

CHAPTER SEVEN

ENLIGHTENMENT INTERSECTIONS IN THE WORK OF JEFFREY RUBINOFF

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An "inveterate evolutionist and a progressive artist."¹ Rubinoff's description of his own outlook reflects his belief in the irreversible and expansive arc of human development. This should not be mistaken for a naïve glorification of progress. Rubinoff is acutely aware of how the development of modern societies has led not simply to greater freedom but also to new forms of domination and nuclear peril. Yet, for good or for ill, progress remains our condition as diagnosed by Darwin, "inexorable and unrelenting," a grand "restlessness" in the heart of things.² Rubinoff deploys a host of non-linear metaphors for thinking about the passage of time—the cable, the cycle, the pivot—and the way his own art might imitate or interrupt these processes. The theme of progress operates on both a cosmic and an intimate level within the Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park, from the "deep time" of geology written into the rocks and coasts of the island through to citations from prehistory, the history of art, the history of modernism and the sequence of the sculptures.

This commitment to progress is closely related to Rubinoff's engagement with the writings and values of the Enlightenment.³ This interest is long-standing and both direct and indirect: "I do not underestimate the value of the Enlightenment and the German Idealists in my education," he has written.⁴ Rubinoff encountered these ideals for the first time while

studying at university in the 1960s. Relishing the freedom provided by a liberal arts education, Rubinoff found a corpus of texts that laid out the stakes of artistic production in visionary terms. The distance of these Enlightenment thinkers—Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel—made them an exhilarating alternative to emerging norms. Rubinoff describes the years after 1962 as a dark period in which modernist art was succumbing to “resignation stated as defiance.”⁵ Having moved to New York, he was disappointed to find artists who aped the insubordinate gestures of the avant-garde while being ever more enmeshed within the commercial gallery system. It is in this context that the writings of the German Idealists symbolized for him a radical refusal to compromise.

Rubinoff’s engagement with the writings of the late eighteenth century might seem less exotic than it first appears; eighteenth-century Germany was the birthplace of aesthetics as a philosophical enterprise.⁶ Developed by Alexander Baumgarten in 1735, the term “aesthetics” began as an inquiry into non-rational modes of cognition and interrogated art as a source of sensory knowledge.⁷ While Baumgarten initiated the philosophical investigation of art, Joachim Johannes Winckelmann gave a rapt account of aesthetics in action, recording how antique sculpture could transport and intoxicate the individual viewer.⁸ Style became politicized and historicized, and the fantasy of a purified and rationalized language of expression emerged.⁹ The debate acquired fresh urgency thanks to the expansion of galleries and museums, raising urgent new questions about the civic responsibilities of the artist.¹⁰ Lastly, the development of the landscape garden posed complex questions about artifice and authenticity and witnessed new attempts to think through the way art could intervene in the natural environment.¹¹ The German Enlightenment thus incubated art history as a discipline while also generating a host of new features of the modern art world—institutional, commercial and ideological.¹²

This eighteenth-century inheritance arguably took on particular

relevance in the wake of the Second World War, at a time when much of the sculptural tradition seemed to be crumbling. The capacity of sculpture to act as a monument, an expression of public values, appeared exhausted. The expressive reimagining of the human figure, derived from Rodin, had hit a cul-de-sac. On the one hand, Clement Greenberg called on sculptors to revitalize the medium and keep up with developments in painting. Praising the lone example of David Smith, Greenberg hoped for sculptors to learn from Cubism to bring out what he saw as a pictorial dimension in sculpture.¹³ On the other hand, Herbert Read upheld a modified version of the figurative tradition descended from Rodin and insisted on the importance of mass and volume in sculpture. The shift to mere pictorial qualities, in which sculpture would become either kinetic, as urged by Read, or optical, as urged by Greenberg, spelled disaster. Looking back in 1964 at the endlessly malleable metal sculpture of the past decades, Read lamented: “Virtually everything, one must say, has been lost that has characterized the art of sculpture in the past. This new sculpture, essentially open in form, dynamic in intention, seeks to disguise its mass and its ponderability. It is not cohesive but cursive—a scribble in the air.”¹⁴

In the new directions of the 1960s, the critical controversy turned over precisely whether such scribbling was permissible. How far should sculpture be conceived in linear or, as Greenberg called them, “syntactic” terms? Within the formal language of Anthony Caro, the modernist achievement was conserved and deepened, though tilted from a narrowly vertical to a horizontal axis. With the development of Minimalism in the early 1960s, however, sculpture was recast not in relational terms but as primary structures designed to heighten or exhort feats of perception. “In Minimalist objects, then, every fundamental sculptural quality—shape, composition, scale and material—was manipulated in order to produce a radically ambiguous kind of thing.”¹⁵ Sculpture in the terms of Michael Fried was praised for its ability to allay “objecthood,” replacing mass and volume with an

emphasis on a unified visual and cerebral impression.¹⁶ One consequence was to repress the temporality aspects within sculpture, both the time needed for fashioning it and the time needed for interpreting it.

The debates over objecthood and temporality replayed themes initially treated by Enlightenment aesthetics. In her seminal *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Rosalind Krauss began her narrative by acknowledging that “although it was written in the eighteenth century, Gotthold Lessing’s aesthetic treatise *Laocoön* applies directly to the discussion in our time.” Lessing had started the investigation into the proper object of sculpture, and the “same questions have become even more necessary to ask” in the twentieth century. If “modern sculpture is incomplete without discussion of the temporal consequences of a particular arrangement of form,” then Krauss hailed an ancestor in Lessing.¹⁷ Goethe’s 1798 reading of *Laocoön* had already offered reflection on how the distinct temporal moments within the narrative in marble were connected with the temporal experience of the viewer.¹⁸ In a different way, postwar claims for the “palpability” of modern sculpture echoed the pioneering insights of J.G. Herder two centuries before into the faculty of touch, not just vision, in the appreciation of art.¹⁹

On a political level too, the legacy of the eighteenth century hung in the balance in the shadow of the Holocaust and the Cold War. Echoing the melancholy inheritor of German aesthetic theory Theodor Adorno, Rubinoff recalls that the “Enlightenment that had meant to liberate civilization with the spirit of knowledge had evolved through that knowledge the means to destroy civilization itself. Under the most extreme circumstances it may prove to have evolved the means for the extinction of the very humanity it meant to uplift.”²⁰ Peter Bürger’s influential theory of the avant-garde traced the hermetic, disinterested nature of art back to Kant and Schiller. The autonomy of art was a category of bourgeois society that gave art a central function “precisely because it has been removed from all the contexts of practical life.”

It was their sharp demarcation of art from practical life, and of aesthetic experiment from political freedom, that the radical artists of the interwar period such as the Dadaists and Surrealists would attempt to erase.²¹ The intellectual legacies of the Enlightenment remained central to understanding the strengths and the weaknesses of the modernist enterprise.

These brief observations suggest that Rubinoff’s interest in German Idealism should not be viewed as extrinsic to his reflections on contemporary art. Indeed, it has been argued that the twentieth-century criticism on modernism, from György Lukács through to Adorno, reprised the “paradigmatic positions” first laid down by Kant, Schiller, Schelling and Hegel.²² The following essay seeks to understand Rubinoff’s ideas and his artistic practice through his fidelity to certain Kantian and post-Kantian categories. The evidence for this connection is taken from published acknowledgements, visual analysis and verbal statements about the “German dimension” in his outlook.²³ This “German dimension” informs Rubinoff’s insistence on autonomy and formalism; the progressive, unfolding nature of his sculptural series; and his interest in the relationship between art and nature. These categories can be encountered not just in Rubinoff’s writings, but arguably can also be read in his sculptural practice. The objective is to highlight how divergent concepts of time are discussed by Rubinoff and have materialized within the sculptural series and to ask how the Kantian tradition might clarify the timeliness of these works in the twenty-first century.

One caveat remains before proceeding, however. Although Rubinoff has consistently attempted to support and participate in scholarly exchange, his practice as a sculptor should not be read as an intellectual manifesto. Rubinoff’s sculptures are not mere illustrations of an underlying philosophical agenda; to read them as such would be to violate the autonomy of the artworks as instantiating their own meaning. Rubinoff has been explicit that it was through his labour as a sculptor that he came to grasp

better the richness of the Idealist tradition. "I have found that through art I am able to come to the understanding of these philosophers and academic art history but I cannot through these philosophers or academic art arrive at creating art."²⁴ In other words, while certain principles may be deduced retrospectively from the works, they did not precede or dictate their realization. His procedures as a sculptor happened organically to pose the same questions as these "ultra-rational German thinkers."²⁵ Art-making is primarily an open process for Rubinoff, oriented to finding new knowledge, not expounding old ideas.



"The German Idealists proclaimed qualities of art separate from the dominance of philosophers," Rubinoff observes. "These arguments allowed art to finally enter institutions of higher learning valued exceedingly beyond the traditional perception of it as craft."²⁶ It was the philosophical reflections of the late eighteenth century that won for art a fresh intellectual credibility and enthroned sculpture in particular as one privileged site for understanding how the "ideal" might be impressed onto the "material" realm. Yet this gap between art and craft had been undermined in the "design modernisms" of the early twentieth century, just as the distance between the artist and the market had been eroded deleteriously.²⁷ Even Marcel Duchamp, whose ready-mades enthroned him as the hero to Nouveau Réalisme, Minimalism and Conceptual Art in the 1960s, had died an outsider but been "resurrected as a market hero."²⁸ Rereading the German Idealist tradition was thus a sharp reminder that art was one of the highest callings of the human spirit, not to be bound by market strictures, and was "capable of evolving knowledge."²⁹

This knowledge was of a special kind, however, as recognized by

Immanuel Kant. In his 1790 *Critique of Judgement*, Kant insisted that art furnished a kind of insight that was incommensurable with both the theoretical knowledge of nature—the cause-and-effect laws of the phenomenal world—and with the practical knowledge of freedom—the universal demands of the categorical imperative. Identified as a middle term between understanding and reason, the faculty of judgement was "a territory with a certain character for which no other principle can be valid."³⁰ Kant recognized that claims about beauty bore a structural resemblance to other kinds of knowledge in that they were *a priori* and capable of commanding potential consensus. The difference was that the perception of beauty was intrinsically subjective, rooted not in particular objects in the world but in how these objects were represented to our consciousness. Hence while agreement about aesthetic matters was possible, since art had to manifest a concept accessible to all, our notion of beauty was "not an objective cognitive judgement ... derived from definite concepts."³¹ Rational but incapable of proof, the fate of the aesthetic was to be simultaneously subjective and universal.

There are three parts of Kant's arguments that are particularly valid for Rubinoff. First is the question of autonomy and abstraction. Art is rational for Kant because it is an emanation of nature and is accessible to human intelligence, even if it is not a manifestation of nature that can be analyzed with scientific tools. Its value comes from its own integrity and dissimilarity from what surrounds it. "Art is self-contained truth. A work of art is perfection by completeness," Rubinoff echoes.³² Original in its form, an artwork expounds a view of the universe that cannot be instrumentalized or translated into another media without disfigurement; in literary terms, the sculpture is akin to a metaphor, not an analogy, since it is an irreducibly new and singular creation.³³ Rubinoff's belief in originality sets high standards for the artist but also for the public, who were asked to reconcile and harmonize the tensions of the artwork in their mind. Building on the

paradigm set by David Smith, Jon Thompson has explained that in such modernist compositions, structured around internal tensions between the parts, "the viewer was made an active participant in the construction of the work through a self-conscious act of reading."³⁴

This emphasis on originality informs Rubinoff's resistance to figuration. According to his own narrative of modernism, the advent of photography and the transformation in patronage in the mid-nineteenth century liberated art from the obligation to reproduce the world of appearances.³⁵ Instead, art could now develop its own means of expression through the exploitation of its own resources. Unlike David Smith, who initially flirted with Assyrian influences, and who retained a flourish of myth and primitivism, Rubinoff from the start of his career was defiantly anti-historicist.³⁶ At a time when other sculptors of the 1960s were recuperating elements of everyday detritus or exploding mass-produced objects, Rubinoff remained true to the idiom of abstraction. Despite their love of geometry, the Minimalists hoped to take the hand of the artist out of sculpture; in Donald Judd's description, the aim was to disclose a formal order that existed without planning, since "rationalism, rationalistic philosophy" was "pretty much discredited now as a way of finding out what the world's like."³⁷ Against the drift toward haphazard assembly, involuntary repetition and directionless iterations, Rubinoff persisted in welding the steel into a conscious and cogent design.

Relatedly, Rubinoff shares with Kant an emphasis on the importance of purposive form as central to the universality of aesthetic judgement. Kant grasped it was form, not sensations, that shaped the aesthetic response of all men. "In painting, sculpture and in fact in all the formative arts, in architecture and horticulture so far as they are beautiful arts," Kant explains, "the delineation is the essential thing; and here it is not what gratifies in sensation but merely what pleases by means of its form that is fundamental for taste."³⁸ This emphasis on form calls for an art

which is not decorative or illusionistic but which seeks to lay bare central structural relationships. Rubinoff describes each of the works in his series as a kind of "argument," in which each new formal modification builds on and reshapes what has gone before.³⁹ His sculptural series announce cumulative refinement and enrichment, moving from their starting position through ever higher "orders of complexity."⁴⁰ While each work possesses completeness according to its own internal criteria, it is only thanks to the passage through and across the works as a total series that this progressive arc becomes apparent.

In Rubinoff's *Series 3* and *4* in particular, the viewer has an acute sense of a formal problem continually being interrogated and worked through. The initial shape is subject to incremental revisions: step by step hollowing out cavities, adding teeth, altering the gradient from the earth, multiplying points of intersection. As Kant had argued, the freedom of the artist comes precisely from labouring within given constraints. "Hence this form is not, as it were, a thing of inspiration or the result of the free swing of the mental powers, but of a slow and even painful process of improvement, by which he seeks to render it adequate to his thought, without detriment to the freedom of the play of his powers."⁴¹ Rubinoff wants to make these processes of intellection visible, and this again marks out his distance from Minimalism. Some early critics of Minimalism in the 1960s complained not only at the use of industrial workshops to fabricate components but also at Minimalism's suppression of "the evidence that the sculpture had been made by an artist as the result of a sequence of interlocking decisions."⁴² By contrast, Rubinoff's monumental series demonstrate a sinewy practical logic and hard-won progression through forms and ideas.

Against the notion of the completion of each work as a single unit, Rubinoff asks the viewer to read each sculpture serially. To echo German criticism again, the artwork is presented less as completed being than as *becoming*, a dynamic unfolding of the initial possibilities. Rubinoff insists

that, in embarking on a new series, he does not begin with a plan of the finished set, but allows each move within the series to pose its own necessary questions and invite its own solutions. Rubinoff uses the metaphor of journeying into the unknown to explain this process of continuous external and internal refinement. If the opening number in a series is the "first temporal move," then the challenge is to build up new intricacies and complexities, opening out an almost "infinite number of picture points." Rubinoff works on a series until its potential seems to have been completed or exhausted, and once finished he then moves on to a new, alternative problem. When asked how he knows that a series has reached its furthestmost extension, Rubinoff replied the "only proof of the edge that you've gone to is the work itself."⁴³ Once again, to paraphrase Kant, the concept revealed by the work of art can only be adduced retrospectively, from the fact of the sculpture itself.

Intriguingly, Rubinoff draws striking parallels between his sculptural practice and the composition of music. These parallels range from a shared terminology—"rhythm," "counterpoint," "syncopation," "polyphony"—to quite detailed comparisons between the dialogic quality of music and sculpture. Here, too, there may be affinities with Kantian ideas. Just as engagement with Kant profoundly shaped the poetic practice of Goethe and Schiller, it has been argued that the influence of Kant can be heard in Beethoven's overhaul of the sonata form: in place of the conventional triad of exposition-development-recapitulation, whose elaboration was announced at the outset, Beethoven created far more open-ended and searching musical structures. As Scott Burnham clarifies, "Beethoven's enhanced sense of drama entails a new relationship between theme and form; the form no longer serves to present pre-stabilized thematic material but rather becomes a necessary process in the life of a theme ... The theme as subject truly appears to create its own objective world (its form), thus musically embodying one of the principal conceits of German

Idealism."⁴⁴ This was music that audibly struggled to realize itself in ever-changing combinations, an unfolding "drama of consciousness," just as each consecutive step in the sculpture series advances and complicates the argument.

Third, Rubinoff has frequently insisted that the truths of art are not just natural but ought to be preserved and transmitted. "Art is the map of the human soul; each original piece is proof of the journey. As the artist navigates the unknown, his art adds to the collective memory."⁴⁵ Kant, too, imagines the artist-navigator as venturing out to discover new truths of nature. This was explicit in Kant's famous encomium on the supreme artist: "Genius is the talent (or natural gift) that gives the rule to art."⁴⁶ Kant sets out the paradox that every true artwork must stem from some precedent rule that made it possible, while recognizing that this rule can never be formulated discursively. If the artwork is made in accord with artificial external rules or traditions, it will appear compromised and unfree and sink into fashionable conformity; the aim is to create works that, while still recognized as art, exude the same quality of necessity and perfection found in the products of nature. Originality and imagination were the true arbiters of excellence.

It is at this point that we hit a divergence, however. Although Kant is concerned primarily with the quality of beauty, he also acknowledges the need for a good artist to possess taste, for it is taste that leads him constantly to refine his product through trial and error.⁴⁷ Yet while taste allows him to temper and hone his natural gift, the genius will always continue to stumble on truths that cannot be summarized rationally or taught to others. The artist-genius "cannot describe or indicate scientifically how it brings about its products, but it gives the rule just as nature does."⁴⁸ If the progress of science is continuous, since it is cumulative and builds on the discoveries of the past, the story of art for Kant is discontinuous, made up of a collection of discrete of inspiration that can never be

systematized or transmitted. "Again, artistic skill cannot be communicated; it is imparted to every artist immediately by the hand of nature; and so it dies with him, until nature endows another in the same way."⁴⁹

For Rubinoff, by contrast, the knowledge gained by art can be progressive since it conforms to Darwinian patterns. This can be elaborated in two respects: the "progress" within the artistic tradition and the "progress" within the natural world. For the former, it is clear that Rubinoff does not subscribe to a generic evolutionism, inflected by the theories of Henri Focillon, which saw styles begetting each other out of necessity. For instance, Dutch critic Abraham Hammacher argued in the late 1960s that late-twentieth-century abstraction was "rooted in the biological, psychic, and spiritual ... natural" functions of the era.⁵⁰ In contrast, Rubinoff recognizes that much of the stylistic heritage had to be consciously excavated in a "dialogue with the ancestors."⁵¹ His own studies of the great iconoclasts of the past—such as Donatello and Rodin—shaped his practice from the 1980s onward. From the exhaustion of avant-garde hubris, it seemed "time to return to, and challenge, art history itself." In each case, what Rubinoff sought to learn from the past was not details of composition but how other artists had crossed "the threshold of originality."⁵² Far from raiding the past in search of models to copy, the aim was to move beyond copying altogether. It was a paradox intrinsic to eighteenth-century aesthetics: "The only way for us to become great, yes, if it is possible to be inimitable, is through imitation of the ancients."⁵³

Rubinoff describes the impact of this engagement with tradition as exhilarating, providing a "feedback loop of knowledge," in which each original insight generated more original insights.⁵⁴ The breakthrough here is not linear or cumulative but based on circuitous paths, unsuspected linkages and sudden interruptions. And for Rubinoff this Darwinian schema shapes both human societies and the landscape in which they reside. "Natural history is history"; "agriculture is culture"; "The evolution of

life is the collective memory of life on our planet": such statements demonstrate Rubinoff's desire to break down the artificial separation between history and prehistory, between the human and non-human past.⁵⁵ Such a conception mirrors the strand of post-Kantian thinking known as *Naturphilosophie*. Developed by Schelling as a means to overcome Kant's divisions within knowledge, *Naturphilosophie* proclaimed that in the odyssey of the human mind, consciousness struggled to overcome self-imposed limits and reunify with externalized nature. There are striking affinities in the vocabulary of Rubinoff, not least a shared interest in collective consciousness, the soul of mankind and the synthesis of philosophy with the intuitive knowledge provided by art.⁵⁶ Such questioning is abundantly clear in the design of the Sculpture Park, a man-made clearing where the dramatic natural scenery off Hornby Island, including the ubiquitous presence of the ocean and mountains, can be placed in dialogue with the carefully sited artworks.

Land artists in the 1970s such as Robert Smithson had championed the notion of entropy as a way of undermining the industrial and technological aesthetic blamed for a hollow cult of progressivism.⁵⁷ Yet Rubinoff's sculptures in COR-TEN steel, allowed to weather gently, exposed to the elements, do not strike a note of triumphalism but seek to amplify natural rhythms. "Since 1989," Rubinoff notes, "I have been extending the history of art deep into evolutionary theory."⁵⁸ The fruit of this work has been the unsettling procession of primordial, abortive metallic creatures in *Series 7* and *8* that conjure up vanished chapters from our evolutionary past. They are the most literal demonstration of Rubinoff's conviction that art conveys "embryonic ideas."⁵⁹ Delicate and intricate, the series are reminiscent in some ways of earlier Surrealist-inflected sculpture from the 1940s and the hallmark of Julio González. But this return to figuration points not only to a distant, non-human past but also to a bleak, post-human future. If we recover glimmers of the rationality operative in nature, we are reminded

that this Darwinian rationality also works through extinction. And while the serial unfolding of the series bears testimony to the inexorable move toward higher orders of complexity, it also stages mankind's existential predicament.

Rubinoﬀ, then, can be seen as continuing and extending certain conceptions of the artist as knowledge-producer that had their origin back in the late Enlightenment. First, working in a Kantian framework, he is committed to upholding the autonomy of non-representational art, using sculpture to scrutinize and subvert a number of structural relationships. Second, building on Kant's notion of the progressive refinement of beauty, Rubinoﬀ produces sculptures that exemplify processes of conceptual and formal refinement. Each sculpture is sovereign in itself, but it also needs to be read serially as part of a developmental logic, whose progressive questioning is not dissimilar from certain musical structures. Indeed, Rubinoﬀ admits that he felt misgivings about sculpting rounded shapes or spheres, such as those found in *Series 5*, since they imply a false sense of completion and might disrupt the onward momentum.⁶⁰ Third, Rubinoﬀ links the progress within the artistic series with more universal conceptions of progress, replicated in the patterns of the natural world. In this pursuit Kant saw sculpture as a privileged medium, since "in its products art is almost interchangeable with nature."⁶¹ Expansive in space and time, Rubinoﬀ's series are marked by a constant questioning, an abhorrence for any definitive closure or facile solutions.

These features explain why Rubinoﬀ seems anomalous when placed against some of his contemporaries. His early debt to David Smith is clear, especially the *Cubi* series, but the scale and weight of his work in his middle series defies the "pictorial" or "optical" labels of Greenberg's parlance. While commensurate with the human figure, the steel exudes vigour and grainy robustness, not acrobatic weightlessness. His work dissents from trends in the new sculpture of the 1960s, when, in William Tucker's

harsh estimation, "form was sacrificed to texture and autonomy to cheap and melodramatic imagery."⁶² Rubinoﬀ's sculptures are more accurately described as instantiations of knotty, compositional equations that can be riddled out by the viewer only through multiple views and exploration in time. They are a far cry from the simplified compression of the Minimalists, with their shift from core to surface. And while the emphasis on mass and volume might place Rubinoﬀ closer to the aesthetic of Herbert Read, he is resolutely an abstract artist, with no visible nostalgia for the organic, figurative aesthetic Read cherished from Rodin to Henry Moore.

Rather than fit in with the orthodoxy of sculptural modernism in the postwar era, Rubinoﬀ claims that his aim was to "rekindle the historical spirit of modernism" glimpsed before the First World War.⁶³ His writings are peppered with references to reviving the "spiritual" in art, an imperative that links artists as diverse as Wassily Kandinsky and Barnett Newman but draws much of its intellectual force from the debates of late eighteenth-century Germany. To laud the spiritual in art was to proclaim dissent from the materialism and the commercialism of modernity and hope to find in art not simply a space of negative resistance but a source of positive, alternative values. It pitted a kind of higher "rationality" against the lunacy of mass destruction: "the Enlightenment having turned back on itself from rationality to irrationality."⁶⁴ As Rubinoﬀ suggests, echoing Kant, art can help us to disentangle the rational, or truth, from the concomitant rationalization. A vital and inextinguishable human act, art-making ultimately affirms our commonality and potential as members within the natural world. In place of the "tribalism," militarism and usurped "spiritual monopoly" of organized religion, art is a glimpse of the universal.⁶⁵

Such views might be written off as humanist, anachronistic or utopian. Since the 1980s the Kantian tradition has been blamed for the shortcomings of modernism and modernity more generally, denounced as an

accomplice to all manner of elitism, imperialism and exclusion. "The end of the discipline," observes Thomas McEvelley on the crisis of art history, "amounted to a claim that the Kantian lineage was now, at last, over. Art, it seemed, had become post-art historical." And in his celebratory vision, as the discipline died, Postmodern sculpture—defined so capaciously as to be anything—now ushered in the age of doubt.⁶⁶ Anti-Form from the 1970s onward has given tangible expression to a paralyzing epistemological nihilism and eclecticism; "everything has become material for the sculptor of today," Udo Kultermann anticipated, now that "the hegemony of the spirit over other forms of human expression is finally overcome."⁶⁷ Yet Rubinoff's sculpture shows us that by working within self-imposed bounds and selecting definite materials, a constructive program of knowing and doubting can still be pursued; a revising and testing of parameters. His work offers a subtle aesthetic response to the wider question that now dominates the humanities: what's left of the Enlightenment?⁶⁸ Counter-posing and connecting the time of nature, the time of history and the time of art, Rubinoff's sculpture vindicates his claims to be an "inveterate progressive."