

Artist's work reflects reverence for raw nature

By Constance Stumin
— Contributing Writer

If you haven't seen Vision 2000 at the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens yet, you might want to pencil it in for 7 p.m. Tuesday, July 11.

Several artists and the curators will be there to discuss this important body of work in an open forum.*

Unfortunately, Joe Segal, one the eight featured artists, will not attend due to a busy schedule that is making him one of Florida's most interesting sculptors.

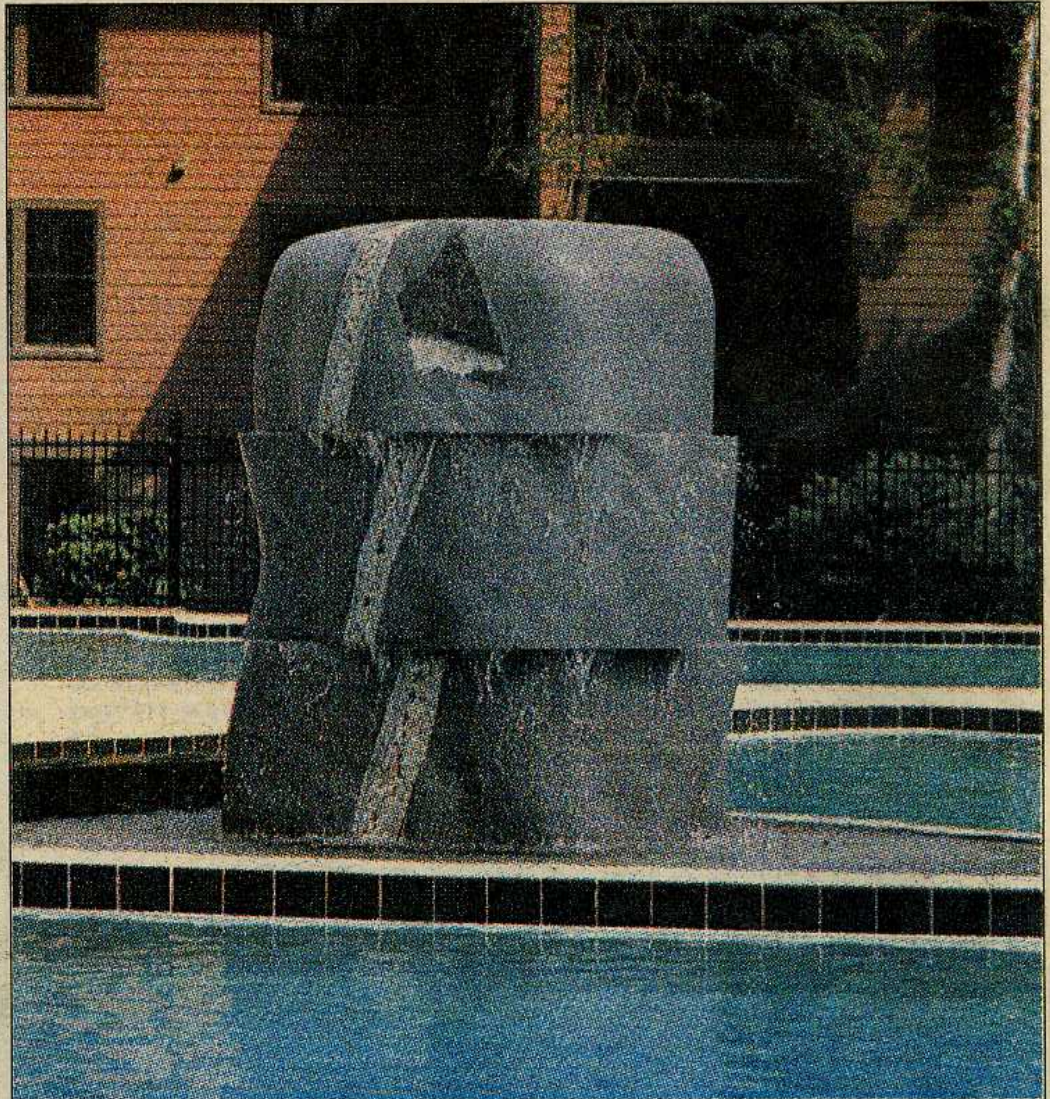
Segal first came to my attention with a solo show at the University of North Florida in 1996. That exhibition featured severely carved burnt timbers Segal had found in a salvage yard. He embedded them with metal insets to form totemic columns of stunning simplicity. It gave the gallery the feeling of a lost temple, a relic of some alien race.

In Vision 2000, the artist continues to explore this theme of sacred spaces with his zen-infused wooden sculptures, but he is also creating some really magnificent stone pieces that also reflect his reverence for raw nature.

"Both hard pine and stone fracture well. My interpretations of wood and stone are calculated and ordered which allows for both materials to dictate their own beauty and language," says the artist.

The stone

Shift is his latest rock creation and was recently installed in a Campus Development pool site in Gainesville. It radiates a fluid purity with more than a nod to the Japanese/American genius, Noguchi. Its creation is a long and arduous story that starts in Georgia where



Shift is sculptor Joe Segal's latest rock creation. The granite for this fountain was formed three hundred million years ago.

the artist quarried the granite himself.

"The granite for this fountain was formed three hundred million years ago. It's hard to imagine the eight-ton boulder as part of a flowing molten mass beneath the earth's surface, but that is how granite exits before it cools and solidifies. For this reason, I find it interesting to return the stone to a liquid environment.

"It's ironic that the tool that I used

was a torch. Once again heat is the guiding force in shaping the material," explains the artist.

The stone contains a large quartz streak that Segal has used to great effect. After the rock was shaped, it was cut into sections and a hole was drilled through each piece to allow water to flow through it.

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After it was shipped to its pool site, the problem of installation reared its head. How do you get the six thousand pound sections positioned on top of each other with a "shift"?

Installation

To accomplish this, bags of ice were used to support the stones long enough to pull out the straps and netting that were used to lift and support the stones. Before the ice melted, Segal was able to turn the sections so that the quartz streak had a sense of movement. Areas of falling water were also created by twisting the sections of stone.

Segal now lives in St. Augustine, having studied at the The Sculpture Center in New York City's Bronze

Casting Program and at Flagler College in St. Augustine with Enzo Torcoletti.

The magna cum laude graduate prefers to work in a large scale and should be on the short list of any individual or institution interested in major sculpture. His reverence for tools, processes and materials manifests itself in man made and natural settings.

*Peter Leventhal, Henry Flood Robert Jr., Jacqueline Holmes and Larry Jon Davis are the artists and panelists who will be featured at the July 11 event, A Sense of Place: New Art on Florida's First Coast. A reception will follow.

For information, call 356-6857.

Beaches Art Center

Living Images, the photographic art of Thomas F. Mattes is on display at the Beaches Art Center during the month of July. An artist's reception will be held July 9 from 2 to 4 p.m.

For information, call 285-5844.



The stone is shaped with a touch that is usually used to burn channels in the ground so that granite may be quarried.