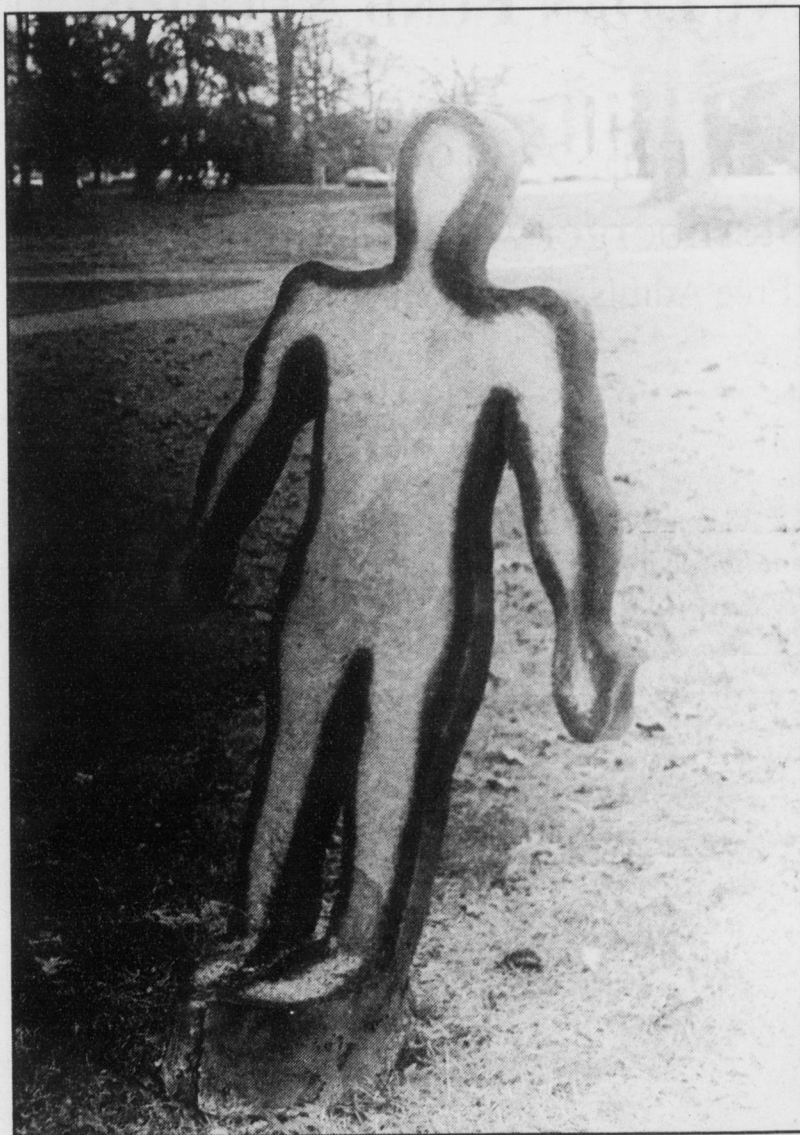


At left, P.Fred Williams gazes through one of his spiritual creations. Below, "Shape without form, shade without color ..." one of P. Fred's 'cement men'

Katie Haddock



Katie Haddock

A study in stone

Lauri Burdelski
Staff Writer

Art is the stuff of speculation. So when the stout cement men appeared abruptly on the lawn of Hege-Cox, those wandering past noticed and wondered, as should be expected. First there was one - an almost life-size chunk of manhood standing defiantly in front of a sapling. Soon two more of similar size followed. Eventually, the three large and five small figures with almost androgynous bodies and sculpted, muscular arms accumulated on the lawn.

The larger ones stand in an extended triangle with three similar, smaller figures inside forming another triangle with the same delta. All six figures direct their blank attention towards a cement creature of differing yet congeneric proportions that gazes out from the center. It is short and has an elongated neck but not the muscled arms of the others. All are featureless and almost barren of ornamentation. One of the larger, however, stands spattered with bright orange paint, another is outlined in black, and in the chest of each of the smaller figures is lodged a molded piece of wood.

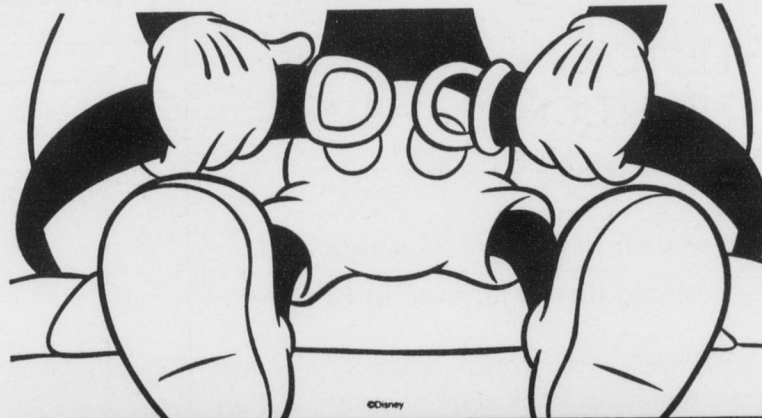
It's startling to see such figures strewn about the lawn, and P. Fred Williams realizes this. He enjoys it when passers-by gawk. With the creation of these creatures, he capitalizes on the nature of speculation. His point is not to communicate one specific message, but that viewers can extrapolate a variety of ideas from his expression in concrete. "People ask me what they mean," he explains. "I ask them what they think." The responses have been varied to say the least. "I was in Feminist Theology last semester, and I said I wished men

could bear children. Well, one of the women from that class told me she felt that these figures are the representation of my subconscious desire to produce offspring. I thought that was really interesting."

Another observable aspect of work such as his is the manner in which others interact with his creations. "I heard that late one night, a guy who must have been drunk rammed right into it, trying to knock it down. People have told me that, while they were tripping, they've had conversation with my men. Others say when it's dark or cloudy, they'll get this sense that they're being watched. It's my men, men without eyes, who are watching them.

They evolved, he says, from an assignment. "We had to create something spiritual," and he thinks perhaps they evoke something of Stonehenge. "They were these big grey solid objects that just...appeared." The statues' spirituality is further validated in the lines of a poem which they bring to mind. "We are the hollow men/we are the stuffed men," begins T.S. Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men." As the poem continues, the cement men are "Shape without form, shade without color/paralyzed face, gesture without motion."

P. Fred meant that the bodies be androgynous, yet he refers to them as "the cement men." They are not overtly male, but their characteristics are indubitably less female. To some extent, he thinks he is exploring himself through his art. His favorite sculptor, Antony Gormley, has done a lot of work in a similar medium, and it is one that Fred finds compelling. "Maybe it means I am still searching from myself...when I've found exactly what that is maybe I'll start drawing landscapes."



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