



DOVE BRADSHAW

FORMFORMLESSNESS

1969-2003

SIDNEY MISHKIN GALLERY
Baruch College, City College of New York

2003

by
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This moment in Bradshaw's oeuvre may be called mid-career. The first step toward indeterminacy occurred early in her development. Since then she has followed the path with concentration and integrity. Over 30 years she has worked out a synthesis of two diverging tendencies: on the one hand, the earthy, material, and heavy aspect of traditional sculpture; on the other, the identity-dodging or shape-shifting of Conceptual Art.

...Bradshaw seems to have found an enduring mode of indeterminacy beyond Cage's idea of the event which remains indeterminate until it happens. The flux produced by chemical ferment in a Contingency painting never ends unless the painting itself is destroyed....The idea was carried over into outdoor sculptures that are likewise susceptible to atmospheric changes, beginning with a copper wall piece (*Passion*, 1993) and land sculptures employing a copper cube (*Notation I*, 1999). For the indoor work she has treated the copper with acetic acid, ammonium chloride copper sulfate and urine to set off the reaction; for the outdoor work she leaves it to the weather."

...The third of Bradshaw's breakthroughs as midwife to nature comprised two related series Negative Ions and Waterstones. The Negative Ion works –rock-salt crystalline boulders ...onto which water dripped from hanging laboratory vessels with regulating valves

...With a sense of deferring to nature, Bradshaw happily yields control to the changing atmospheric conditions nature provides, whatever they might be. In decisions like this the role of the artist was being redefined; rather than controlling the works appearance for three ages, she deliberately unleashes a process of unpredictable change. The desire for mastery that was basic to Modernism yields to an acceptance of the unexpected. In a broader sense the idea of contingency leads to a quasi-metaphysical complex which Buddhist tradition calls conditioned co-production (Sanskrit, *pratitya-samutpada*)—meaning that things come into existence in causal nexi which are continually shifting as they themselves are similarly whole vast network of phenomena is seen as arising not from essences (or fixed identities) but from temporary contingencies that are always in a state of flux and therefore are without identity or essence or inner truth; everything, in other words is both ephemeral and indeterminate.