Toronto, the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and Sir George Williams University (now Concordia University) in Montreal. He has been a leading figure in the Montreal avant-garde art scene for decades.

## **Vietnam War**

An extended military conflict lasting from 1955 to 1975 between the communist government of North Vietnam and the government of South Vietnam, the latter of which fought with the aid of the United States. Resulting in millions of military and civilian deaths, the war sharply divided political opinion in the United States and ended with a North Vietnamese victory in 1975.

## **Zach, Jan (Czech, 1914–1986)**

An internationally renowned Czech sculptor whose works explore themes of human freedom and courage in relation to the history of Nazi and Communist oppression in his native country. Jan Zach moved to Victoria, British Columbia, in 1951, where he opened a school for painting and sculpture. He was chairman of the Department of Sculpture in the School of Architecture and Allied Arts at the University of Oregon from 1958 to 1979.



# SOURCES & RESOURCES

Since 1971, Tim Whiten RCA has presented his two- and three-dimensional works and ritual performances in exhibitions throughout North America and Asia. His work is held in numerous collections, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the Art Gallery of Hamilton. Whiten is represented by Olga Korper Gallery in Toronto. He received the prestigious Gershon Iskowitz Prize at the AGO in 2022 and a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts for Artistic Achievement in 2023.



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



Installation view of the exhibition *Tim Whiten: Messages from the Light* at the Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts, Montreal, 1997.

## EXHIBITION HISTORY (SELECTED)

### SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 
- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>1971</b> | <i>Tim Whiten: Meditation Metamorphosis and Psalm</i> , Erindale College, University of Toronto Mississauga |
|-------------|---|
- 
- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>1972</b> | <i>Tim Whiten: Sculpture and Drawings</i> , Jerrold Morris Gallery and Art Gallery of York University, Toronto |
|-------------|--|
- 
- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>1976</b> | <i>Tim Whiten</i> , Bau-Xi Gallery, Toronto |
|-------------|---|
- 
- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>1978</b> | <i>Tim Whiten</i> , Bau-Xi Gallery, Toronto |
|-------------|---|
- 
- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>1979</b> | <i>Tim Whiten: Selected Works on Paper</i> , Bau-Xi Gallery, Toronto |
|-------------|--|
- 
- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>1983</b> | <i>Tim Whiten</i> , Bau-Xi Gallery, Toronto |
|-------------|---|
- 
- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>1986</b> | <i>Descendants of Parsifal</i> , Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto |
|-------------|---|
- 
- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>1990</b> | <i>Tim Whiten</i> , Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto |
|-------------|--|
- 
- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>1993</b> | <i>Tim Whiten</i> , Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto |
|-------------|--|
-

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

- 1996** *Tim Whiten*, Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto
- 
- 1997** *Last Night, Night Before*, Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto  
*Tim Whiten: Messages from the Light*, Koffler Gallery, Koffler Centre of the Arts, Toronto
- 
- 1998** *Tim Whiten: Messages from the Light*, Liane and Danny Taran Gallery, Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts, Montreal; Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto
- 
- 2001** *Tim Whiten: Enigmata/Rose*, Meridian Gallery, San Francisco
- 
- 2002** *T After Tom*, Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto
- 
- 2004** *Working The Unseen*, Meridian Gallery, San Francisco
- 
- 2006** *...as it is...*, Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery, Waterloo
- 
- 2008** *UP, DOWN, IN-BETWEEN*, Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto
- 
- 2010** *Ritual Evidence*, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton  
*Darker, ever darker; Deeper, always deeper: The Journey of Tim Whiten*, Meridian Gallery, San Francisco
- 
- 2011** *coming PASSAGE going*, Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto
- 
- 2013** *CIRCUIT inside*, Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto
- 
- 2018** *Mindful*, Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound
- 
- 2019** *Suspend*, Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto
- 
- 2021** *Tim Whiten: Tools of Conveyance*, CU Art Museum, University of Colorado Boulder
- 
- 2022** *Elemental: Ethereal*, McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton  
*Elemental: Oceanic*, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa
- 
- 2023** *Elemental: Earthen*, Art Gallery of Peterborough, Peterborough  
*Elemental: Fire*, Art Gallery of York University, Toronto

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 
- 1970**      *Works Mostly on Paper*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston  
*Circuit*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston  
*Drawings and Prints*, Nightingale Gallery, Toronto
- 
- 1974**      *Selections of Contemporary Canadian Painting*, State University of New York, Buffalo
- 
- 1977**      *Making Marks: An Exhibition of Current Canadian Drawing*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina  
*Ontario Now 2: A Survey of Contemporary Art*, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton
- 
- 1981**      *Post-Modernist Metaphors*, The Alternative Museum, New York  
*Sculptural Density*, Visual Arts Museum, New York  
*Down Under*, Site Works, Cultural exchange with Australia, Art Gallery at Harbourfront, Toronto
- 
- 1983**      *Remains to be Seen*, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin
- 
- 1991**      *Site Memory: Contemporary Art from Canada*, Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art; Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, Guelph
- 
- 1994**      *Ofrenda*, Art Gallery at Harbourfront, York Quay Centre, Toronto
- 
- 1995**      *Ordinary Magic: Aspects of Ritual in Contemporary Art*, Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal
- 
- 1998**      *Between Body and Soul*, Liane and Danny Taran Gallery, Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts; Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal  
*Outdoor Installations*, The Tree Museum, Gravenhurst
- 
- 2005**      *Tribute: The Art of African Canadians*, Art Gallery of Mississauga; Art Gallery of Peel, Brampton
- 
- 2008**      *Transformation AGO*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
- 
- 2011**      *Magic Squares: The Patterned Imagination of Muslim Africa in Contemporary Culture*, Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto
- 
- 2014**      *If It Weren't for the War*, Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound  
*The Human Condition Through Glass*, Espace VERRE, Montreal
- 
- 2015**      *Puppet Act: Manipulating the Master's Voice*, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

---

**2016** *Toronto: Tributes + Tributaries, 1971-1989*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

---

**2017** *Cultural Topographies: The Complexities of History and Identity in Canada*, Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery, Waterloo

---

**2018** *BELIEVE*, Museum of Contemporary Art Toronto

---

**2020** *Detroit, We Love You*, Art Gallery of Windsor, Windsor

---

## RITUAL INSTALLATIONS / PERFORMANCES

---

**1976** *Lecture on the Weather*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo  
*Four Worlds*, The Music Gallery, Toronto

---

**1977** *Morada*, Artpark, Lewiston

---

**1978** *Requiem for Abraxas*, Bau-Xi Gallery, Toronto  
*Metamorphosis (Stage I)*, College Street, Toronto

---

**1979** *Septem Septum*, Factory 77, Toronto  
*Voler Volé*, York University Fine Arts, Markham (YUFAM)  
*Pier De Vigne*, Bau-Xi Gallery, Toronto  
*Osiris Ahmose*, York University Fine Arts, Markham (YUFAM)

---

**1980** *Metamorphosis (Stage II)*, Bau-Xi Gallery, Vancouver  
*Metamorphosis (Stage III)*, Bau-Xi Gallery, Toronto

---

**1982** *Matrix*, presented at *Art Across the Park*, Central Park, New York

---

**1986** *Mediatrix*, Atkinson College Theatre, Art Gallery of York University, Toronto

---

## AWARDS

---

**1989** Distinguished Leadership Award, Extraordinary Service to the Arts, American Biographical Institute

---

**2000** Faculty of Fine Arts Dean's Teaching Award, York University

---

**2022** Gershon Iskowitz Prize at the AGO, Gershon Iskowitz Foundation

---

**2023** Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts for Artistic Achievement

---

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## SELECTED EXHIBITION PUBLICATIONS

Greenwood, Michael. *Tim Whiten: Sculpture and Drawings*. Toronto: Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, 1972.

Cumming, Glen E. *Ontario Now 2: A Survey of Contemporary Art*. Hamilton: Art Gallery of Hamilton, 1977.

Phillips, Carol A. *Making Marks: An Exhibition of Current Canadian Drawing*. Regina: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1977.

Morris, Jerrold. *20th Century Canadian Drawings*. Stratford: The Gallery Stratford, 1979.

Aarons, Anita. *Down Under: 3 + 3 + 9: Sculptors in Exchange: Australia and Canada*. Toronto: Art Gallery at Harbourfront, 1981.

Jenkner, Ingrid. *Site Memory: Contemporary Art from Canada*. Guelph: Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, 1991.

Antaki, Karen. *Ordinary Magic: Aspects of Ritual in Contemporary Art*. Montreal: Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, 1995.

Christie, Claire. *The Spontaneous Echo: Christian Eckart, Barbara Steinman, Tim Whiten*. Toronto: Olga Korper Gallery, 1995.

Bell Farrell, Carolyn, David Liss, and Claire Christie. *Tim Whiten: Messages from the Light*. Toronto and Montreal: Koffler Gallery, Koffler Centre of the Arts and the Liane and Danny Taran Gallery, Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts, 1997.

Antaki, Karen, and David Liss. *Between Body and Soul*. Montreal: Liane and Danny Taran Gallery, Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts and Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, 1998.

Bell Farrell, Carolyn. *The Tree Museum: Site-Specific Installations*. Gravenhurst: The Tree Museum, 2000.

Anthony, Elizabeth, and Carolyn Bell Farrell. *Tim Whiten: Enigmata/Enigmata Rose*. San Francisco: Meridian Gallery, 2001.

Clarke, Neville, and Andrea De Shield. *Tribute: The Art of African Canadians*. Mississauga and Peel: Art Gallery of Mississauga and the Art Gallery of Peel, 2005.

Eichhorn, Virginia. *...as it is....* Waterloo: Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery, 2006.

Lister, Kenneth R., ed. *Canada Collects: Treasures from Across the Nation*. Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 2007.

Reid, Stuart, Carla Garnet, and Corinna Ghaznavi. *18 Illuminations: Contemporary Art and Light*. Owen Sound: Tom Thomson Art Gallery, 2007.



Cover of *Tim Whiten: Messages from the Light*, by Carolyn Bell Farrell, David Liss, and Claire Christie (Toronto and Montreal: Koffler Gallery, Koffler Centre of the Arts and the Liane and Danny Taran Gallery, Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts, 1997).

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

Brodzky, Anne Trueblood, Robert Farris Thompson, Dale McConathy, Claire Daigle, Jarrett Earnest, and Mia Kirsi Stageberg. *Darker, ever darker; Deeper, always deeper: The Journey of Tim Whiten*. San Francisco: Meridian Gallery, 2010.

Singer, Christian Bernard, and Nancy Schnarr. *Glass Factor: Luminaries in the Canadian Art Glass Scene*. Waterloo: Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery, 2010.

Meurehg, Claude S. *Art & Theology in Dialogue: Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. Toronto: Toronto School of Theology, 2011.

Nanibush, Wanda, and Georgiana Uhlyarik, eds. *Toronto: Tributes + Tributaries, 1971-1989*. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2018.

Firmin, Sandra Q., Jarrett Earnest, and S. Brent Plate. *Tim Whiten: Tools of Conveyance*. Boulder: University of Colorado Art Museum, 2022.

## SELECTED BOOKS, PERIODICALS, AND ANTHOLOGIES

Brodzky, Anne Trueblood, Rose Danesewich, and Nick Johnson, eds. *Stones, Bones and Skin: Ritual and Shamanic Art*. Toronto: Society for Art Publications, 1977.

Lippard, Lucy R. *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1983.

Krantz, Les. *American Artists: An Illustrated Survey of Leading Contemporaries*. New York: American References Publishing Corporation, 1985.

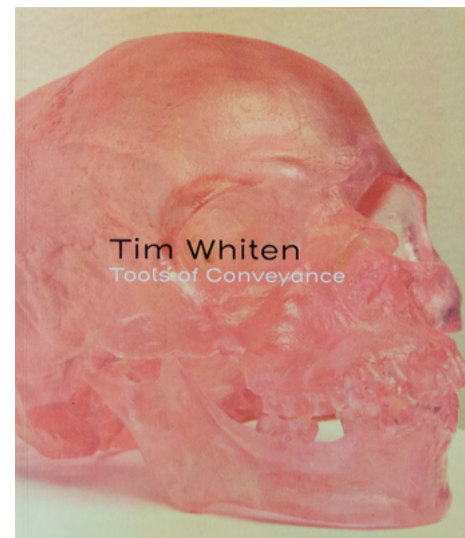
Marriott, John, Ich Neuman, Ken Little, Hakim Bey, Stefan Szczelkun, Chris Bearchell, Ben Allen, et al. *Sensoria from Censorium: An Anthology of Diverse Perspectives*, Volume 2. Toronto: Mangajin Books, 1993.

Belton, Robert J. *Sights of Resistance: Approaches to Canadian Visual Culture*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2001.

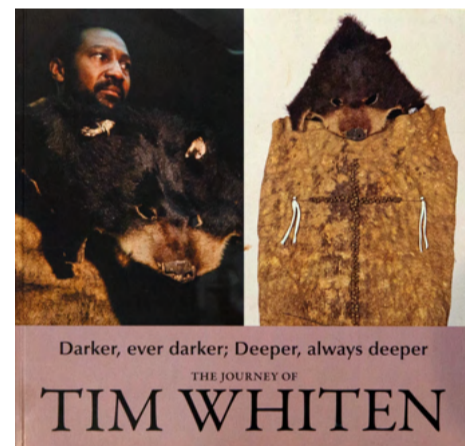
Holubizky, Ihor, and Daniel Donovan. *Signs of the Spirit: The Donovan Collection at St. Michael's College*. Toronto: St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, 2001.

Firmin, Sandra Q. *Artpark: 1974-1984*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010.

Vanderstukken, Koen. *Glass: Virtual, Real*. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2016.



Cover of *Tim Whiten: Tools of Conveyance*, by Jarrett Earnest and S. Brent Plate, edited by Sandra Firmin (Boulder: University of Colorado Art Museum, 2021).



Cover of *Darker, ever darker; Deeper, always deeper: The Journey of Tim Whiten*, by Tim Whiten, Anne Trueblood Brodzky, Robert Farris Thompson, Dale McConathy, Claire Daigle, Jarrett Earnest, and Mia Kirsi Stageberg (San Francisco: Meridian Gallery, 2010).

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## ONLINE INTERVIEWS

"Interview: Tim Whiten." Lori Starr. ArtSync. Vimeo video (<https://vimeo.com/19606777>), 11:48. February 4, 2011.

"Catching the Rainbow: Image-Maker Tim Whiten in Conversation with Jarrett Earnest." Meridian Gallery. Vimeo video (<https://vimeo.com/126381045>), 38:33. April 29, 2015.

"Art in the Spotlight: Tim Whiten," Tim Whiten in Conversation with Sherry Phillips and Georgiana Uhlyarik. Art Gallery of Ontario. Vimeo video (<https://vimeo.com/538744861>), 40:19. August 27, 2020.

"Tim Whiten in Conversation with Erika DeFreitas." McMaster Museum of Art. YouTube video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5XvnzJAP1TM>), 58:51. May 6, 2022.

## ONLINE DATABASES

"Tim Whiten," [www.timwhiten.com](http://www.timwhiten.com).

"Tim Whiten," [e-artexte.ca](http://e-artexte.ca).

"Tim Whiten," CCCA Canadian Art Database, Concordia University, Montreal, <https://cca.art/artwork/maker-whiten-tim/>.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### CAROLYN BELL FARRELL

Carolyn Bell Farrell is an independent curator and writer living in London, Ontario, and a PhD candidate in Art and Visual Culture at Western University. Since 1990, she has curated more than sixty exhibitions of contemporary art and has contributed as many essays for exhibition publications. Over the last four decades, Bell Farrell has worked in public art galleries, arts service organizations, and artist-run centres, holding positions of director, curator, program coordinator, and education officer. From 2007 to 2020, she was Executive Director of the MacLaren Art Centre, the regional public art gallery serving the city of Barrie and Simcoe County. While in Barrie, she chaired the Barrie Public Art Committee and Georgian College's Fine Arts Advisory Committee. She also taught museum management in the college's Museum and Gallery Studies program.

Prior to joining the MacLaren Art Centre, Bell Farrell was Senior Curator of the Koffler Gallery in Toronto, where she initiated a program exploring the complexities of personal and cultural memory and identity from different perspectives to contextualize the contemporary experiences of religious and secular Jews living in the Diaspora. These exhibitions, presented between 1994 and 2007, featured work by artists Isaac Applebaum, Rafael Goldchain, Mindy Yan Miller, Ed Pien, Sarindar Dhaliwal, June Clark, Tim Whiten, Rebecca Baird, FASTWÜRMS, Blue Republic, Norman White, Lois Andison, and Cathy Daley, among others.

Between 1990 and 1994, Bell Farrell curated twelve exhibitions for Oakville Galleries, initiating the institution's contemporary art program. While based in Toronto, she was also an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Visual Arts at York University and a member of the City of Toronto's newly formed Art Committee for Public Places, created to encourage public art on public land.



**“Imbued with ancestral knowledge and sacred symbolism, Tim Whiten’s cultural objects are deeply resonant, their impact profound. As if rekindling the mythic imagination, they seem to call us back to that ‘once upon a time’ rarely experienced in contemporary life.”**



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



© 2025 Art Canada Institute in collaboration with the author and other individual contributors. All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-1-4871-0352-1

Published in Canada

Art Canada Institute  
Massey College, University of Toronto  
4 Devonshire Place, Toronto, ON M5S 2E1

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## COPYRIGHT & CREDITS

### Acknowledgements

#### From the Art Canada Institute

The Art Canada Institute gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the sponsors of this book:

#### SEASON SPONSOR



#### TITLE SPONSORS

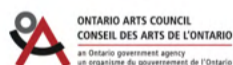
LIZA MAUER AND ANDREW SCHEINER  
NANCY MCCAIN AND BILL MORNEAU  
OLGA KORPER GALLERY  
JOYCE ZEMANS

We thank the Founding Sponsor of the Art Canada Institute: BMO Financial Group. Finally, we acknowledge the generosity of all those who support the Art Canada Institute and make our work possible.

#### From the Author

The author is indebted to Tim Whiten for his generous contributions to this book, drawn from a series of interviews and conversations held between September of 2021 and July of 2023. Appreciation is also extended to his York University colleagues Ted Bieler, Srebrenka Bogovic, and Vera Frenkel; his dealer Olga Korper; artists Sandra Brewster, Lyn Carter, June Clark, Bonnie Devine, Shabnam K.Ghazi, Shelagh Keeley, James Lahey, Francis LeBouthillier, Ron Shuebrook, and Frances Thomas; and curators Melissa Bennett, Pamela Edmonds, Virginia Eichhorn, David Liss, and Leila Timmins for their participation; as well as Ajeuro Abala, Jocelyn Anderson, Stéphanie Verge, Simone Wharton, and the entire team at ACI, most especially Sara Angel, Emma Doubt, and Tara Ng.

The author gratefully acknowledges funding support from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council, an agency of the Government of Ontario.



---

## IMAGE SOURCES

Every effort has been made to secure permissions for all copyrighted material. The Art Canada Institute will gladly correct any errors or omissions.

The Art Canada Institute would like to thank the following for their assistance: Art Gallery of Hamilton (Andrea Howard); Art Gallery of Ontario (Alexandra Cousins); Art Gallery of York University (Michael Maranda); Art Museum at the University of Toronto (Alex King); Art Resource (John Benicewicz); Art Windsor-Essex (Nicole McCabe); Buffalo AKG Art Museum (Kelly Carpenter); Canada Council Art Bank (Saada El-Akhrass); Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery (Peter Flannery); Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University Libraries (Julia Holland and Anna St.Onge); Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University (Bryan Whitledge); City of Toronto (Jacquie Gardner);

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

Copyright Visual Arts (Geneviève Daigneault); CU Art Museum, University of Colorado Boulder (Maggie Mazzullo); Detroit Historical Society (Brendan Roney); Dia Art Foundation (Jenn Kane); Fundação Pierre Verger (Guilherme de Aragão); John Michael Kohler Arts Center (Brian Rusch); Koffler Centre of the Arts (Matthew Jocelyn and Maria Segura); MacKenzie Art Gallery (Marie Olinik); Magnum Photos (Isabella Howard); McMaster Museum of Art (Julie Bronson); National Gallery of Canada (Laurence Breault); Olga Korper Gallery (Shelli Cassidy-McIntosh); Portland Art Museum (Lexy Hartford); The Robert McLaughlin Gallery (Sonya Jones); SBC Gallery of Contemporary Art (Nuria Carton de Grammont); Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Gardens (Kelly Crawford); *stern*-Fotoarchiv, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München (Dr. Fabian Waßer and Katharina Wohlfart); Tom Thomson Art Gallery (Shannon Bingeman); Ajeuro Abala; Sarah Bay-Cheng; Michael Chambers; June Clark; Irene Haupt; Robert B. Miller; and Leo Touchet.

The ACI recognizes the additional private collectors who have given permission for their works to be published in this edition.

---

## Credit for Cover Image



Tim Whiten, *Reliquaire*, 2012. (See below for details.)

---

## Credits for Banner Images



Biography: Tim Whiten inside *Morada*, 1977. (See below for details.)



Key Works: Tim Whiten, *Danse* (detail of drummer), 1998-2000. (See below for details.)



Significance & Critical Issues: Tim Whiten, *Kanopi*, 2008. (See below for details.)

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

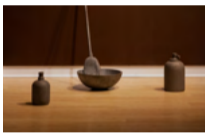
---



Style & Technique: Tim Whiten, *Reliquaire*, 2012. (See below for details.)



Sources & Resources: Tim Whiten, *Book of Light: Containing Poetry from the Heart of God*, 2016. (See below for details.)



Where to See: Tim Whiten, installation view of *Vessel, Vessel, Mortar and Pestle*, 1999-2000, from the exhibition *Elemental: Earthen* at the Art Gallery of Peterborough. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. Photo courtesy of the Art Gallery of Peterborough. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Zach Ward.



Credits: Tim Whiten, *Vault* (interior view), 1993. (See below for details.)

---

## Credits for Works by Tim Whiten



*After Ethan's Wheels*, 2010. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.



*After Phaeton*, 2013. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of the Artist in honour of Tom and Mary E. Whiten, 2022 (2022/7). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.

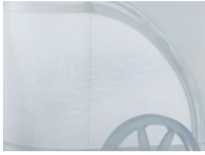


*After Phaeton* (detail), 2013. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of the Artist in honour of Tom and Mary E. Whiten, 2022 (2022/7). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

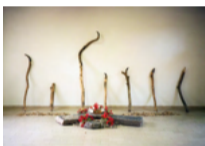
---



*After Phaeton* (detail), 2013. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Gift of the Artist in honour of Tom and Mary E. Whiten, 2022 (2022/7). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.



*Arisearose*, 2018. Collection of the McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton, Purchase 2021 (2021.008.0001). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Adam Swica.



*At the Third Point of the Triangle*, 2001-2, installation view at Juracy Magalhaes Junior Gallery, Itaparica, Brazil. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Tim Whiten.



*Book of Light: Containing Poetry from the Heart of God*, 2016. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid.



*Canticle for Adrienne*, 1989. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of the artist, 2001 (2001.5.2). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Robert McNair.



*Ch-air*, 1992. Collection of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Gift from Tim Whiten, 2012 (2012.006.001). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Helena Wilson.



*Clycieun*, 1991. Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Gift of the artist, 2011-17. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Helena Wilson.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---



*Cosmological I*, 1966. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Tim Whiten.



*Cosmos*, 1983. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Tim Whiten.



*Court*, 2023. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 2024 (SLC - 2024.0236.1). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: NGC.



*Courting the Caliph's Daughter*, 1993. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Helena Wilson.



*Danse* (detail of drummer), 1998-2000. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Ilana Lightman.



*Danse* (detail of the constellation of roses), 2000. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Ilana Lightman.



*Danse* (detail of xylophone player), 1998-2000. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Wojtek Bicsco.

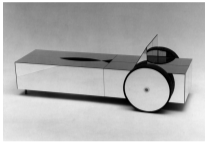
# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---



*Descendants of Parsifal* (detail), 1986. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Cheryl O'Brien.



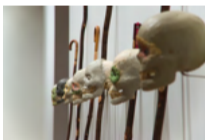
*Draw*, 1993. Collection of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario, Gift from the Artist, 2008 (2008.023.001b). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Helena Wilson.



*Elemental*, 1993. Collection of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario, Gift from Tim Whiten, 2015 (2015.012.004). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Helena Wilson.



*Elysium*, 2008. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Purchased with the assistance of the Dr. Michael Braudo Canadian Contemporary Art Fund, and with the Financial Support of the Canada Council for the Arts, 2010 (2010/8). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: AGO.



*Elysium* (detail), 2008. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Purchased with the assistance of the Dr. Michael Braudo Canadian Contemporary Art Fund, and with the Financial Support of the Canada Council for the Arts, 2010 (2010/8). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Artin Aryaei.



*Enigmata* (3), 1996. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Kevin Hedley.



*Enigmata/Rose* (3), 1998. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Kevin Hedley.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---



*Enigmata/Shower of Roses (5)*, 2002. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Ajeuro Abala.



*Ground Rules*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenschied.



*Hallelujah (II)*, 2015. Collection of the McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton, Gift of Tim Whiten (2022.002.0001). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenschied.



*Hearken to the Service of Emmanuel*, 1990. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of the artist, 2013 (2013.7). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Helena Wilson.



*His Presence Has Always Been Known to Me*, 1988. Collection of the CU Art Museum, University of Colorado Boulder, Gift of Tim Whiten (2022.04.10). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Kevin Hedley.



*Horus Negotiating the Waters*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Adam Swica.



*Kanopi*, 2008. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---



*Last Night, Night Before*, 1997, installation view from *Elemental: Oceanic* at The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa. Collection of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Gift of the artist, 2019 (2019WT14). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid.



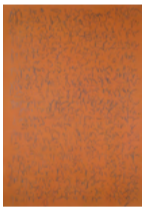
*Long Silence*, 1971. University of Toronto Collection, Gift of the artist, 2004 (2004-252). Courtesy of Art Museum at the University of Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid.



*Lucky, Lucky, Lucky*, 2010. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of the artist, 2015 (2015.16). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid.



*Magic Gestures: Lites and Incantations*, 1981. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Leah Savitzky.



*Magic Gestures: Lites and Incantations (Orange)*, 1981. Collection of the CU Art Museum, University of Colorado Boulder, Gift of Tim Whiten (2022.04.09). Courtesy of the CU Art Museum, University of Colorado Boulder. © Tim Whiten.



*Magic Sticks*, 1970. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of the artist in memory of Anne Brodzky, 2019 (2019.1.1). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Isaac Applebaum.



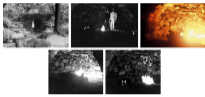
*Magisterium Pardesh*, 1993. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Helena Wilson.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



*Mary's Permeating Sign*, 2006, edition 2/2. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of the artist in memory of Tom and Mary E. Whiten, 2019 (2019.1.5). Courtesy of Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Aaron Guravich.



*Matrix*, 1982. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Jennifer Manfredi.



*Metamorphosis (Stage I)*, 1978, performance view by Grant MacLeod. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Purchase with assistance from the Estate of P.J. Glasser, 2016 (2016/42.5). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: AGO.



*Metamorphosis (Stage I)*, 1978, performance view by Grant MacLeod. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Purchase with assistance from the Estate of P.J. Glasser, 2016 (2016.42.6). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: AGO.



*Metamorphosis (Stage I)*, 1978, performance view by Grant MacLeod. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Purchase with assistance from the Estate of P.J. Glasser, 2016 (2016.42.3). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: AGO.



*Metamorphosis (Stage II)*, 1980, installation view of the J.S. McLean Centre for Canadian Art, Permanent Collection Rotation, at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Purchase with assistance from the Estate of P.J. Glasser, 2016 (2016/42). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: AGO.



*Morada*, 1977. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Andrew Stout.

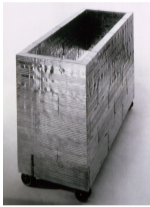
# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---



*Morada* (detail of interior), 1977. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Andrew Stout.



*Oasis*, 1989. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Helena Wilson.



*One, One, One*, third edition, 2005. Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery Permanent Collection, Purchased with funds from the Elizabeth L. Gordon Art Programme, the Royal Canadian Academy of Art, and a matching grant from the Canadian Council for the Arts. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.



*Perceval*, 2013. Collection of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario, Gift from the Artist, 2014 (2014.004.002). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.



*Post Trigon III*, 1983, with Julie Freeman. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Jerry Shiner.



*Ram*, 1987. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of the artist, 2008 (2008.5). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Robert McNair.

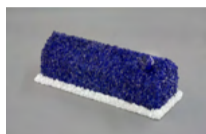
# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---



*Reliquaire*, 2012. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.



*Respite*, 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid.



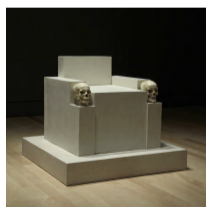
*Saying His Name, At the Portal*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid.



*Search Reach Release*, 2020. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid.



*Septem Septum*, 1979, installation view at Factory 77, Toronto. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Tim Whiten.



*Siege Perilous*, 1988. Collection of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of the artist, 2001 (2001.5.1). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Robert McNair.



*Snare*, 1996. Collection of the City of Toronto / MOCCA Collection (1998.007). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Alex Neumann.



*Spanner*, 1975. Collection of the CU Art Museum, University of Colorado Boulder, Gift of Tim Whiten, 2022 (2022.04.01). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---



*T After Tom*, 2002. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.



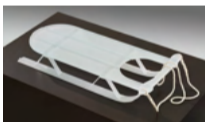
*T After Tom: Phase II (Divider)*, 2006. Collection of the Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa (09/10-0043). © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.



*T After Tom (Pickaxe)*, 2010. Collection of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario, Gift from Tim Whiten, 2015 (2015.012.007). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenschied.



*Temno IV*, 1995. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Artin Aryaei.



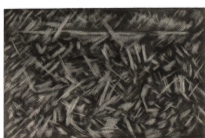
*Travel Stik*, 2012. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Michael Cullen.



*Untitled*, 1972. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Jerry Shiner.



*Untitled*, 1972. Private collection. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenschied.

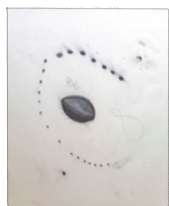


*Untitled*, 1973. University of Toronto Collection, Gift of the artist, 2004 (2004-249). Courtesy of Art Museum at the University of Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenschied.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---



*Untitled*, from the Constellation series, 1991. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Ajeuro Abala.



*Vault*, 1993. Collection of Art Windsor-Essex, Windsor, Gift of the artist, 2003 (2003.071). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Frank Piccolo.



*Vault (interior view)*, 1993. Collection of Art Windsor-Essex, Windsor, Gift of the artist, 2003 (2003.071). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Frank Piccolo.



*Victor*, 1993. Collection of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario, Gift from Tim Whiten, 2015 (2015.012.003a). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Helena Wilson.



*Void I*, 1970. University of Toronto Collection, Gift of the artist, 2004 (2004-218). Courtesy of Art Museum at the University of Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenschied.



*Voler Volé*, 1979, with Julie Freeman. Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Jerry Shiner.



*Who-Man/Amen*, 2016. Collection of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Owen Sound, Ontario, Gift from the artist in honour of Tom and Mary E. Whiten, 2019 (2019.003.001). Courtesy of the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. © Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Adam Swicka.

---

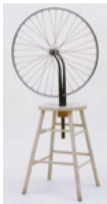
# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

## Credits for Photographs and Works by Other Artists



Announcement for the exhibition *Tim Whiten* at the Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto, September 13–October 8, 1986, Artist Documentation Files, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada.



*Bicycle Wheel*, New York, 1951 (third version, after lost original of 1913), by Marcel Duchamp. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection (595.1967.a-b). © 2024 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Estate of Marcel Duchamp.



*Blinders*, 1994, by Michael Chambers. Courtesy of Michael Chambers. © Michael Chambers.



A Bottle Tree in the Oaklawn Garden room of the Gibson Garden, Dallas, date unknown. Photograph by David H. Gibson. Collection of the Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Gardens, The Garden Club of America Collection, Washington, D.C. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.



Captain Tim Whiten with his Austin Healey, outside Bachelor's Officer's Quarters, Fort Lewis, Washington, 1968. Photograph by William Brickey. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



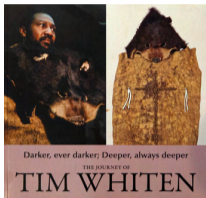
Central Michigan University students crossing Warriner Mall on their way to class, Mount Pleasant, 1960s. Photographer unknown. Collection of the Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant. Courtesy of the Clarke Historical Library.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



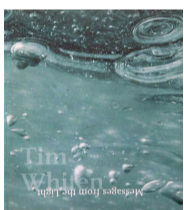
*The Chief - Fluxus Chant*, 1963-64, by Joseph Beuys. Collection of the *stern*-Fotoarchiv, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München. © Estate of Joseph Beuys / Bild-Kunst, Bonn / CARCC Ottawa 2024. Photo © Bayerische Staatsbibliothek / *stern*-Fotoarchiv / Müller-Schneck. Photo credit: Jürgen Müller-Schneck.



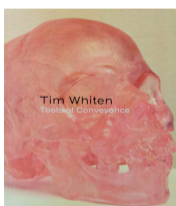
Cover of *Darker, ever darker; Deeper, always deeper: The Journey of Tim Whiten*, by Tim Whiten, Anne Trueblood Brodzky, Robert Farris Thompson, Dale McConathy, Claire Daigle, Jarrett Earnest, and Mia Kirsi Stageberg (San Francisco: Meridian Gallery, 2010). Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



Cover of *Tim Whiten: Enigmata / Enigmata Rose*, by Tim Whiten, Elizabeth Anthony, and Carolyn Bell Farrell (San Francisco: Meridian Gallery, 2001). Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



Cover of *Tim Whiten: Messages from the Light*, by Carolyn Bell Farrell, David Liss, and Claire Christie (Toronto and Montreal: Koffler Gallery, Koffler Centre of the Arts and the Liane and Danny Taran Gallery, Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts, 1997). Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



Cover of *Tim Whiten: Tools of Conveyance*, by Jarrett Earnest and S. Brent Plate, edited by Sandra Firmin (Boulder: University of Colorado Art Museum, 2021), featuring Tim Whiten's *Perceval*, 2013. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



*Dirge*, 2003, by June Clark. Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Purchase, with funds by exchange, and funds from Joyce and Fred Zemans, 2021 (2020/137). Courtesy of the artist and Daniel Faria Gallery, Toronto. © June Clark. Photo credit: LF Documentation.



Dr. Oscar Oppenheimer, date unknown. Photographer unknown. Collection of the Clarke Historical Society, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant. Courtesy of the Clarke Historical Society.



# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---



*Endless Column*, version 1, 1918, by Constantin Brâncuși. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Mary Sisler (645.1983). © Succession Brancusi - All rights reserved (ARS) 2018.



Festa de Xangô, Sakété, Bénin, 1958. Photograph by Pierre Verger. Collection of the Fundação Pierre Verger, Salvador. Courtesy of the Fundação Pierre Verger. © Fundação Pierre Verger.



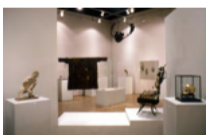
Ford Model A Assembly Line, Rouge Plant, Dearborn, 1928. Photographer unknown. Collection of the Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Gift of Fort Motor Company (84.1.1660.P.833.51076). Courtesy of the Henry Ford Museum.



Inkster High School, pictured in the 1959 Inkster High School yearbook. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Classmates.com.



Installation view of the exhibition *Elemental: Fire* at the Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, 2023. Courtesy of Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenschied.



Installation view of the exhibition *Remains to be Seen* at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, 1983. Courtesy of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center.



Installation view of the exhibition *Tim Whiten: Messages from the Light* at the Koffler Gallery, Koffler Centre of the Arts, Toronto, 1997. Courtesy of Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Isaac Applebaum.



Installation view of the exhibition *Tim Whiten: Messages from the Light* at the Koffler Gallery, Koffler Centre of the Arts, Toronto, 1997. Courtesy of Tim Whiten. Photo credit: Isaac Applebaum.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell



Installation view of the exhibition *Tim Whiten: Messages from the Light* at the Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts, Montreal, 1997. Courtesy of the Liane and Danny Taran Gallery, Montreal.



Installation view of the exhibition *Tim Whiten: Tools of Conveyance* at the CU Art Museum, University of Colorado Boulder, 2021. Courtesy of the CU Art Museum, University of Colorado Boulder. © CU Art Museum. Photo credit: Wes Magyar.



*Jan Zach - Sculptor*, 1980, by Robert B. Miller. Collection of the Portland Art Museum, Oregon, Gift of the artist (2013.51.32). Courtesy of the Portland Museum. © Robert B. Miller.



*Jazz Funeral, New Orleans, Louisiana, No. 4*, 1969, by Leo Touchet. Courtesy of Leo Touchet. © Leo Touchet.



*John Cage in Buffalo*, c.1987, by Irene Haupt. Courtesy of Irene Haupt. © Irene Haupt.



Mary Emma Whiten, the day she received her high school diploma, 3427 Irene Street, Inkster, Michigan, 1958. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



*Mirrored Room*, 1966, by Lucas Samaras. Collection of Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1966 (K1966:15). Courtesy of Buffalo AKG Art Museum. © Estate of Lucas Samaras. Photo credit: Tom Loonan, Buffalo AKG Art Museum.



*My oldest son Moses Towell eats a wild pear while Ann sits behind the wheel of a 1951 pickup truck. It's the family's only vehicle. I bought it as junk for \$200 and fixed it up on my own*, 1983, by Larry Towell. Courtesy of Magnum Photos, New York (TOL1983001W00004/22). © Larry Towell / Magnum Photos.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---



*The Old Woman*, from the series *The Dance of Death*, c.1526, published 1538, by Hans Holbein the Younger. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1919 (19.57.25). Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



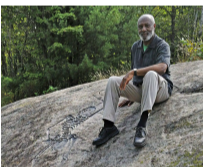
*Spiral Jetty*, 1970, by Robert Smithson. Collection of Dia Art Foundation, New York. Courtesy of Dia Art Foundation. © Holt/Smithson Foundation and Dia Art Foundation / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY / CARCC Ottawa 2024. Photo credit: George Steinmetz.



*Still Life: An Allegory of the Vanities of Human Life*, c.1640, by Harmen Steenwijck. Collection of the National Gallery, London, Presented by Lord Savile, 1888 (NG1256). Courtesy of the National Gallery.



Tim Whiten, 2001. Photograph by Jaroslaw Rodycz. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



Tim Whiten, 2022, installation view of *Danse* (detail of drummer), 1998-2000, Tree Museum, Gravenhurst, Ontario. Photograph by Mehraban Mehrabani. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



Tim Whiten in his studio, Toronto, 1974. Photograph by Eberhard Otto. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



Tim Whiten inside *Morada* at Artpark in Lewiston, New York, 1977. Photograph by Andrew Stout. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---



Tim Whiten inside *Morada* at Artpark in Lewiston, New York, 1977. Photograph by Andrew Stout. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



Tim Whiten receiving a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts for Artistic Achievement from Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, in a ceremony at Rideau Hall, Ottawa, 2023. Photograph by Sgt Anis Assari, Rideau Hall. © His Majesty The King in Right of Canada represented by the OSGG, 2023. Reproduced with the permission of Office of the Secretary to the Governor General, 2024.



Tim Whiten, school graduation photograph, 1949. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



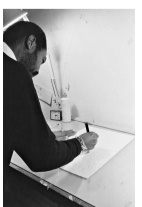
Tim Whiten, school graduation photograph, 1959. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



Tim Whiten's elder brother, Jim Whiten, a jazz musician, 1974. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



Tim Whiten's eldest brother Leonard Whiten receiving an award at his retirement, St. Joseph's Hospital, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1989. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



Tim Whiten signing a print by Jerry Shiner's studio, The Art Printer, Toronto, 1981. Photograph by Michael Glassbourg. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---



Tim Whiten with his own sculptures, University of Oregon, Eugene, 1966. Photograph by Jerry Dodd. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



Tim Whiten working on *Arisearose*, 2017. Photograph by Margherita Matera. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



Tom Whiten holding Tim at the first house built by Tom, 3502 Irene Street, Inkster, Michigan, 1941. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



Tom Whiten standing in front of the house he had built, taken in the late fall with him wearing a fine Stetson hat, a long black woolen coat, and fine leather gloves, Inkster, Michigan, 1930. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



The Whiten family, with Mary Emma Whiten standing with the old Ford Model T that Tom Whiten owned at the time, 1935. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Tim Whiten.



York University students stroll outside Founders College, Toronto, c.1965. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of The York University Magazine.



Zuihō-in, a sub-temple of Daitoku-ji, Kyoto, 2008. Photograph by Olivier Lejade. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

---

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

## BOOK CREDITS

### **Publisher**

Sara Angel

### **Director of Programming**

Emma Doubt

### **Executive Editor**

Tara Ng

### **French Editorial Director**

Annie Champagne

### **Graphic Designer**

Shane Krepakevich

### **Substantive Editor**

Stéphanie Verge

### **Copy Editor**

Jack Stanley

### **Proofreader**

Imoinda Romain

### **Translator**

Geneviève Blais

### **French Copy Editor**

Aude Laurent-de Chantal

### **French Proofreader**

Julien-Claude Charlebois

### **Image Research Associate**

Philip Dombowsky

### **Design Template**

Studio Blackwell

---

## COPYRIGHT

© 2025 Art Canada Institute in collaboration with the author and other individual contributors. All rights reserved.

Art Canada Institute  
Massey College, University of Toronto  
4 Devonshire Place  
Toronto, ON M5S 2E1

# TIM WHITEN

Life & Work by Carolyn Bell Farrell

---

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: Tim Whiten : life & work / by Carolyn Bell Farrell.

Names: Bell Farrell, Carolyn, author. | Container of (work) : Whiten,

Tim, 1941- Works. Selections. | Art Canada Institute, publisher.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20240427262 | Canadiana (ebook) 20240427246 |

ISBN 9781487103552

(hardcover) | ISBN 9781487103514 (HTML) | ISBN 9781487103521 (PDF)

Subjects: LCSH: Whiten, Tim, 1941- | LCSH: Whiten, Tim, 1941--Criticism and interpretation. | LCSH:

Artists--Canada--Biography. | LCGFT: Biographies.

Classification: LCC N6549.W456 B45 2025 | DDC 709.2--dc23