

...CONTINUED Although she'd never taken art classes until college, Winter's childhood in Fort Worth was punctuated with frequent trips to museums and art openings, accompanied by her art major mother or her grandfather, who owned a stainless steel manufacturing company involved in construction.

Winter also worked for large architectural firms in New Orleans and Dallas, and began to notice that she was missing something in the creative process. "I loved the firms I worked for, and I was exposed to tremendous architects. But when I'd visit the woodshops where the craftsmen were making furniture that we had designed, I'd think, 'these guys are having all the fun,' you know? I missed that in just designing something—you're not really doing it yourself." Winter and her surgeon husband John had two children along the way, and Joan lightened her work load to make more 'mom' time; she also did volunteer work in the Dallas arts scene.

Finally in the early '90s, Winter knew she had to go back to school, and after auditing classes at SMU for a couple of years, figured out where she might fit in. In 1993, she completed her MFA in sculpture and printmaking. "So many sculptors relate to printmaking," she observes. "I don't know why that is, maybe it's the processes. I do kind of approach printmaking the way that I do sculpture." The intaglio method, which involves acid-etching images onto copper plates,

offers her lots of latitude, with aquatints, soft grounds, hard grounds and drawing involved. "I look at my prints in a way that's 'space on the plate'—I use multiple layers, so for me, the way those layers are put together relates to sculpture." For sculpting, Joan favors light-hued woods of Baltic birch and basswood, sometimes accented with exotically-grained veneers, in addition to her use of casting resins and various metals.

Besides the obvious influence of nature on her work, Winter acknowledges that, "I think there is a direct tie-in between my background in architecture and my art. It's my focus on light, natural materials; I'm really interested in translucency and transparency, that same thing I'd be looking at with interior space, always looking at how natural light could be infused into an interior space. It's sort of an understated architectural approach to the work: proportion, scale, sense of space, natural light, natural materials, all those things." Her longstanding passion for contemporary Japanese architecture also informs her thinking, and she includes architects Kengo Kuma, Toyo Ito, and Tadao Ando on her shortlist of favorites. Ando, best known in the area for his design of The Modern in Fort Worth is a special muse: "Every building he does has a spiritual force that is just incredible," she enthuses. Other artists whose work she looks to include Martin Puryear and



NATURE AND NURTURE From top: *Push. Two* in foreground, *Counterpoint*, in background.

Brice Marden. She also visits Santa Fe twice a year, drawing inspiration from its natural palette, its skies, and the sheer escape of it all.

At just over a wiry five feet tall, the limitations of Winter's strength and stature have occasionally caused her to find creative solutions for realizing larger, heavier works. Some pieces may require helpers, but the artist insists that, "What I do is try to think of ways to get around the limitations. I couldn't possibly work in stone, but I can handle ply, and I can put pieces together. I've typically worked with joinery and pieces that are assembled, assembled segments." Now with her *Counterpoint* period behind her, Winter is moving on, readying for the next chapter in her exploration. "I've been inundated with the bean shape," she confesses, "and so I really have started thinking about form. I'm thinking about either a bridge or sort of a shell shape, but not one that you might think of as a shell, because I want it to be open; I'm interested in open-ended forms that really don't have inside/outside space, they're sort of intertwined." Intertwining the two and three dimensional, the worlds of nature and the man-made, and inside and outside space into the familiarity of the unfamiliar, the art of Joan Winter continues to evolve, challenge, and coruscate with Zen-like ease and a quiet sense of inevitable arrival. ■

See Winter's work this month at Holly Johnson Gallery, 1411 Dragon St.

