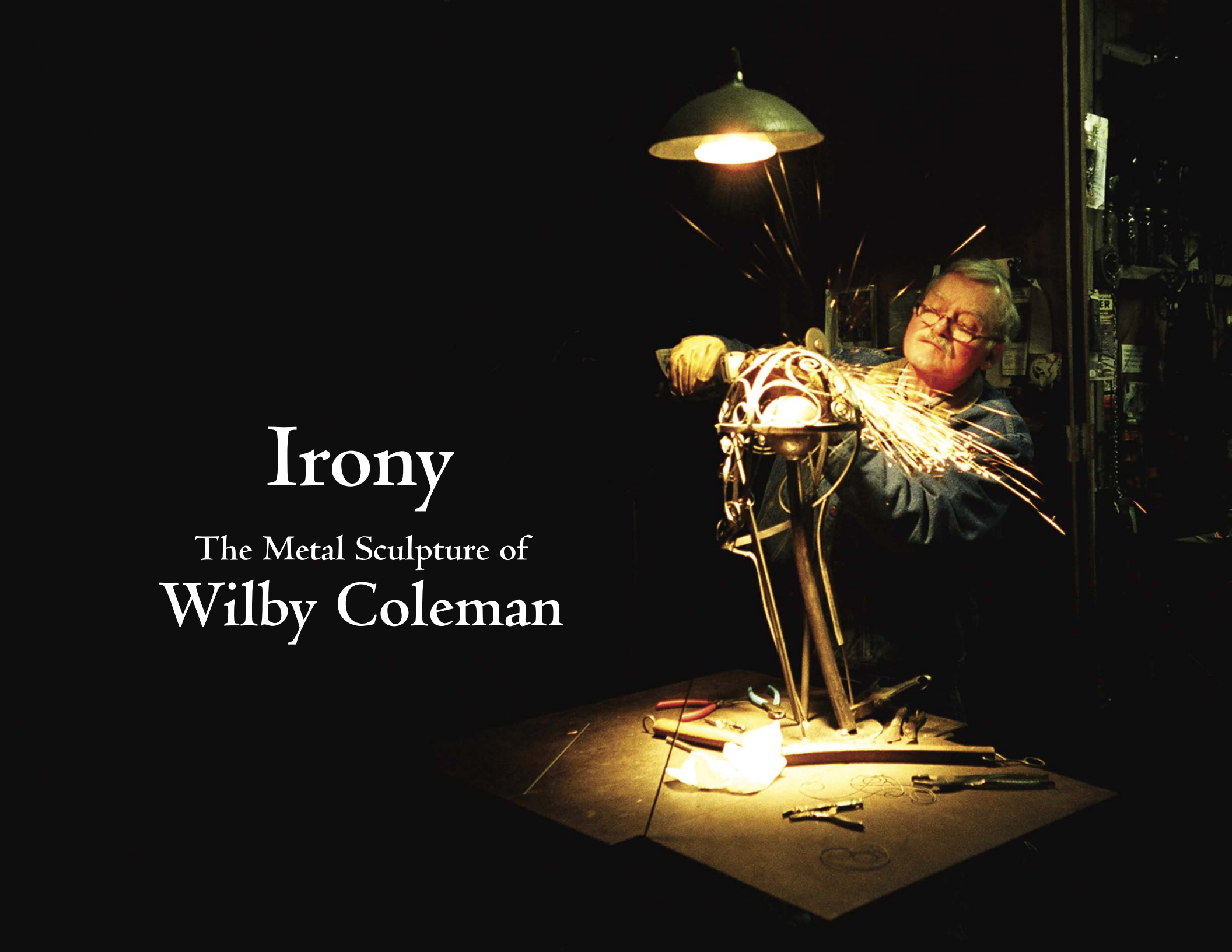
# Irony

## The Metal Sculpture of Wilby Coleman



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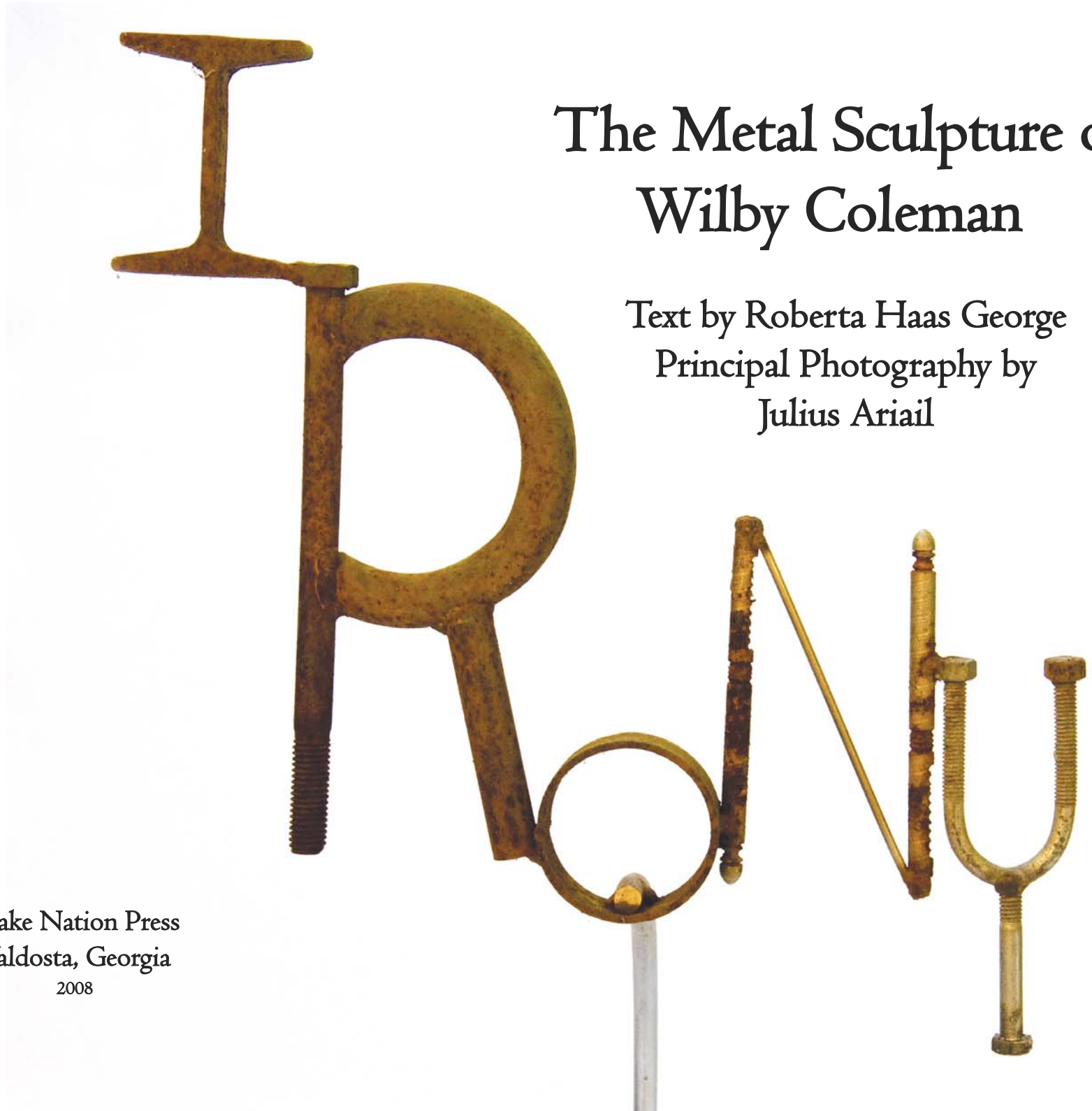

# The Metal Sculpture of Wilby Coleman

Text by Roberta Haas George
Principal Photography by
Julius Ariail

Snake Nation Press
Valdosta, Georgia
2008

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Photograph contributed by MAS


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As of August 2008, sculptures by Wilby Coleman may be seen in the following locations: 1. The Jacqueline Casey Hudgens Center for the Arts in Duluth, Georgia; 2. The Annette Howell Turner Center for the Arts in Valdosta, Georgia; 3. The Colquitt County Arts Center in Moultrie, Georgia; 4. The Museum of Arts and Sciences in Macon, Georgia; 5. The Ashburn-Turner County Chamber of Commerce in Ashburn, Georgia; 6. The Valwood School in Valdosta, Georgia; 7. The Pearlman Comprehensive Cancer Center at the South Georgia Medical Center in Valdosta, Georgia; 8. The South Georgia Regional Library in Valdosta, Georgia; 9. Hyta's Park in Valdosta, Georgia; 10. Mack's Park in Valdosta, Georgia; 11. TECT Corporation in Thomasville, Georgia; 12. The Colemans' home in Valdosta, Georgia. The numbers are keyed to the photographs around the borders of this page. Snake Nation Press would like to thank the institutions listed above for permission to photograph Coleman's works.

Georgia Council for the Arts
Office of the Governor

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Photographs from the Coleman family collection

Wilby and Gloria Coleman

Photograph contributed by Lindsay Brice

# *A Straightforward Foreword*

Photograph from the Coleman family collection

This is not an artist's statement, so don't get nervous. I can't invent metaphysical explanations and stretches of the imagination for the invention, construction, or naming of any of the stuff in this book, and so I am going to write a straightforward foreword.

In 1953 with a new bride I came to Valdosta, Georgia, to practice law. Four children later in 1968 my wife suddenly died. The cavalry arrived in 1970 in the form of a wonderful woman, Gloria Mederer, who was willing and able to take on me and my four children. We honeymooned on the Appalachian Trail, sailed snipe sailboats, rode bicycles both at home and on bike trips in Europe, and I seriously pursued cooking, guitar, the five-string banjo, and later the Appalachian dulcimer. This marvelous, beautiful woman supported me through all this foolishness and also presented me with a baby girl.

After I had practiced law for more than 30 years, a friend prevailed on us to attend an International Blacksmith Workshop in Savannah, Georgia. I found this to be electrifying. I built a forge, but there was no local source for coal, so I bought a propane forge and a few hammers. I already had an anvil, so I set up shop and started making forged implements and spoons and forks and such. I adopted as a "shop mark" the Georgia Code Section 16-9-1, which deals with forgery in the first degree.

I am aware that some people do not find replication tedious, but I am not one of them. In the meantime I bought a welder and taught myself to weld. I started making welded steel sculptures combined with forged parts and found objects. This was a lot of fun. In hundreds of sculptures, not one is a replication of anything I have ever made.

I was told by a renowned artist friend to lay off the jokes that were constantly appearing in my sculptures and titles. "Art is too serious to be funny," he said. Nevertheless, I couldn't help myself and even wore a lapel pin to art openings, which said, "Art is anything you can get away with."

Most of my work has some found object in it. There is something appealing in recognizing and using an object in a way in which it was never intended. It must be like what makes a joke funny: that surprise ending which you don't expect, and which puts a new meaning to the whole affair. A lot of people must appreciate these things, too, because most, if not all, seem to find this work funny.

Themes in my work are taken from science, mythology, religion (or lack of it), astronomy, old jokes, songs, common phrases, cartoons, history, literature, and just about everything. From the lessons of life, law practice, and much reading, I have accumulated a lot of totally useless facts. Titles are replete with irony, puns, double entendres, and layers of meaning, so that many of my works can be found to be funny by an eight-year-old, a 12-year-old, and an adult–all for different reasons. I don't try to make it easy to understand the work or the titles. What you get is what *you* get.

My wife has not only carried one end of most of the work seen here, she is also my severest and most successful critic. An occasional "Just what in the hell do you think you are doing?" has often stopped me in my tracks. On one occasion, on reviewing *Out at Third…sic transit gloria mundi* she said, "Nobody is ever going to get this." I said, "But what about the one who does get it? It will be stupendous."

I started making metal sculptures late in life and retired from a 37-year law practice in order to pursue it. I could not bring myself to sell any of my work, "my progeny." I found that I could make a commissioned piece and let it go because I never considered it mine while I was building it. I feel lucky to have this body of work in my possession. I feel exaltedly lucky to have stumbled upon this discipline. While I make art for me, I am pleased when others get the joke and appreciate the lack of seriousness which I strive to achieve.

Photograph from the Coleman family collection

I want to thank the following who have caused the work and this book to come into being:

My mother, Elizabeth Coleman, for passing me the genes that made me want to do this work;
Marshall Parks who enticed me to go to the International Blacksmith Workshop in Savannah, Georgia;
Louie White who got me involved in the local art scene and who took a very early interest in what I was beginning to do;
The many people who gave me encouragement by saying and writing that they really enjoyed these sculptures;
The competition judges who much more often than not awarded me a prize;
Rete R. Odom, Jr. who persistently pushed to get me my first one-man show at the Madison-Morgan Cultural Center after my original application was rejected. I never had to apply for the next thirty one-man shows;
Tommy "T. G." Connell who patiently directed me in a videographed interview for the production "100 Years of Art in Georgia" by Georgia Public Television;
My wife, Gloria, who didn't even fuss when I quit my day job and was home all the time for the next 20 years. She has supported me every step of the way and without whimper allowed me to fill up our house and two-acre lot with rusty iron shapes;
Barbara Passmore who planted the seed for this book by pushing hard to have the work catalogued;
Roberta George who persistently interviewed me about once a week for over six years concerning the work, what it was made of, what the name of it was, and what it meant. I could usually answer all of the questions except for the last one. Without her herding me like a border collie, this book would never have been written;
Julius and Julia Ariail who recently came aboard and volunteered to make this book a reality. Julius' flair for the camera makes the job of photographing three-dimensional pieces look easy. Having taken thousands of inept photographs of them, I know that it is not. Julia's longtime training as a graphic designer and book layout artist blends well with her wit and intelligence. It is far beyond my ability to even contemplate the work she has done here;
Voigt Sheet Metal who gave me the run of their stainless steel "throwaway" bin;
Rice Iron and Metal who have run the best "art supply house" south of the Mason-Dixon line;
And all those others who have supported me whom I may not have mentioned.

Photograph from the Coleman family collection

Wilby Coleman
August 2008

# *Introduction*

Recreating one's career paradigm and breaking the mold of a conventional, respected, and flourishing lifestyle defy the fortitude, much less the determination, of most individuals. Valdosta, Georgia, resident Wilby Coleman has accomplished just such a feat. In two years he transformed himself from Wilby Coleman, successful lawyer, into Wilby Coleman, steel sculptor. Still respected in his community, though perhaps with a new esteem and a different reputation, Coleman revels in the success of his pursuits in the sculptural domain. However, there is nothing common or rigid about his work or his view of success.

Coleman grew up in College Park, Georgia. His mother had been a commercial artist with *Women's Wear Daily* in New York for many years, and examples of her design work are found today in Coleman's collection. He does not recall any family directives about pursuing an arts-oriented career, but there were early signs that art and design interested him. He entered Washington and Lee University, with the intention of obtaining a degree in business, and left two years later to study art at the University of Georgia. After one brief quarter, he decided another field might offer a more lucrative future. Ultimately, Coleman graduated from law school, joined an old Valdosta firm and for thirty-five years was the quintessential lawyer, husband, father of five, and good corporate citizen.

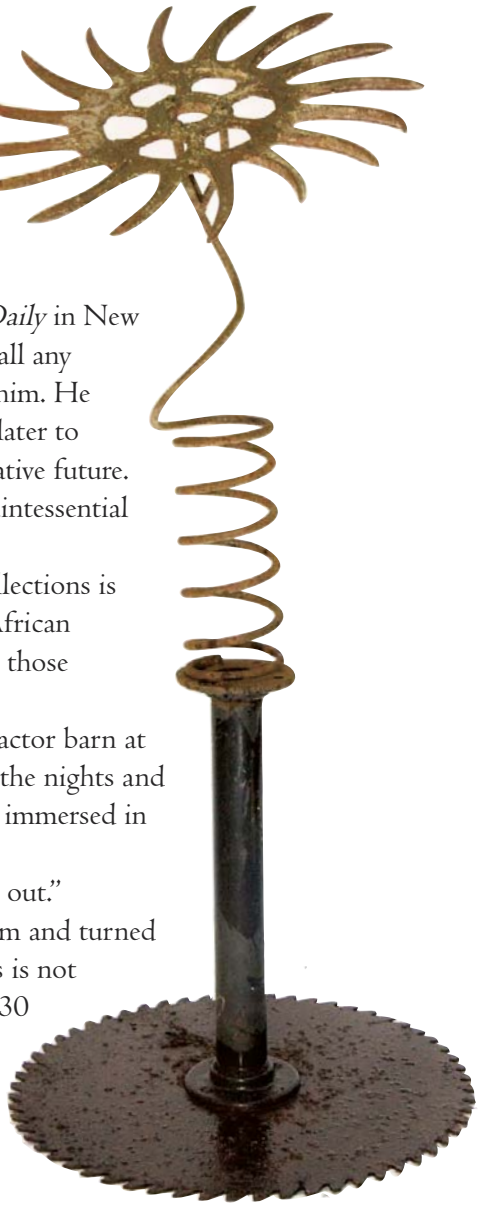
Coleman had deserted the studio, but the excitement of art never left him. In fact, one of his strongest recollections is of a family visit when he was seventeen or eighteen to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. There in the African galleries, the sculptural forms with their simple, strong, dramatic lines made a lasting impression. The impact of those images and lines can be seen today in his own sculpture.

Years later, when Coleman finally began "making things," it was on weekends or nights. He turned an old tractor barn at the back of his two-acre lot into a shop with an anvil and welder, gifts from his wife Gloria. But as time passed, the nights and weekends stretched into several days a week, and soon his practice of law was scaled back. Coleman had become immersed in metal sculpture.

"It was like a volcano," he said. "I'd sublimated the artistic impulse for thirty years. This stuff came spewing out."

By 1989 something had snapped. The lawyer had re-forged himself into a sculptor. Coleman quit the law firm and turned his work week into seven, 12-hour days in his shop, each one idea-filled and exhilarating. Expecting eventually, as is not uncommon with artists, to hit a dry spell, to be in need of inspiration, Coleman has been amazed: the result of 30 years of sublimated "stuff" was a rich deposit of artistic inspiration.

He refers to his media as "handsome junk with intrinsically nice qualities." Found objects, scrap metal, and steel in rich varieties are all incorporated into his work. Valdosta's Rice Iron and Metal is a scrap-metal heaven, ideal for foraging materials and helping with ideas. Friends and neighbors also aided and abetted Coleman's lust for found objects by scrounging for raw materials, old castoffs that come to life again in his sculptural forms.



*Spring Flower 2*

*Spring Flower 1*

The titles of Coleman's sculptures bear evidence of his slightly irreverent point of view. For example, *How Am I Doin' for Openers?* is made from various cutting and opening tools. *Gettin' a Grip on the Future* is created with wrenches, disks, and a toothed cultivator blade. *Judges I have Known* uses a shovel, cultivator parts, sheet metal, and angle iron.

Another piece, *…And Baby Makes Three,* was inspired by the dismay and anguish of his son and daughter-in-law at the challenges of family life. A disk harrow blade, square extrusion pipe, chain, shackle, a Civil War cannonball, pitchforks, and toilet floats are reconfigured to embody a man and woman joined as one with their new lifeblood, their child. One of the heaviest elements in the design, both physically and visually, is the child, the cannonball. In this piece, as in so many of Coleman's other works, the materials are familiar to the viewer from other modes, but the content is startlingly new. The piece as a whole resonates with meaning. There is humor in the whole and in the individual found objects comprising the parts (i.e. toilet floats for breasts and a cannonball, shackle, and chain representing the parental bond, relationship, and obligations.) But in the parts he utilizes, Coleman shows a recognition of the intrinsic handsomeness of each design. His imaginative organization of parts is a creative gift demonstrating an understanding and enthusiasm for the abstract statements and sense of discovery of primitive sculpture and 20th century abstract designs. Coleman's work reflects a penetrating grasp of human nature.

His ideas have been inspired by nature, by literature, by his reservoir of humor, and by years spent observing the human "animal." The lawyer's chair in court served as quite an observation point. His unique sculptural statements glisten with such humor, irony, and insight that one might call Coleman a "Mark Twain in metal," a person he slightly resembles.

Coleman's body of work as a sculptor consists of approximately 225 pieces. Most are in his possession. They fill his home and spill over into the surrounding acreage, standing out among the trees and bushes, lined up in sections of the front yard, peeking out from vines, hanging from branches, and positioned at the back patio, and at the front door.

Rarely does Coleman sell his pieces. Financially, he has no need, and he measures his success not in monetary terms but in the exhilaration of the creative journey.

Suzanne Harper
Executive Director
Museum of Arts and Sciences
Macon, Georgia
June 1995

## *Editor's Notes*

*The faintest ink lasts longer than the longest memory*
*Chinese proverb*

Barbara Passmore is the one who planted the seed, the idea. "Really someone should catalog Wilby's work," she'd say every once in a while. I'd agree. I really liked his sculpture, and being a writer, I liked his titles and the stories about the work even more. Over the ten-plus years I was the Director at the old Lowndes/Valdosta Arts Center, I'd listened to Wilby giving artist's talks at his one-man exhibits and talking to young people at his home as he gave them tours. And again and again, I'd heard Wilby and Gloria, two good story tellers, relate how an idea had sparked the creation of a sculpture or how something funny had happened at an exhibit. And I thoroughly agreed with the artist who told Wilby that his titles were so good that he could just leave the work at home and send in the names of his pieces.

Then I retired from L/VAC, but I missed all the visual artists' conversation. Of course, I continued writing with The Snake Handlers (what Bob Hornbuckle calls our writers' group). With them and in my yoga classes, I was constantly telling people to write their memories down, to not let the image of a loved one or a hated one, for that matter, slip away.

Don't ask me exactly when the thought came, but it did: Why didn't I get descriptions of Wilby's work and the stories that went with them down on paper? At least that way when we were all dead and gone, there would be a list of the pieces and the tales. I said to Wilby, "Let's set up a schedule, once a week for a couple of hours; I'll come to your house, you'll describe the artistic process of making a sculpture, tell the stories that go along with it, and I'll write it all down."

*Puttin' On the Ritz*

Of course, always in the back of my mind was the idea that Snake Nation Press would someday publish Wilby's book. Still, there were so many hurdles to overcome. First, Wilby's metal sculpture was very hard to photograph. Jean Arambula, the Snake's other editor, and I had tried it once, featuring his *Stolid Musk Ox Transmogrified* on the cover of Issue 7 of *Snake Nation Review* and other pieces on the inside pages. (You try holding up a sheet behind a sculpture and not let the wrinkles show.) Still, Jean kept saying, "It would make a great book."

So over a period of six years, I made weekly and sometimes only monthly visits to the Colemans' home because, of course, life interfered. There were illnesses, family crises, other business, and holidays. Still, fairly often an afternoon would find me at the Colemans' table, drinking Gloria's flavored water, and taking notes on Wilby's art. They were good times. We'd often get off track, recount stories of our families that had nothing to do with art. We exchanged recipes and shared information on diabetes, since both Wilby and my husband Noel had the disease. Gloria printed

out poems she found on the Internet for me, and I gave them some of my poems and stories to read. I found out what a good editor she is. When Gloria would call to cancel an appointment, she'd apologize, and I'd say, "Life comes before art." She liked that idea, and I did, too.

Finally we had a photo album of about 75 snapshots with the stories underneath, but it was far from complete, and finding a worthy photographer was proving to be an insurmountable barrier. I spent two whole Saturdays helping to build two giant white backdrops that were never used. At one point, I told Wilby, "I'm almost despairing." He said, "I've already despaired."

Now, here comes the real, real miracle. At one of the Turner Art Center's receptions, I told Julius and Julia Ariail that I was trying to do a book on Wilby's sculpture. Julius, who had given the *Snake Nation Review* some wonderful photographs of pitcher plants for its cover, said, "I'd like a shot at that."

I told him, "They're almost impossible to photograph. We've already tried two established professionals."

"I'd still like to try," he said.

Well, as they say, the rest is history. Julius was incredibly inventive and organized, and within a few weeks, the photo sessions began. Julia took over layout and design. It truly was as though the angels had descended to make the book, *Irony*, a reality. Julia, whom I'd known for years through yoga classes and her work at Colson Printing, had always steered me in the right direction with art cards for L/VAC. Now, with her incredible tact and patience, she was part of this husband and wife team that for hours on end moved sculpture, took innumerable photographs, recorded facts, sent out e-mails, and pulled it all together into this book. Colson Printing, well known for their beautiful art books and excellent reproductions of artwork, agreed to do the printing.

Wilby kept asking, "How did you find those two?" I kept saying–as he did about his art, when I asked how it came about?–"I don't know." Some may call it serendipity; I call it an answer to a prayer.

This book contains photographs and descriptive text for approximately half of Wilby's named sculptures. The remainder are included as photographs on the accompanying DVD. Most of the photographs in the book and on the DVD were taken by Julius, but others are informal snapshots that show the construction process or other aspects of a piece when it was new. In addition to Gloria and Wilby's snapshots, several other excellent photographers added their work over the years to the Colemans' collection, and some of those photographs have been used in this book. In some cases, the pieces show the inevitable signs of exposure to the elements for a decade or more, but this is all part of the natural cycle of life for inanimate objects as well as for all of us.

So many people have contributed to this book. First I want to thank my beloved husband, Noel George, who for 50 years has lived with me and understood my need to have so many projects. I want to thank the entire population of Valdosta and Lowndes County, a wonderful, beautiful place where we raised our seven children. I want to thank the Valdosta and Lowndes schools, and especially St. Johns School and Valdosta State University, where everyone in our family received a first-rate education. I want to thank my good friend, Jean Arambula, who came along, not once but twice, when I was going to let Snake Nation Press die. She kept it going. I also want to thank Griff Holland, who used his strong muscles to help move the heavier sculpture pieces so they could be photographed. I want to thank Phyllis and John Hiers, two members of our proofreading team, who gave the manuscript careful attention in its final stage. I want to thank Blake Ellis, an artist in his own right, for supporting this project. I want to thank Barbara Passmore, another proofreader, who has done so much over the years for the arts in this community and the Snake in particular. And last but not least, I want to thank the Snake Handlers, our Saturday writing group, and all my fellow artists who came to the L/VAC Center over the years; their energy and inspiration are with me still.

Roberta Haas George
August 2008

# Irony

## The Metal Sculpture of Wilby Coleman

irony /ˈʌirəni/ *n.* 1. Dissimulation, pretense: *esp.* the pretense of ignorance practiced by Socrates as a step towards confuting an adversary. 2. the expression of meaning that uses language that normally expresses the opposite.

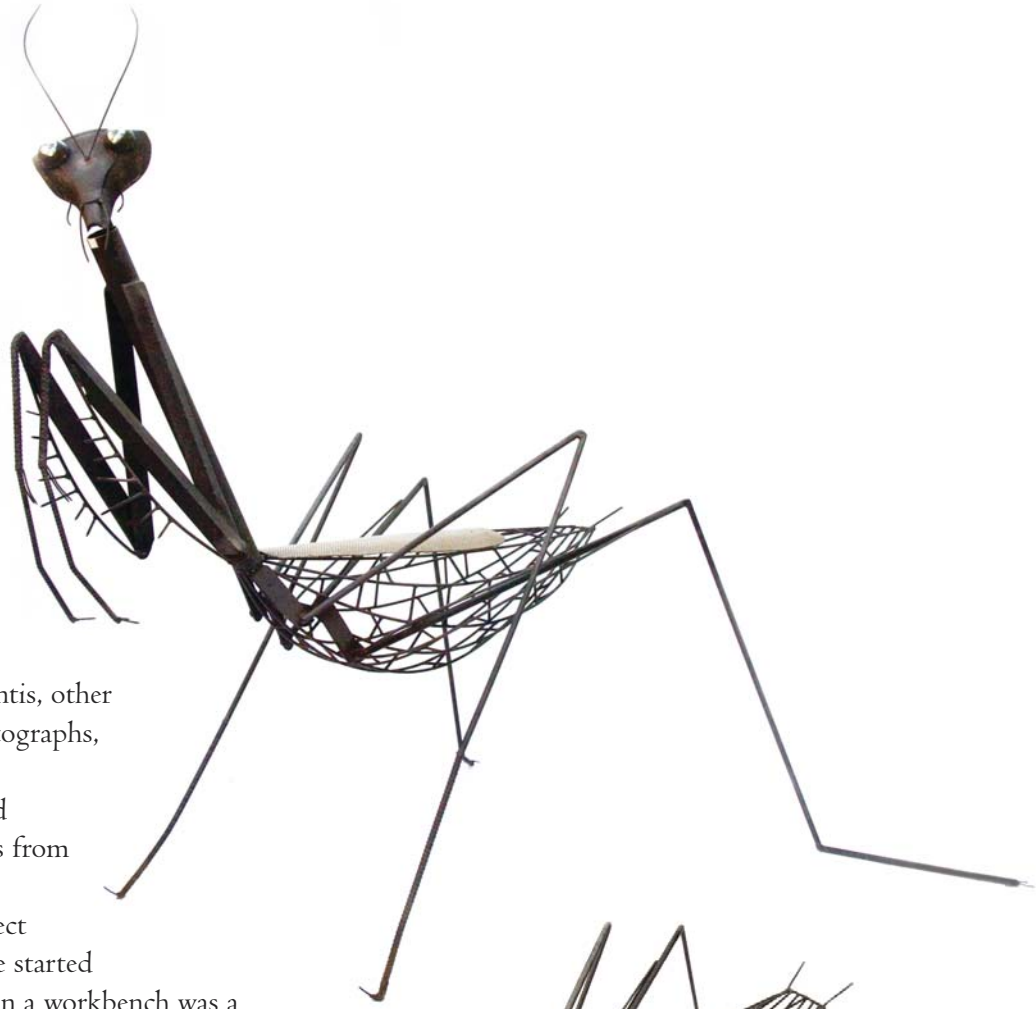
irony /ˈʌirəni/ *a.* 1. consisting of or containing iron; of the nature of or resembling iron.

— from *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Photograph contributed by Mike Tanner

## *The Preying Mantis*

*69" h x 65" w x 75" l*

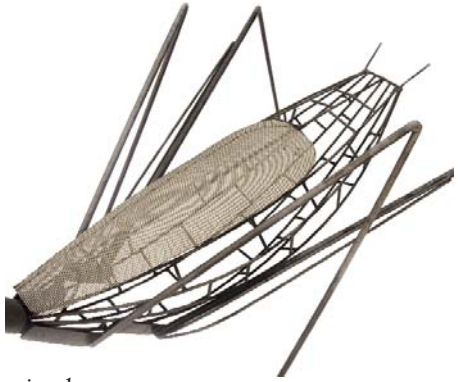


The inspiration for the sculpture, *The Preying Mantis*, came to Wilby from a 1990s news report about a Catholic diocese and its bishop being sued for failure to address the problem of child molestation. Apparently, the parents of over 30 young acolytes had complained to this particular bishop over a long period of years and had even taken their grievances to Rome–all to no avail. Later, the case so inflamed a jury that the complainants were awarded a multi-million dollar judgment. Wilby started work on *The Preying Mantis* the very next morning.

Wilby says he had never seen a real praying mantis, other than pictures of a spooky insect on TV or in photographs, and he couldn't recall much about it. Gloria had not yet started to use the Internet for research, and an entomology book only showed a praying mantis from the side.

Although he had no exact idea how the insect looked from the front, back, bottom, or top, he started to make the legs. Amazingly, right next to him on a workbench was a bright-green praying mantis–a sign, he thought, that he was on the right track. Wilby very gingerly eased the insect into a Mason jar and for the next few days had the perfect model. He put ants into the jar, figuring the bug needed something to eat, but it ignored them, and a moth was fearfully batted away.

After all the needed drawings were completed, Wilby released the praying mantis back where he'd found him, never to be seen again.



The head of *The Preying Mantis* is a metal bicycle seat, stripped of its cover, which can turn from side to side revealing the clerical collar on its neck. The large oversized eyes are stainless steel ladles purchased from a restaurant supply store. The legs and body are made out of steel rods, and the wings are stainless steel mesh. Wherever it is shown, this sculpture generates discussion.

## *Out of Africa*

*20" diameter disk*

Wilby has had an interest in African art all his life and has a number of books on African art. But in reviewing this material, he was unable to find anything to aid him in making this piece.

*Out of Africa* is a most unusual sculpture, which has the appearance of a bronze casting but is actually a convex disk harrow blade. Wilby used galvanized annealed eighth-inch wire in concentric lines to achieve the three-dimensional trompe-l'oeil effect. The heavy-lidded eyes, shaped on an anvil, are at half-mast over shiny metal washers and give the appearance of long-suffering resignation. The classical nose and lips are flat steel, hammered into shape by a ball-peen hammer, and stand an inch or less out from the face. Wilby waxed every other space between the wires, and the alternating light and dark colorations seem to be part of the trick to the eye of seeing it as a fully rounded piece.

Wilby had always thought of the sculpture as being a woman, but a curator in Vidalia took a different view. "I've had many a long conversation with him," she said, after Wilby's one-man exhibit was taken down, "and I'm sorry to see him go." This piece has won a number of awards in various competitions and exhibits.

## *Benediction*

*Vulture 23" h x 44.5" w  Stand 37" h x 17" w*

Looking at a book on Florida birds, Wilby came across a photograph of a Turkey Vulture, commonly known in the South as a turkey buzzard. The bird, with outspread wings, looked to Wilby as though it were giving a benediction.

Two huge manure forks make the wings in the same spread-out posture as in the photograph. The body and tail are made of three- and four-tined pitchforks, with the top forks' tines spread out as shoulders to accommodate the wings. Eighth-inch steel rods form the neck, and the head was forged on the anvil along with the talons. The eyes are ball bearings, and the wattles are weld material, dabbed on to resemble the folds of the real wattle. The nails on the talons are steel rods, heated and drawn out to a point.

As a result of a Best in Show award, this piece was displayed in the Governor's Office at the Georgia State Capitol for several months.

## *. . . And Baby Makes Three*

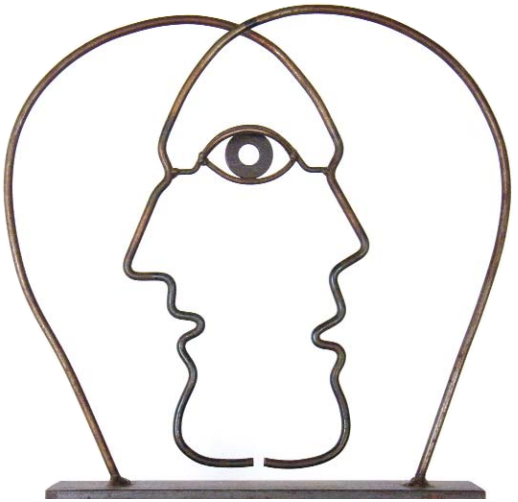
*77" h x 28" w*

Wilby found a Civil War cannonball that had previously been used as a clapper in a large cast-iron bell. He cut a length of heavy chain, attaching one end to the cannonball and the other end to a large shackle. This ball and chain assembly was still warm on the welding table when Justin and Rosemary, his son and daughter-in-law, came to the shop to see what he was doing. On seeing the new work, Justin said, "What's our new baby doing here?"

The light bulb went on, and Wilby started the sculpture. Using a disk harrow blade, round and square extrusions, pitchforks, and toilet floats along with the cannonball and chain, he reconfigured them to embody a man and a woman joined as one holding their new "child" firmly shackled to their legs.

This piece as a whole resonates with meaning. There is humor in the individual found objects comprising the parts (toilet floats for breasts and a cannonball–the baby–and the shackle and chain represent the parental bond, relationship, and its obligations). The conjoined faces, arms, and interlocking hands epitomize the marriage bond.

The title comes from a line in the song, "My Blue Heaven."



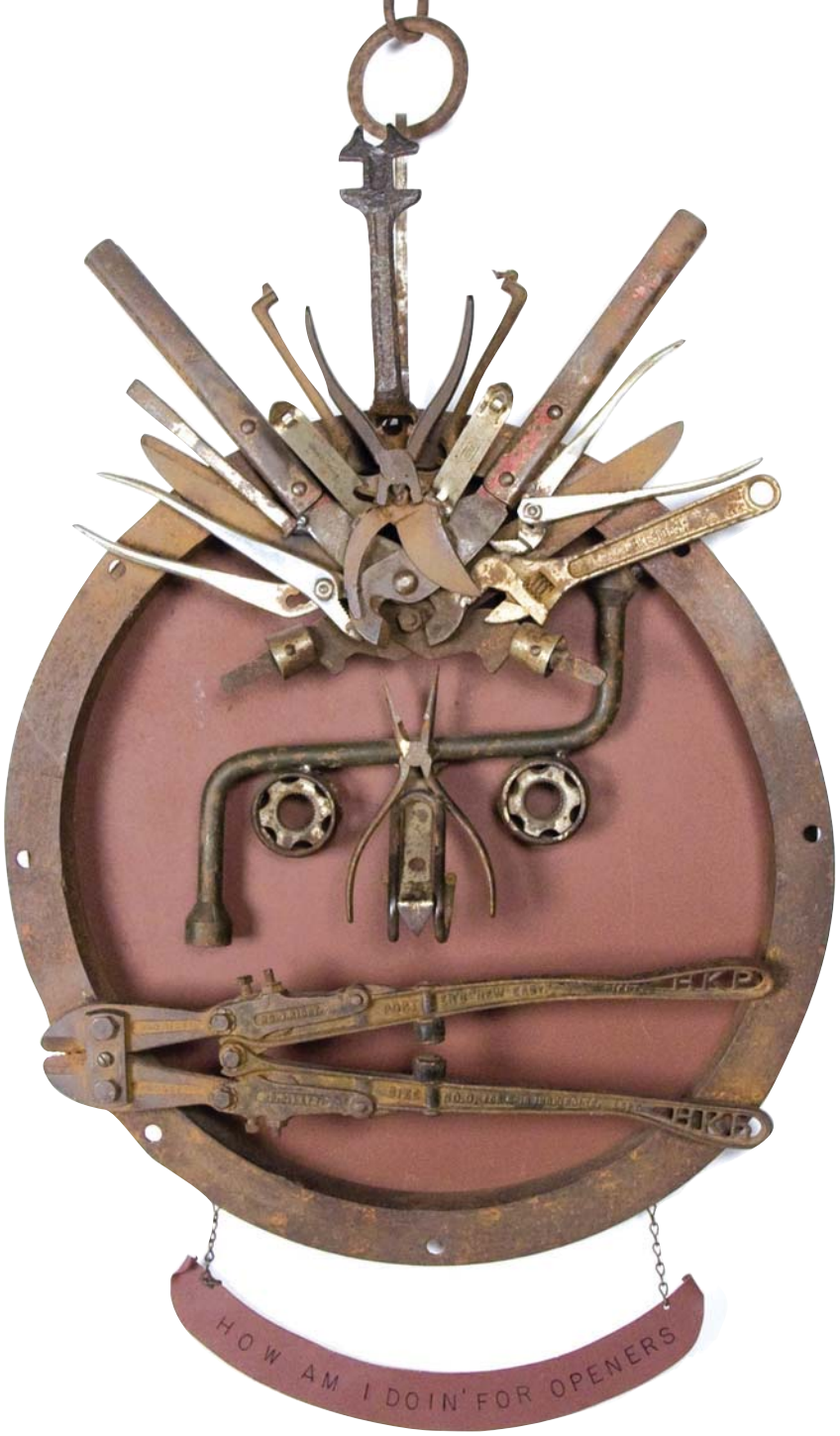
## *Fiddling with Steel*

*44" h x 30" w*

Three hanging wall sculptures composed of a violin and two steel plates tell the story of the Colemans' preparation for a 500-mile bicycle trip through Europe. The couple decided to become physically fit by riding 500 miles throughout Lowndes County. On these outings, they also picked up all the metal junk they found at grade crossings and stop signs for about two months, accumulating two large boxes of found metal. The purpose was to make two comparison plates, which would display American road junk next to Austrian/German road junk. However, in their bike rides from Munich, Germany, to Vienna, Austria, they found no metal on the roadways, except one single piece 17 miles outside of Munich. This large bolt came from a Mercedes-Benz automobile and was the only discarded metal found on the 500-mile journey. Twenty-three other riders in their cycling group were also searching the roads.

One panel, covered with the many metal pieces found in America, spells out the numerals 500, with a large fringe of extras, which includes a cast-iron pot and heavy-duty truck springs hanging from the bottom. The other panel, with the numerals "500" written in metallic pen, holds the single Mercedes-Benz bolt, which represents the entire European trip with its clean highways and byways. The violin to the left adds meaning to the title.

The Colemans later took another get-in-shape ride through Lowndes County, and at the same intersections the accumulation of metal pieces had returned, all of it looking much as it did before.




## *How Am I Doin' for Openers?*

*34" h x 20" w*

The phrase "How am I doing for openers?" had long had a place in Wilby's lexicon. He built to this phrase. "I picked up every tool I could spare that was used for opening something and began," he said.

A worn, red handle of an open cable cutter and various open plier handles and beer openers are welded to the metal scalp to make up a disheveled head of hair. Shear blades turn into a wrinkled forehead, and a lug wrench turns into exaggerated eyebrows, one drooping downward and one rising upwards for a quizzical expression. Open needle-nose pliers make lines between the eyebrows, and the handles are the lines down the sides of the beer-opener nose. Curved wires form the nostrils. An extra large pair of slightly-open bolt cutters gives the face a huge mouth revealing two single black teeth, one on top of the other.

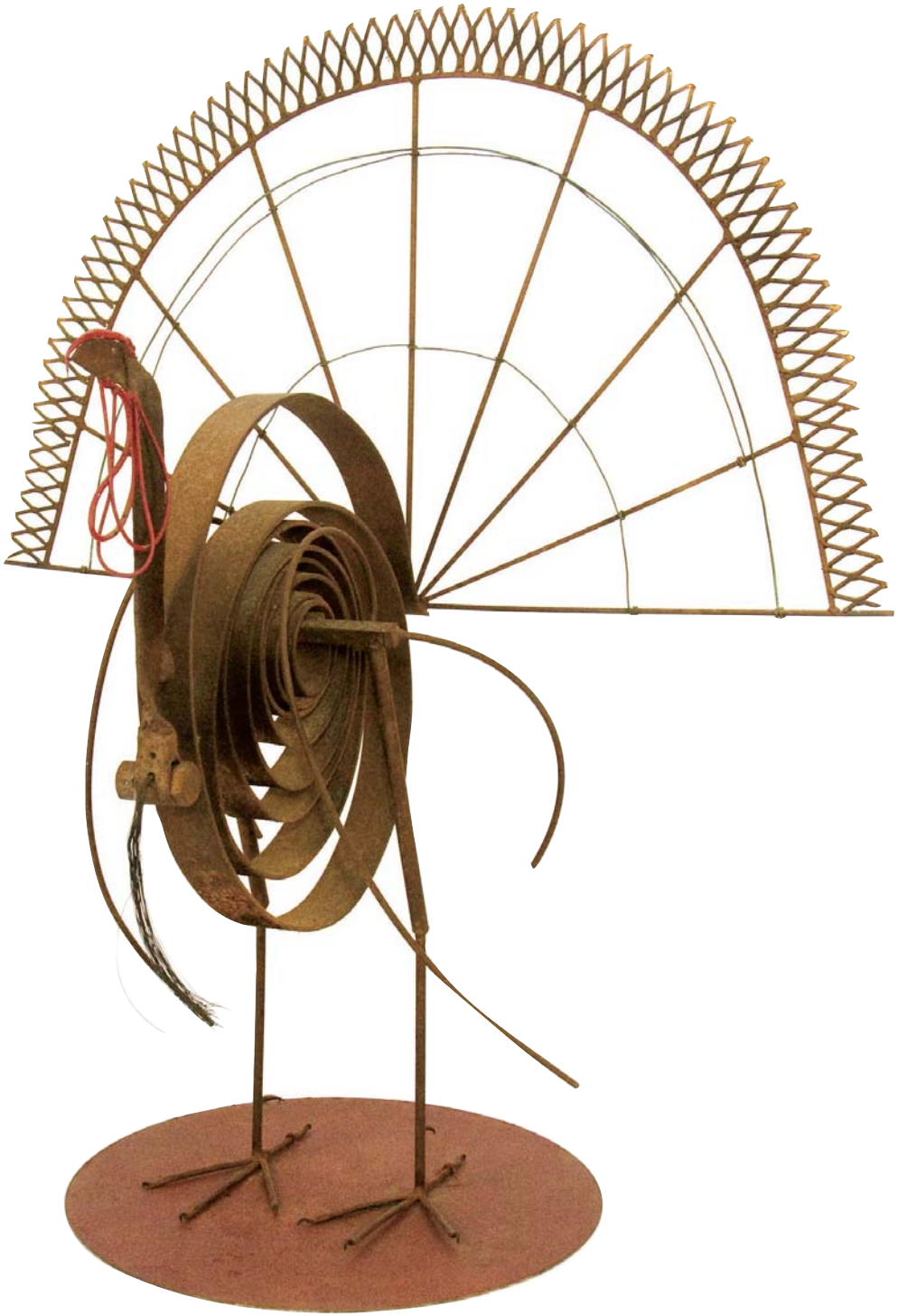
A fitting question for this comedic face is: "How am I doin' for openers?" The phrase is stamped into a hanging metal scroll at the bottom of the steel disk.

## *Tom*

*44" h x 38" w x 24" l*

The spring body of this strutting Wild Turkey is made from a 20-foot-long piece of two-inch-wide steel bar. Wilby clamped the steel into a post vise and walked it around and around to create a spring. The heated ends were turned so the tail and head could be welded on. A hacking blade, used for making cuts called "cat faces" in pine trees for the collection of resin, is the head. Expanded steel wire makes the fanned-out tail. As in the Wild Turkey, a "beard" of copper wire blackened by liver of sulfur grows out of the chest. Feet, nails, and spurs are forged steel rods. The wire wattle and snood that laps over the beak are painted red, and the wire wings are pulled down into a full strut.

A flick to one of the wings, and the entire body of the bird from head to tail shudders exactly like a tom turkey on display.



## *Self-Made Man and Companion Piece*

*Woman 68.5" h x 41" w  Man 72" h x 29" w*

Wilby drew his inspiration for *Self-Made Man,* a six-foot-tall construction, from the life and figure of his maternal grandfather, William Wilby, an immigrant from Heckmondwike, England. William Wilby took a job as a plumber's apprentice and soon became a licensed plumber. In the late 1800s, he met and married Elizabeth Woods and moved to Selma, Alabama.

William Wilby owned the first automobile in Selma, would not touch liquor of any kind, but was an inveterate gambler who would bet on anything. He had the type of math genius that could add up long columns of figures accurately without a pencil. He could add boxcar numbers– the numbers on the sides of the cars, 100 or more in a long train–and would bet that he knew the final tally. He was never wrong.

Wilby decided to make *Self-Made Man* out of black iron plumbing pipes. The fingers are solid rods bent on a forge, simulating the joints. The toes, heels, and ankles are pipe nipples and nuts. The head is the rounded end, cut off, of two scuba tanks, each beveled around the edges, welded, and polished. "Making the hair was difficult," Wilby says. "It is easier to make a full head of hair than a semi-bald head with a comb over."

It took three months to build the first sculpture and many trips to Miller Hardware for the different plumbing joints. Wilby needed all sorts of different lengths of threaded pipes with nipples for the different parts, which Miller had in stock. The staff at Miller's grew curious, so Wilby brought the finished man down in the back of a truck to show what he had been working on.

As it happened, Senator Loyce Turner was outside and joined in the viewing on the sidewalk.

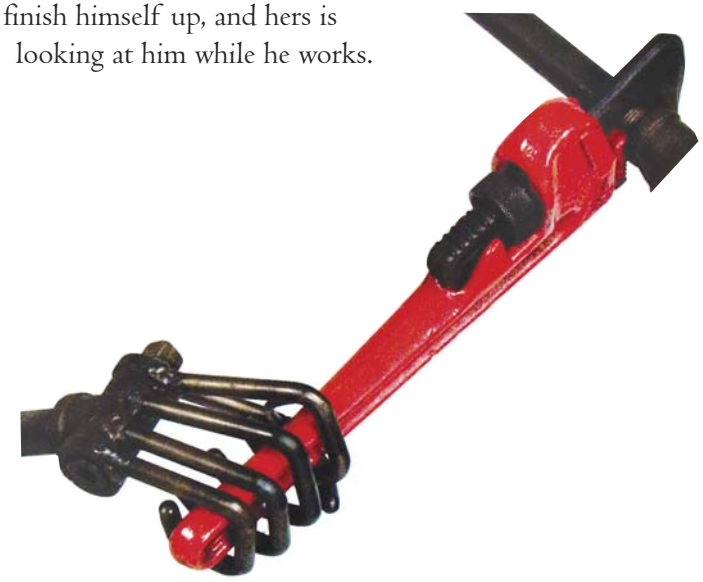
Turner asked, "Who in the world is that?"

Wilby explained, "My grandfather."

Turner looked on for a few more minutes, then said, motioning to a particular part of the sculpture, "I'll tell you what, if that had been one of my forebears, I'd have used a bigger pipe."

"The woman's height was shortened, shoulders narrowed, hips widened, and the stance 'sissified,'" said Wilby, "but she was completed in much less time." The easier-to-make full head of hair required more wires, and they are bent as though blowing in the wind.

The heads on both figures are movable. His head is usually looking where he is using the wrench to finish himself up, and hers is looking at him while he works.



Photograph from the Coleman Family collection

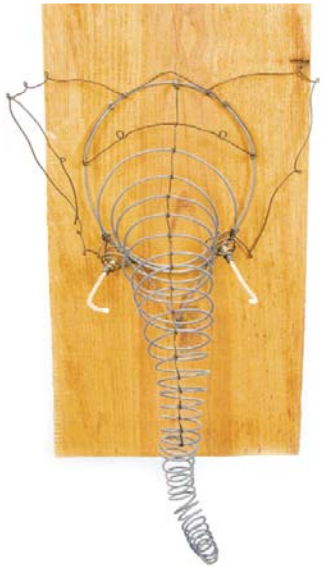
## *The Elephants*

### *Nude Elephant Descending Trunk*

*72" h x 60" w*

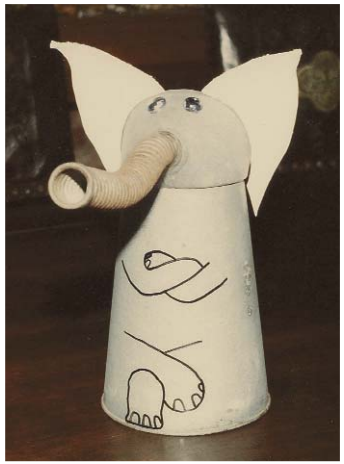
This delicate one-quarter-inch steel-rod elephant is composed of large African elephant ears, a head, four eyes, tusks of carved wood painted white, and four trunks in descending order from uplifted to turned downward. The lines of rods and the descending trunks suggest movement. Each trunk is looped at the end in the exact shape of an elephant's snout. An elephant's foot is suggested by four ivory-painted toenails on the disk harrow blade forming the foot.

The idea for this sculpture came from the painting, *Nude Descending a Staircase,* exhibited in the 1913 Armory Show in New York by Marcel Duchamp, one of the earliest examples of true Modern Art painters who depicted motion by repeatedly painting parts of the figure's legs simulating movement. The sculpture is now in the collection of Wilbur Warner at Highlands, North Carolina.



***Truncated Elephant***
*20" h x 11" w*

Photograph from the Coleman Family collection



***Oil Can Elephant***
*12" h x 6" w*

Using wire, an oil can, a pot-bellied stove leg, and a cast-steel coffee table leg, Wilby has created four other sculptures of elephants.

***Dumbo*** *- 13" h x 13" w*

***Jumbo*** *- 16" h x 10.5" w*

## *Tycho Brahe*

*14" diameter disk*

When Wilby found this stainless steel salt cellar at the junk yard, he knew immediately that it would be the nose of *Tycho Brahe*.

This 16th-century mathematician and astronomer was so beloved by the King of Denmark that he built a tower from which Tycho Brahe could observe the heavens. The tower had no steps, only a winding ramp inside, so wide that a horse, carrying heavy instruments, could ascend. As it is said, "Pride goes before a fall." While in Copenhagen, Brahe became involved in an argument with another astronomer about who was the best mathematician. Challenged to a sword duel, he emerged without a nose, and thereafter wore a silver one, stuck on with gum arabic.

In another ingenious use of a disk harrow blade for a portrait, Wilby uses the upper part of the dark blade for the face and the bottom part for the ruffed collar. Eighth-inch stainless steel wire defines all the features: ears, hair, eye brows, eyes, mustache, and beard. The eyelids are plasma-cut steel, oxidized with a torch, set over the washer eyes to give a heavy-lidded aspect to the portrait– true to life, Wilby feels, after looking at some 30 life portraits in books and on the Internet. The ends of the mustache and beard were heated and pulled out into sharp points, and the manufacturer's stamp on the disk-harrow blade reads, "Brazil 2018" and other indecipherable names. Topping off this remarkable piece is the cylindrical salt shaker for the nose.

Once a visitor, coming into the Colemans' house said, "Oh, Tycho Brahe," immediately recognizing the mathematician's distinctive face with its unusual nose.

## *Brown Phylum: Katy Didn't*

*24" h x 16" w*

The body of this insect, a katydid, is a wood rasp, a metal file used for shaping wood. The head is five-eighths-inch-thick steel, with eyes of weld material spot welded on with a mig welder. The doubled steel rods of the upper legs make them appear thicker than the bottom parts of the legs. The folded wings are stainless steel, and the carapace is copper that has been made to verdigris with acid, rendering it in varying shades of green.

The antennae are one-eighth-inch rods that have been drawn out to a sharp point, and the legs are welded onto a stainless steel plate that has been polished with a disk grinder.

Wilby expressed concern at this sculpture being shown since the antennae jutted out right at eye level for some small child. The Madison-Morgan Cultural Center curator solved the problem by placing the piece in a holder for a plaque or dish, which actually gave a better view of the sculpture. Later, Wilby constructed a similar stand out of stainless steel.

## *Ouch*

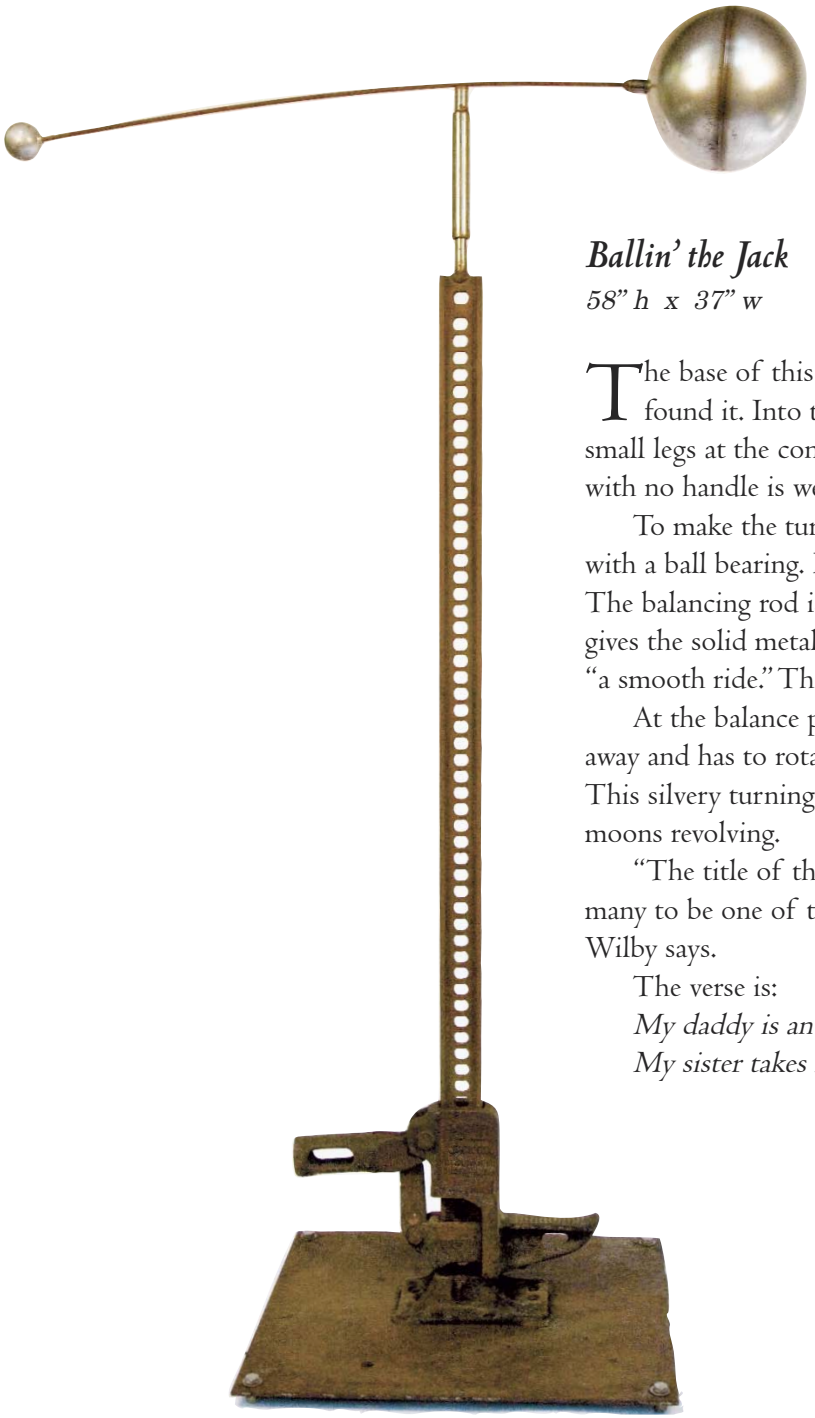
*56.5" h x 13" w*

The curves of this complex piece are bent out and down and back up again in many different directions to suggest a chicken's feathers.

Made out of strips of one-eighth-inch-thick steel, one inch wide, Wilby used a vise with open jaws so that he could bend the strips curving them inches at a time. The eyes are ball bearings welded to flat washers. At first, Wilby had the idea to put an ostrich egg inside the chicken, but a contractor doing renovation on a local auditorium called and offered him some discarded fixtures. Now the chicken sits atop an upside-down, lighted plastic globe that used to be a hanging light fixture in Mathis Auditorium in Valdosta, Georgia.

The name came from a comment made by Roberta George, mother of seven children and former Director of the Lowndes/Valdosta Arts Commission. On seeing the piece, she said, "Ouch." Few men seem to think that the hen sitting on top of an oversized egg is funny, but women laugh out loud when told the name.





## *Ballin' the Jack*

*58" h x 37" w*

The base of this sculpture is a square steel plate, which already had four holes in place when Wilby found it. Into these holes, he placed four acorn nuts, which when turned upside down, gave it four small legs at the contact points to keep the rusty metal off the floor. The bottom of a large truck jack with no handle is welded to the plate, which makes up the foundation of this sculpture.

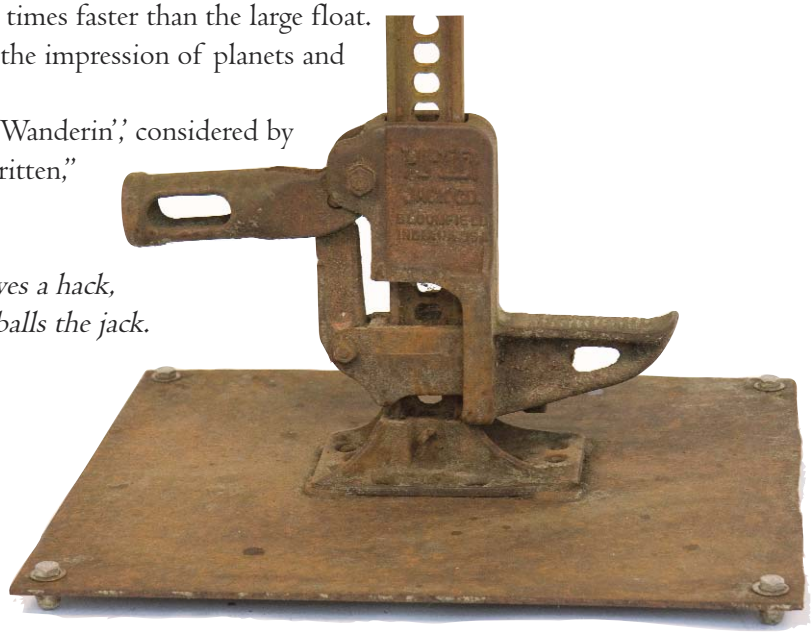
To make the turning mechanism, Wilby welded a stainless steel rod to the top of the jack, capped off with a ball bearing. He plugged a six-inch stainless steel pipe and placed it over the rod and ball bearing. The balancing rod is welded to the top of the plug, which rotates on the ball bearing. This arrangement gives the solid metal ball on one end and the large stainless steel hollow float on the other end of the rod "a smooth ride." The solid ball was sprayed with chrome paint to match the stainless steel float.

At the balance point between these two balls, the smaller ball is exactly two and a half times farther away and has to rotate exactly two and a half times faster than the large float. This silvery turning of balls gives the viewer the impression of planets and moons revolving.

"The title of this sculpture comes from 'Wanderin'," considered by many to be one of the best folk songs ever written," Wilby says.

The verse is:

*My daddy is an engineer, my brother drives a hack,*
*My sister takes in washin', and the baby balls the jack.*

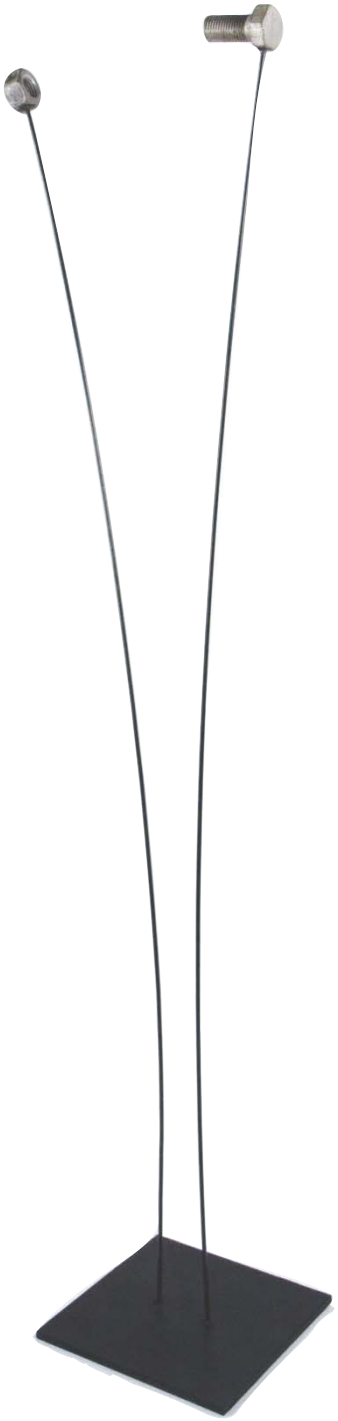


## *Courtship*

*70" h x 17.5" w*

This deceptively simple sculpture, equally ironic and funny, is made from a large one-inch galvanized bolt and a one-inch nut, both welded onto five-foot, spring-steel rods. With the slightest touch, the two parts of the sculpture bounce back and forth, the nut and bolt making a musical ringing as the parts try to connect.

No such luck. The male part of the sculpture finally gives out, but the female can go on moving much longer.



## *Last of the Red Hot Mamas*

*47" h x 12" w*

The idea for *Last of the Red Hot Mamas* came when Wilby saw a great pile of radiators dumped out of a flatbed truck at Rice Iron and Metal, the local scrap-metal yard. One section of a radiator had broken loose, and he immediately knew that the damaged piece lying on the ground was a 1920s flapper.

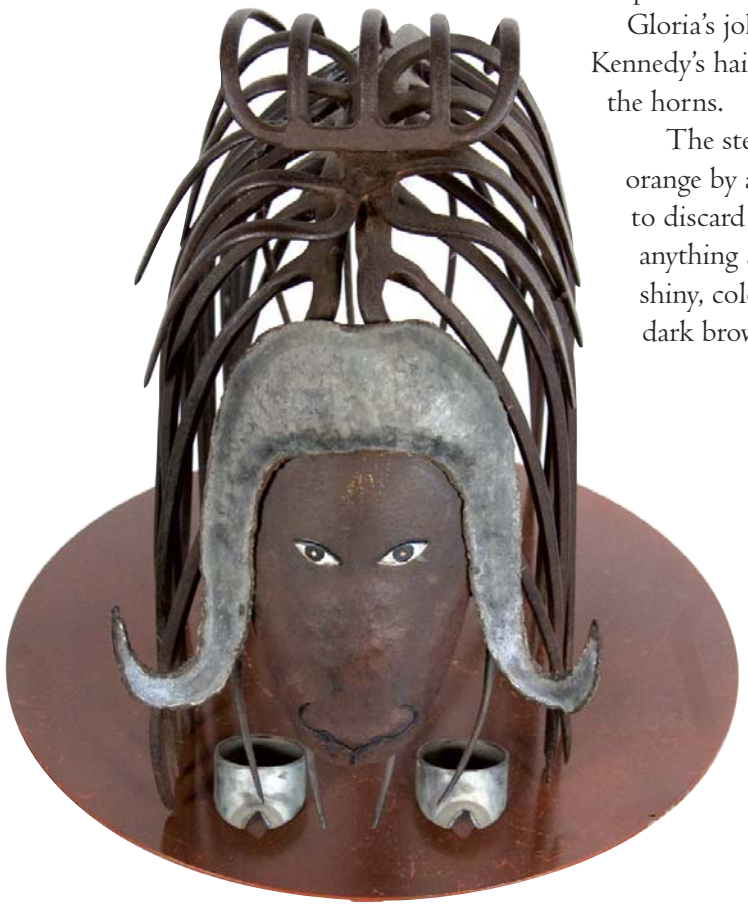
"This kind of immediate inspiration doesn't always happen," Wilby says, "and it's a pleasant surprise when it does."

*Last of the Red Hot Mamas* is made out of one slice of a steam radiator, which is her red dress. She has on black pumps turned outward, slew-footed, and the heels of the shoes are the feet of the radiator. The rest of each shoe is cut steel. She wears white gloves and a white cloche hat made out of the top of an acetylene bottle with a welded brim around the top. She looks like she's doing the Charleston. Her neck is a spring so she can say "yes" or "no." Her face is green, the color of the acetylene cap, and she has Meg Ryan's mouth.

## *The Stolid Musk Ox Transmogrified*

*Ox 18" h x 10" w*
*Stand 37" h x 20" w*

Two manure forks, three claw rakes, and one three-tined pitchfork comprise the shaggy hide of this arctic creature. The galvanized pipe hooves peek out from under the prongs of the hair just as they do on the real musk ox. The face is the long blade of a tulip shovel, cut off, and shaped. The eyes and nose are etched into the metal with a die grinder. The animal's horns are galvanized steel, cut by torch and then peened to give them a three-dimensional look.



Gloria's joke is that Wilby did a nice job of Jackie Kennedy's hair, since there is that resemblance about the horns.

The steel stand was made and painted gloss orange by a neighbor, Nick Carroll, who was going to discard it. Wilby, always reluctant to throw anything away, rescued it. The contrast of the shiny, colorful stand seems to fit nicely with the dark brown, rough-coated musk ox.

## *Open Wide, This Won't Hurt a Bit*

*45" h x 13" w*

A large Hughes drill bit patented in 1908 was the inspiration for this sculpture. The big drill is welded on a cam shaft and attached to an old-timey dentist's kick drill. This instrument, a foot-activated mechanism, is now a thing of the past. A push to one lever would turn the drill clockwise, and a push to the other lever would turn the drill counter clockwise.

A lot of people find this sculpture funny because it expresses exactly what they feel about going to the dentist.

## *Universal Eye*

*96" h x 40" w*

The gift of a metal galaxy map led to the making of this sculpture, whose meaning, as with much of Wilby's art, has more than one connotation.

A steel buggy wheel tire stands on an upright three-quarter-inch steel rod welded to a heavy steel plate. Hanging from a chain in the middle of the wheel is a large blue eye, complete with eyelid and upper and lower eyelashes. A large disk harrow blade is the eyeball itself painted white; the iris is blue, and the pupil is black. Three curved pitchforks are the long top eyelashes, with a copper wire simulating the edge of the upper eyelid. A metal rake, cut, heated, and bent to conform, makes the lower eyelashes.

Only when one stands close and looks deep into the pupil does the Milky Way galaxy become visible. Wilby sliced off the bottom of a Tupperware bowl, attached the map of the galaxy to the bowl, and glued it to the back of the eye. The sides of the bowl let in enough light to see the Milky Way clearly. While what you see is not the entire universe, but only the Milky Way galaxy–a very small part of it–the name *Galaxy Eye* just didn't have the same ring as *Universal Eye*.


## *Speed the Plow*

*76" h x 34" w*

Wilby was familiar with the phrase, "speed the plow," a shortened version of a Middle English farming phrase, "God speed the plow," which means "May God give you a bountiful harvest."

The sculpture features a disk harrow blade, a type of plow used in cutting and turning the earth. Streaming up from the blade are several cultivator spiders, which look like sparks. The sparks are being emitted as the blade hurries through the earth. The spider sparks are held by curved steel rods, which Wilby bent by trial and error until the sculpture was balanced.

This is Wilby's idea of a steel cartoon.

*Altamira Deer*
*39.5" h x 62.5" w*

This deer was plasma cut from a single four-by-eight-foot sheet of steel and hangs ten feet up on the fireplace wall of the Colemans' living room. A very similar image appears in the Altamira cave near Santillana del Mar, Spain. This cave was first occupied by humans about 18,000 years ago, and the occupants drew and painted images of animals and other objects on the walls and rocks during periods of occupancy before it was sealed by a landslide 13,000 years ago.

## *Water Buck*

*Buck 18" h x 28" w  Stand 32" h x 20" w*

One horn of this sculpture is an indoor pitcher pump handle, found at the Lowndes County Historical Society's giveaway of odds and ends that didn't seem to fit into any exhibition. Wilby took the handle and replicated it in flat steel. The result, which he calls "close enough for government work," gave him the two horns necessary for *Water Buck*. The enclosed pump, different from an open-top, out-of-doors pump where the water pours straight out, is the animal's muzzle curved downwards, and the handle still moves up and down and pumps, as it did so many years ago. The idea was worked up in "jig" time, Wilby says. After cleaning all parts as well as he could, he applied acid to oxidize the new bright steel, and then coated all in LPS3, a magic potion of wax and oil that protects, preserves, and colors the steel to exactly the same color as the cast iron.

The base for the sculpture is a clutch assembly for a car's automatic transmission. It sits on a white assemblage of a disk harrow blade, a steel tube, and a steel disk.

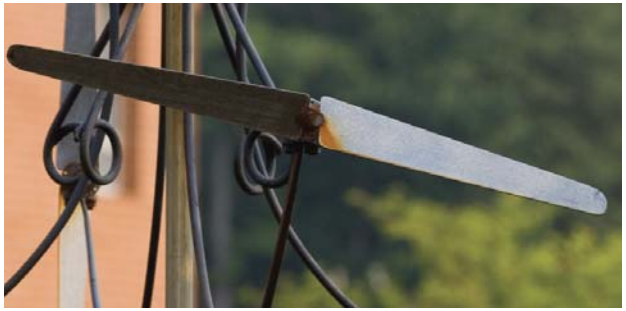
## *Fanfare*

*84" h x 72" w*

Wilby decided to make a kinetic sculpture that would be activated by wind power.

Using eight hay-rake tines, he bolted a sealed ball bearing front bicycle sprocket to the end of each one and attached fan blades–some made, some bought–to the free end of each sprocket shaft. The fan blades turn easily in any breeze, and the entire structure turns on a ball bearing inside the stand's center pipe.

The piece saw very little action in the Colemans' heavily wooded front yard. Later, after three exhibits at the Jacqueline Casey Hudgens Center for the Arts in Duluth, Georgia, he donated the piece to their permanent collection. Now, *Fanfare* stands in front of the Hudgens Center, which is located in a cul-de-sac, and the wind whips down this venue every day, causing the sculpture to live up to its name.

## *Spring Chicken*

*Chicken - 24" h x 24" w*
*Stand- 41" h x 12" w*

Wilby has received more offers to buy this piece than any other he has ever exhibited. It won two Best in Show awards and seven First Place blue ribbons in various art competitions.

"*Spring Chicken*," Wilby says, "is actually a rooster made out of five three-tined hayforks." The neck and the upper part of the legs are springs, the tail feathers are half-inch flat steel stock, and the lower legs are three-eighths-inch round stock. The toes, toenails, spurs, and beak are forged by hammer on an anvil. The cockscomb is plasma-cut flat steel, and the eyes are ball bearings.

## *Come Closer, My Dear*

*82" h x 28" w*

This odd arrangement of sharp-pronged manure forks, tree-like in their tall stand, contains a single shiny glass gazing ball–a gift from Gloria. At one time, glass gazing balls were very popular. When set in a garden, the balls reflected the flowers and trees, increasing the visual effect of the many colors.

In this piece, Wilby says he liked the juxtaposition of round, shiny, and smooth against narrow, pointy, and rusty. Observers are drawn by the shiny bauble to approach the sculpture, only to find that their reflection, in becoming larger and larger, is caught within the spiny spikes of the nine forks, caught as it were in a spider's web, hemmed in by a network of lethal points.

Look carefully at the enlarged photo inset to see the sculptor reflected in the foreground and his photographer reflected in the background. Both are caught in the web.

## *Judges I Have Known*

*Judge 40" h x 14" w  Stand 26" h x 16" w*

Several large pieces of Wilby's sculpture were shown in an invitational art show, called "Holiday Classics," at the Swan Coach House in Atlanta in 1994. Ned Rifkin, Director of the High Museum of Art, came out to see the exhibit, and said to Harriet Robinson, curator of the Swan Coach House. "Well, I see Coleman's work has finally pulled you into the 20th Century."

Later, an art patron, Gwyn Webb, saw Wilby's pieces and invited him to participate in an art exhibit in Savannah, at the annual meeting of the State Bar of Georgia. This exhibit was for lawyers, ex-lawyers, judges, and their families. Wilby brought several works that he had shown in the Swan Coach House exhibit, along with a new piece, *Judges I Have Known.*

The juror for the exhibit was Rodney C. Cook, a Baltimore artist and professor at the Maryland Institute College of Art, who chose *Judges I Have Known* as the First Place winner.

For inspiration, Wilby used four superior court judges under whom he had practiced law. The salient and distinctive features are: Roy Lilly's sparse hair and sleepy eyes, George Lilly's body size and slew footedness, Arthur McLane's big nose (who said on seeing it, "That's not my nose; that's my father's nose"), and George Horkin's no-nonsense mouth.

A large coal shovel forms the judge's big belly and judicial robe. A sharp crease in the trousers is provided by angle iron legs.

Wilby asked a friend, an appellate court judge, "How did the judges like the sculpture?" The judge answered, "Apparently very much, since nearly every one of them had his picture taken with his arm around the piece."

## *Binary Crank*

*55" h x 13" w*

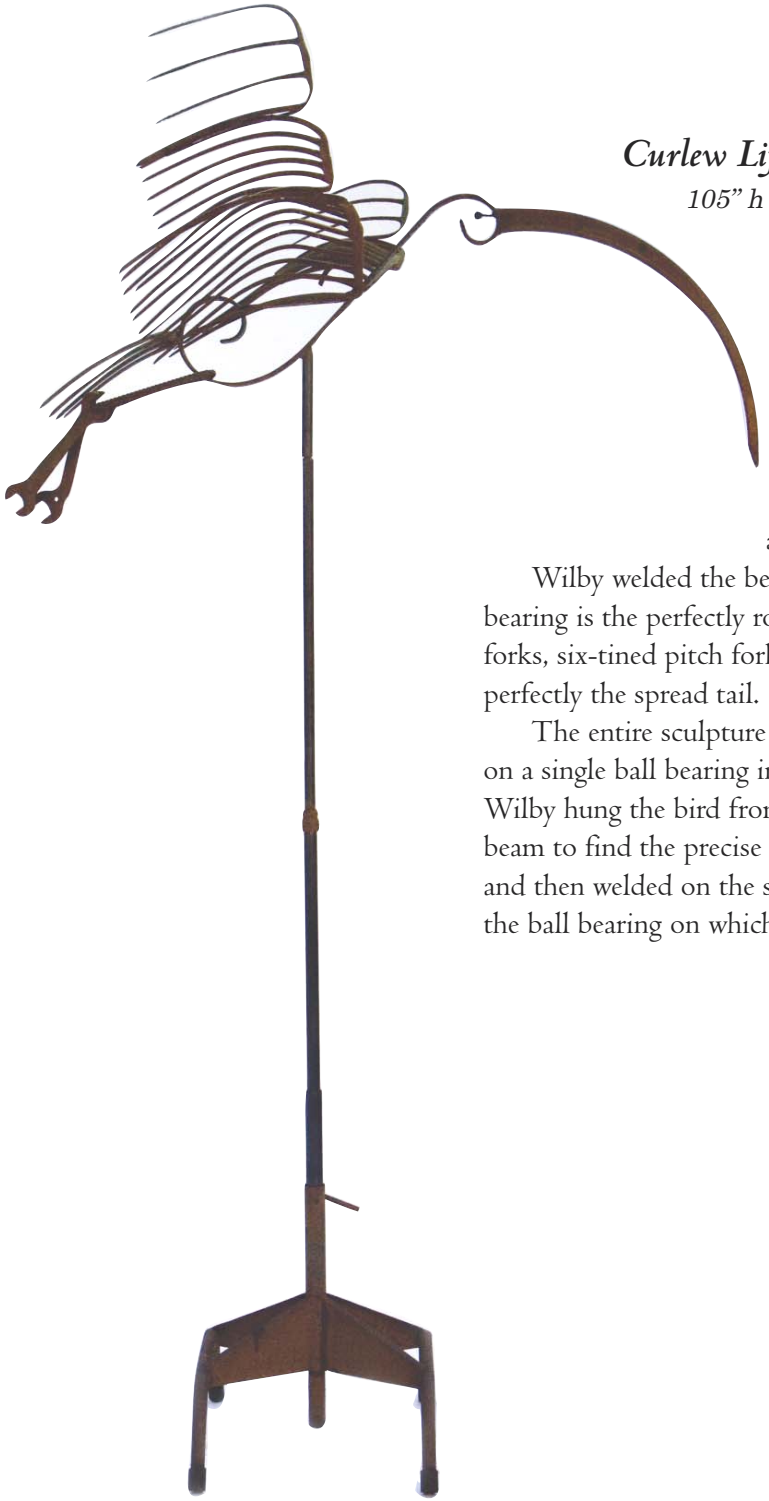
The definition of a binary star system is a red giant star and a white dwarf star rotating around an imaginary point between them. Wilby knew of this type of star system when he produced this sculpture. On seeing a Hubble telescope picture describing the star system, he knew instantly that *Binary Crank* was the name. The base of this sculpture is a cast-iron stand. Two heavy cultivator spiders joined by a bearinged axle are attached to a heavy steel rod, which is inserted into the base. The heavy weight of the rod and the spiders, pulled by a mule or a tractor, helped them cut deep into the earth so they could break up the soil for planting.

One spider is painted yellow in the middle graduating to red, and the other is hot white graduating to blue. Wilby made an over-large rubber gasket to fit on top of this base, which allows the spiders to turn round and round and in opposite directions at the same time, aptly conveying the movements of a binary star.

## *Le Roi*

*Head 14" h x 10" w  Stand 40" h x 14" w*

In this piece, a stainless steel bowl with handles, a stainless steel hub cap, and stainless steel tubes all fit together precisely and became the very patrician shoulders and head of the king, complete with earrings, necklace, and crown. Stainless steel washers, the centers painted black, are topped by cut-steel eyelids. The large mustache is made of stainless steel rods drawn out to points by a hammer. The nose is cut and folded stainless steel. A hubcap crowns the piece, thus making it "the king."



## *Curlew Liftoff*

*105" h x 59" w*

This tall, imposing full-spread winged sculpture would please any bird watcher; the metal shape captures exactly the first down-power stroke of the Long-billed Curlew. The outsized beak is a hay-baling needle, no longer used since nowadays farmers roll their hay into large rounds covered in plastic. The hole in the beak is where the twine went through to bind the bales.

While building the sculpture, Wilby had no idea of the use of the large, curved instrument, but he learned what it was when the curator of a Madison, Georgia, show held a competition to see who could name the most pieces of farm equipment in his display.

Wilby welded the beak onto part of a hanger for a metal sign, keeping the S-shape for the head and body. A ball bearing is the perfectly round eye of the bird. A bent wrench is one leg, and a straight wrench is the other. Manure forks, six-tined pitch forks, and four-tined pitch forks make up the widespread wings, with a garden fork capturing perfectly the spread tail.

The entire sculpture rests and turns on a single ball bearing inside a pipe. Wilby hung the bird from an overhead beam to find the precise balance point and then welded on the sleeve holding the ball bearing on which the bird turns.

## *The Creator: Changing Hats*

*148" h x 68" w*

This 13-foot-high, six-foot-wide sculpture once graced the old Unitarian Church building on Ashley Street in Valdosta.

The piece has 12-foot-long square iron rods for the body, arms, and shoulders, and plasma-cut steel for hands (cut from a pattern of Wilby's own hands). One hundred feet of galvanized chain make up the hood and robe. The diadem is a large, turnable saw blade painted gold on which are the names of the Creator, from seven major religions of the world: God, Yahweh, Mazda, Allah, Logos, Indra, and Tao. A seven-foot dialing stick comes with the sculpture, and the observer can turn the saw blade, dialing up to the top his or her favorite name for the Creator.

The inspiration for this sculpture came from a book by Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*. His thesis is that there is but one Creator. Name changes do not turn the Creator into a committee. No matter what name you use, you are referring to the same creating power. It seemed ironic that wars have been fought because one group refers to the Creator as God and another as Allah.

The Unitarian Church asked for the loan of the piece and kept it for six months–that is until a lady of the church sat Wilby down and said, "You have to get your sculpture out of here."

"Is it too radical?" Wilby asked.

"No," she answered, "too conservative; like a crucifix; the congregation looks up there, and it makes us feel like we're in a traditional church."



## *Barbellerina*

*78" h x 9" w*

During one of Wilby's many forays to Rice Iron and Metal, he came upon a chrome-plated barbell that he thought was much too nice to be melted down into rebar.

The barbell turned into the dancer's legs held tightly together. The pink scalloped skirt is a clutch part, which is made out of high-carbon steel and has a nice ring when struck. The head is an old-fashioned copper soldering iron, which becomes the ballerina's red-blonde hair. The face that shows out of the copper is steel with a nose, mouth, and eyes applied with a welder. The steel hands are hammered out flat with the thumbs welded on. The bent arm of the ballerina holds a ringer, a metal mallet to strike the bell of her skirt.

Thus we have a barbell, a bell, and a ballerina.

## *An Eye for an Eye*

*78" h x 28" w*

Made of a large disk harrow blade, this sculpture features eyelids and lashes made of steel rods, the lashes bent and clipped and individually welded to the lids. The lid and lashes are painted black, and the iris of the eye is olive green. Behind the pupil is a truncated mesh cone that leads to half of a ping-pong ball, which is another eyeball, the pupil painted blue.

The entire eye is suspended on a chain, held by a large steel spring, driven into a heated square extruded tube, anchored into another disk harrow blade that serves as a base.

Whatever name Wilby may have been planning for this sculpture took second place when his daughter-in-law, Rosemary, on looking into the pupil, said, "Oh, an eye for an eye."

Photograph from the Coleman family collection

## *Lascaux Pony*

*30" h x 47" w*

A trip to southern France and Spain to see painted caves gave rise to this sculpture. The cave of Lascaux was discovered in 1940 by a group of boys after a summer storm blew a tree over. The boys went down into the hole left by the tree's roots to retrieve their dog and entered the cave. Upon returning with adults and lights, they discovered that the walls were covered with paintings of animals. Among the hundreds of etchings and paintings was a five-inch depiction of an Ice Age horse.

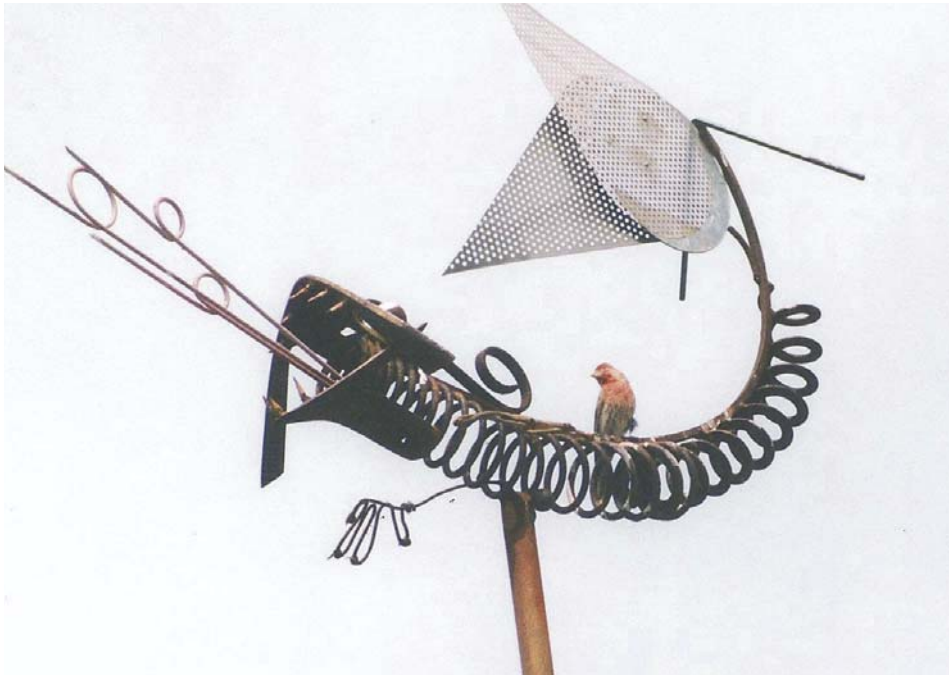
After returning to Valdosta, Wilby bought a single sheet of steel and torch cut the sculpture of the *Lascaux Pony*. He was "terrified," he said, cutting the narrow connection between the body and the tail of the pony. The belly is peen-hammered out, giving it a more three-dimensional effect. Painted with six different colors of canned spray paint, the shading and coloration of this pony are very much like the Ice Age pony depicted in Lascaux and similar to those that still exist on the steppes of Russia and in Iceland.

## *Weather Vane for Converse Bright*

*15" h x 30" w*

Long before Wilby had ever constructed any commissioned pieces, Converse Bright, a friend and fellow lawyer, asked him to make a weather vane to go on top of his barn in Lowndes County. A book containing Bright's coat of arms was offered as some inspiration for the sculpture. The coat of arms had a "rampant dragon" as part of its shield, and this rearing, fire-breathing monster was the model for Wilby's sculpture.

The dragon's body is composed of a long, curved tubular auger, with two opposing plow sweeps as its head and open-jawed mouth. Three forged, twisted square rods with barbed ends are painted red and spew from the dragon's mouth as fire. The forked tail is a constructed-steel spear point, with disks and stainless steel mesh as fins.



Photographs contributed by Jill Bright

The dragon's claws are entirely fanciful, just a bent piece of wire.

This accepted commission was an experiment to see whether or not Wilby could comfortably do a commission and let a sculpture go after completion. It turned out to be fine; in fact, for some time Wilby did not even have a photograph of the finished piece. The photograph with the House Finch standing on the sculpture was taken with a long lens from atop an adjoining barn by Jill Bright. Please note that the bird is not in the least frightened by Converse's dragon.

## *Gyre and Gimble*

*111" h x 111" w*

The title for this sculpture was taken from Lewis Carroll's nonsense poem, "Jabberwocky," and the sculpture incorporates all the motions of gyrating and gimbling.

A steel-handled manure fork and a steel-handled coal shovel are balanced on a steel rod, and the entire structure turns, bobs up and down, and seesaws a bit, too.

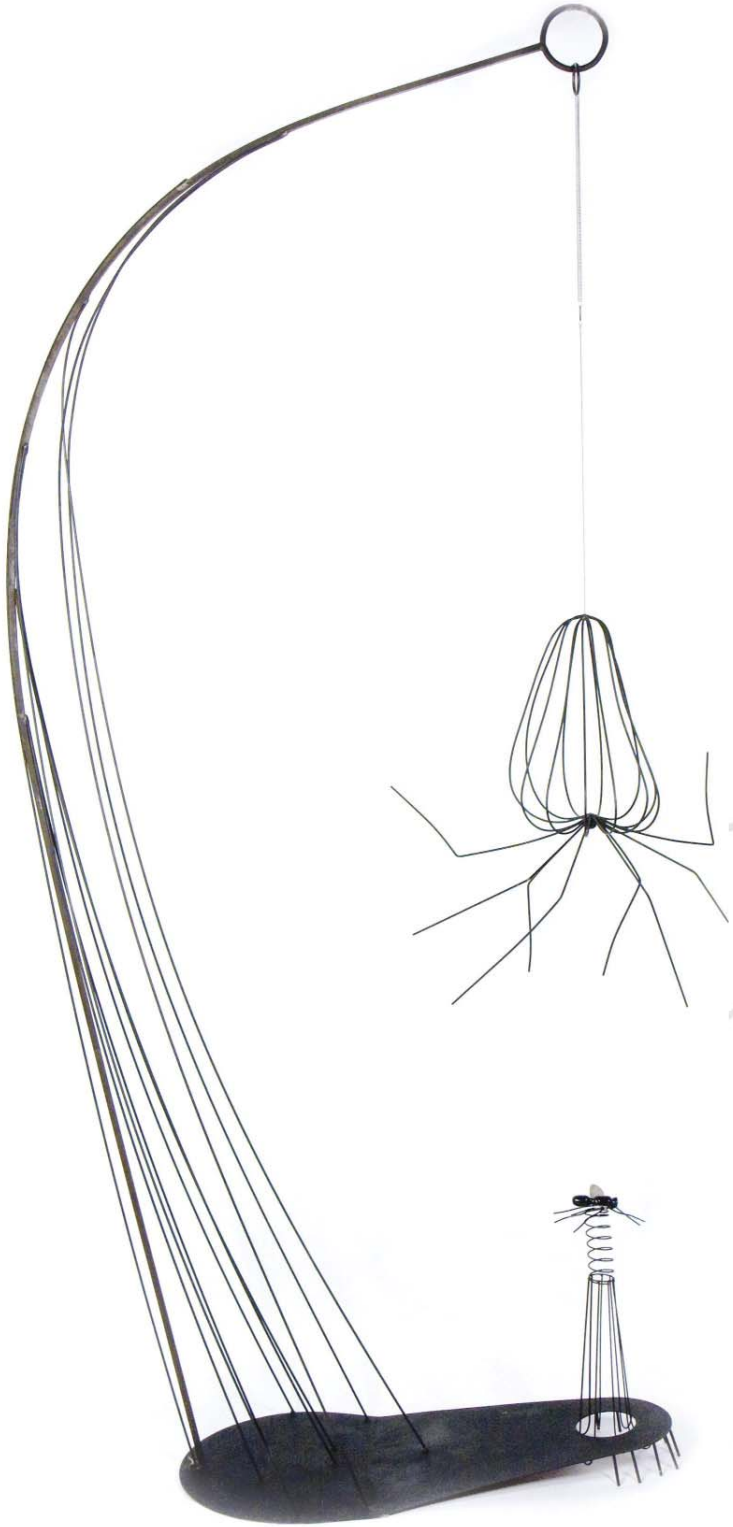
## *Io and Them Others*

*168" h x 48" w*

This sculpture honors Galileo, who with his simple, low-powered telescope discovered four of Jupiter's moons: Io, Ganymede, Callisto, and Europa. Of course, modern telescopes have revealed many more moons.

The piece is 14-feet-high, with a square steel tube fitting into an eight-foot channel iron with a water faucet handle on its side. Made by boring a hole and welding a nut to the hole, the handle allows the sculpture to be taken apart and adjusted in height.

At the top is a solid steel disk, 16 inches in diameter, painted light red. A dark red dot on this disk represents Jupiter's eye, a storm which has been going on for centuries. Out from the disk are four, two-foot-long stainless steel rods, with a small cultivator spider welded to the ends of each rod. All are painted different colors, white, blue, yellow, and pink.



## *The Parlor*

*120" h x 64" w*

This tall sculpture sits on a black oval steel base and has ten 14-foot-long rods of three-sixteenths-inch spring steel bent to form the suggestion of a web. The odd pear-shaped spider is also made of steel rods and is held by a single strand and a long spring while it reaches with slightly longer forelegs toward the fly, which also sits on a spring. The body of the fly was heated, reduced, and forged on an anvil. The wings are cut stainless steel. When the spider is activated, the fly trembles.

The name, of course, comes from the children's poem by Mary Howitt, *The Spider and the Fly*. "'Will you walk into my parlor?' said the spider to the fly."

## *Iron Arcimboldo*

*17" h x 12" w*

The inspiration for this sculpture came to Wilby from another artist, Arcimboldo, who lived in the 16th century. He often painted portraits using fruits, vegetables, and even pots, pans, or tools to form the body and faces of his subjects. In Moultrie, Georgia, Wilby found and brought home about 25 discarded crucibles with handle receptacles but no handles, used in the making of aluminum furniture. The company had to throw the pots away since after a month, the molten aluminum rendered them useless.

To Wilby, the pot and its two-sided pouring spouts suggested the back of a head and ears, so all he had to do was suspend the face inside. Instead of vegetables, Wilby used tools. A one-inch diameter spring is a furrowed brow; two curves of steel, cut and bent, are simulated eyelids; washers with ball bearings inside are the eyes; a small pipe wrench is the nose; ladles are cheeks; a c-clamp is both the mouth and chin, and the handle receptacle is the neck. A cast-steel rectangular piece serves as both base and shoulders.

## *Hyta's Park*

*Center Sculpture Base 40" h x 80" w x 44 d*
*Center Sculpture Flowers 200" h x 120" d*

In 1974, the city of Valdosta widened a road, which left a small, unoccupied corner of land at the intersection of Baytree Road and Jerry Jones Drive. In 1976, Hyta Mederer, Gloria Coleman's mother, an avid gardener, planted flowers and started maintaining the abandoned spot.

Wilby suggested to his mother-in-law that a sculpture occupying a central position in the small park would be a nice touch. She and the city of Valdosta agreed. Over several weeks, Ms. Hyta gave Wilby book after book on flower arrangements, since she rightfully felt her son-in-law knew nothing about that subject. Every week Wilby and Gloria would visit, and Wilby took sketch after sketch of flowers for approval. Ms. Hyta turned them all down.

Finally, one day she said of one sketch: "Well, that's right nice."

The metal flowers took eight weeks to create and assemble. There are ten large, abstract blossoms, "which look nothing like what is in nature," Wilby says. The flowers are mainly constructed out of cultivator spiders and hay-winnowing rakes. One has a center made out of a large corn sheller, and another's big daisy center is a motorcycle sprocket of stainless steel with gold metal showing through. The flowers' stems are thick-walled pipes, and it was a problem to bend them at the exact angles needed for the display. Wilby found a tree with a fork and pocketed the

metal pipes between the trunks, bending them a little at a time.

In addition to making the flowers, Wilby constructed a steel box to hold the arrangement together and yet make the flowers stand at the correct angles. At the park he built a steel framework with four galvanized sets of channel irons, welded high and low. He made all the flowers at home and brought them to the park to be u-bolted into place.

Later, the piece was vandalized, and two of the flowers and all of the leaves were stolen. Wilby welded a motorcycle-sprocket flower into the arrangement to replace the lost articles.

A grant from her daughters to the Town & Country Garden Club for maintenance sustains Ms. Hyta's Park in perpetuity. It is an attractive oasis in mid-town traffic; its larger-than-life flowers and well-kept beds remind everyone to slow down, to take time to look, as Wilby says, "for here is beauty."



## *Agricola*

*102" h x 39" w*

This joining together of old, abandoned farm equipment is basically an abstract sculpture formed of pleasing circles and curves. Wilby found and put the pieces together to represent various aspects of farming, most specifically the influence of the moon.

The wheel, with its plow point and shaft, were enigmas to Wilby, until an elderly farmer, at an exhibition in Valdosta's First National Bank building, said, "My Lord, I done wore out five or six of them 'knock-wheel gew-anna' spreaders in my lifetime." He went on to explain that the plow, pulled by a mule, dug a two-inch trough, and small metal knobs on the wheel hit a rod inserted into a container of bird guano, a very popular fertilizer in the early part of the 20th Century. Those metal knobs and the knocking sound they produced with the release of the guano into the furrow gave the plow its name. "On a soft day," the farmer continued, "you could hear one of those things knocking for a good five miles." Wilby was glad for the enlightening information about the plow, but equally impressed at the South Georgia farmer's use of the distinctively archaic Irish term of "soft day" for a misty, gray morning.

The moons, one a rusted part of the plow, and inside it, another, a brass plate, a medallion, were finely etched by Wilby with a detailed face of a bearded man in the moon. A third moon, brass, was patinated to look like a blue moon, and is held at the top of a tall curved steel rod. If one takes the wheel of the plow as a fourth moon, which is also a circle, one glimpses some of the many phases of the moon.

The spring at the bottom is also farm equipment of unknown origin, but the shaft of the plow fits into its metal holder exactly. The entire balanced structure is supported by three enormously heavy blades used for cutting salt cake in the manufacture of paper.

## *Blue-Footed Boobie*

*Bird 18" h x 16" w*
*Stand 48" h x 13" w*

Tallulah Whitesell's trip to the Galapagos and her description of the exotic blue-footed birds there inspired Wilby to build this whimsical sculpture. Looking through a book about the birds of the Galapagos, Wilby saw this interesting pose and came up with the idea of painting a bowling ball flesh-toned. He glued on cut-steel peened wings, and epoxyed the feet, legs, and tail into the finger holes of the ball. The bird stands on one foot, holding up the other, in a classic booby pose. The eyes are brass washers. The beak is made of a two-part, self-hardening plastic, curiously resembling a part of the human breast.



## *Rigoletto*

*62" h x 30" w*

The Colemans' grandchildren call this piece, "The Laughing Man," but a friend, Archie Griffin, said it had to be the jester from the opera, *Rigoletto*. This sculpture stands at the front door of the Colemans' home, and visitors cannot resist the impulse to jiggle this laughing, springy fellow.

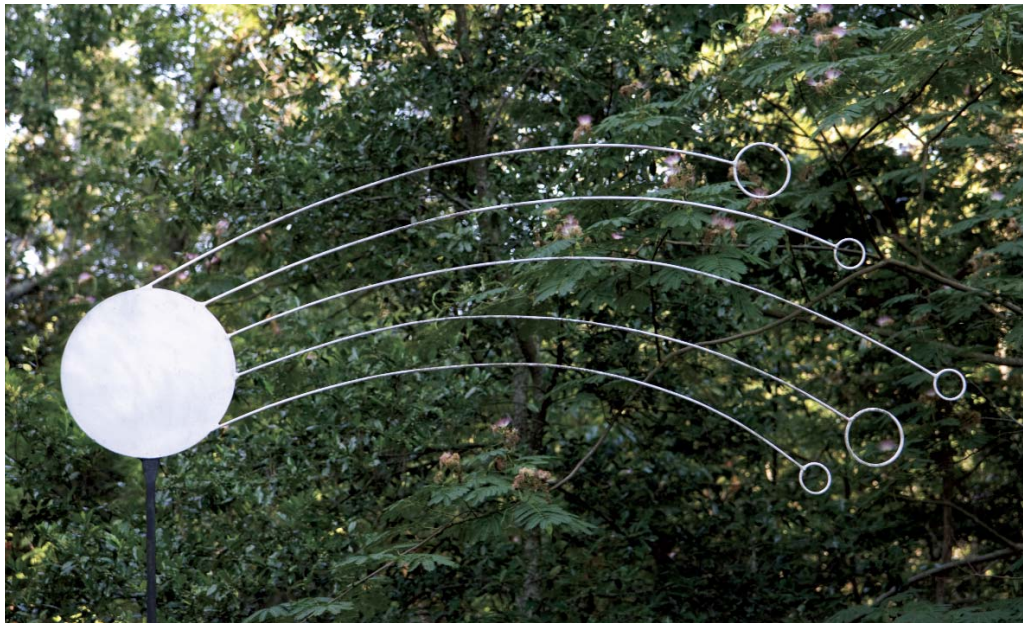
The making of this hunchbacked jester involved placing springs within springs since a single and even a double spring were too flexible, and the piece would fall over. The cast-iron part used for the top of the head and the jester's cap–an odd-shaped metal half circle with two projecting points–was an unknown to Wilby. Then a viewer informed him that it was an unusual cultivator spider made in a Tifton plant that closed in 1941. The bottom part of the face is a cut-off wheel. The base is welded to a saw blade, and the body is made of two steel hay rakes. Even with all the reinforcements to keep it steady, the jester jiggles enthusiastically and rings the bells on his cap.

## *No Comet*

*136" h x 80" w*

Wilby built this piece when Halley's Comet returned in 1986. The comet came, the comet went, without much fanfare; thus the title, *No Comet*.

In this sculpture a metal disk sits atop a square ten-foot steel rod, trailed by curved steel rods, which end in circles simulating a tail of gases and particles. Direct sunlight causes the head of the comet and its streaming tails to gleam, much as the real comet.



## *The Bishop*

*92" h x 15" w*

This sculpture was fashioned after Wilby heard newscasts of the self-protective attitude of bishops in the Catholic Church scandals of the year 2000.

The tall, austere personage's entire body is a long, thin metal pipe, found at Rice Iron and Metal. The faded gold, light to dark, miter (the bishop's hat) sits atop the head and is made of an automobile exhaust pipe. The stone-white face, above the black cassock, has beetle brows and a blood-red slit for a mouth; instead of being beneficent, the look is harsh and austere. The top of the bishop's crook is a device for cleaning soot out of a chimney or stove pipe. The hands, palms painted red (caught red-handed), are cut from flat steel. One is holding the crook; the other, in a close-to-the-vest blessing, has a large ruby bishop's ring–actually a bicycle reflector–on the index finger. There seems to be no need for arms; the viewer's eye supplies them. At the bishop's rear appears a small forked tail.

## *Gandy Dancer*

*66" h x 30" w*

Wilby was familiar with Degas' cast bronze ballerina, having seen it in two editions in London and Paris museums. The statue is called *The Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* and has real clothes on the torso consisting of a tulle tutu and a yellow-fabric camisole top. He was also familiar with the term "gandy dancer" for railroad workers who tended the tracks and for the long metal tools they used. Wilby found these long steel gandy dancer tools at Rice Iron and Metal.

With these two elements in mind, Wilby built *Gandy Dancer*, using one tool, a spike puller, with a bend in it that nicely corresponds to a knee, and another with a large, hooked foot, the track liner. The tutu is strips of cut, stainless steel mesh; the camisole is painted yellow, and the arms are steel with articulated fingers welded to the palms of the hands. The hair, which is one-eighth-inch wire, is neatly tied back with a copper ribbon. The head is block steel set on a neck that has a turning mechanism in it, which allows the head to be adjusted in any direction. The piece sits atop two flat metal disks, beveled and welded together, stabilizing the legs.

One interesting observation made by Wilby over the years, and also a comment on human nature, is that at every exhibition of *Gandy Dancer* several people, men and women alike, squat down and peek up under the ballerina's skirt.

This piece has won a number of awards, including a Best in Show in Camilla, Georgia.

## *Ferrous Flight*

*76" h x 42" w*

Wilby took this sculpture, along with ten kinetic pieces, to a competition in Bainbridge, Georgia. Not thinking too much of *Ferrous Flight*, since it was a static piece in comparison to the others, he left it on the trailer. After arranging the other sculptures, he noticed a small space off to the side in the allotted area, which Gloria suggested filling with the bird sculpture. *Ferrous Flight* won the Best in Show award. While it was being shown at the Swan Coach House in Atlanta, "Miss Boo," a popular children's television star, donned a cardboard beak and returned to have a dance with *Ferrous Flight*.

A very large plow sweep was used to make the wings, and two other smaller plow sweeps were used to form the beak and the tail feathers. The outstretched talons, ready to seize prey, are one-fourth-inch steel rods, the ends forged and drawn out into fierce claws. Part of the beak is a forged square rod, curved downward and reduced to a point, and stacks of washers make up the eyes. A yellow clamp-on device makes a flared-out feathered ruff around the neck. An S-shaped, heavy spring that keeps a plow below ground level is the body, with large ball bearings for the testicles. Four rods of spring steel welded to a heavy square plate hold the sculpture steady.

## *Rings on Her Fingers and Bells on Her Toes*

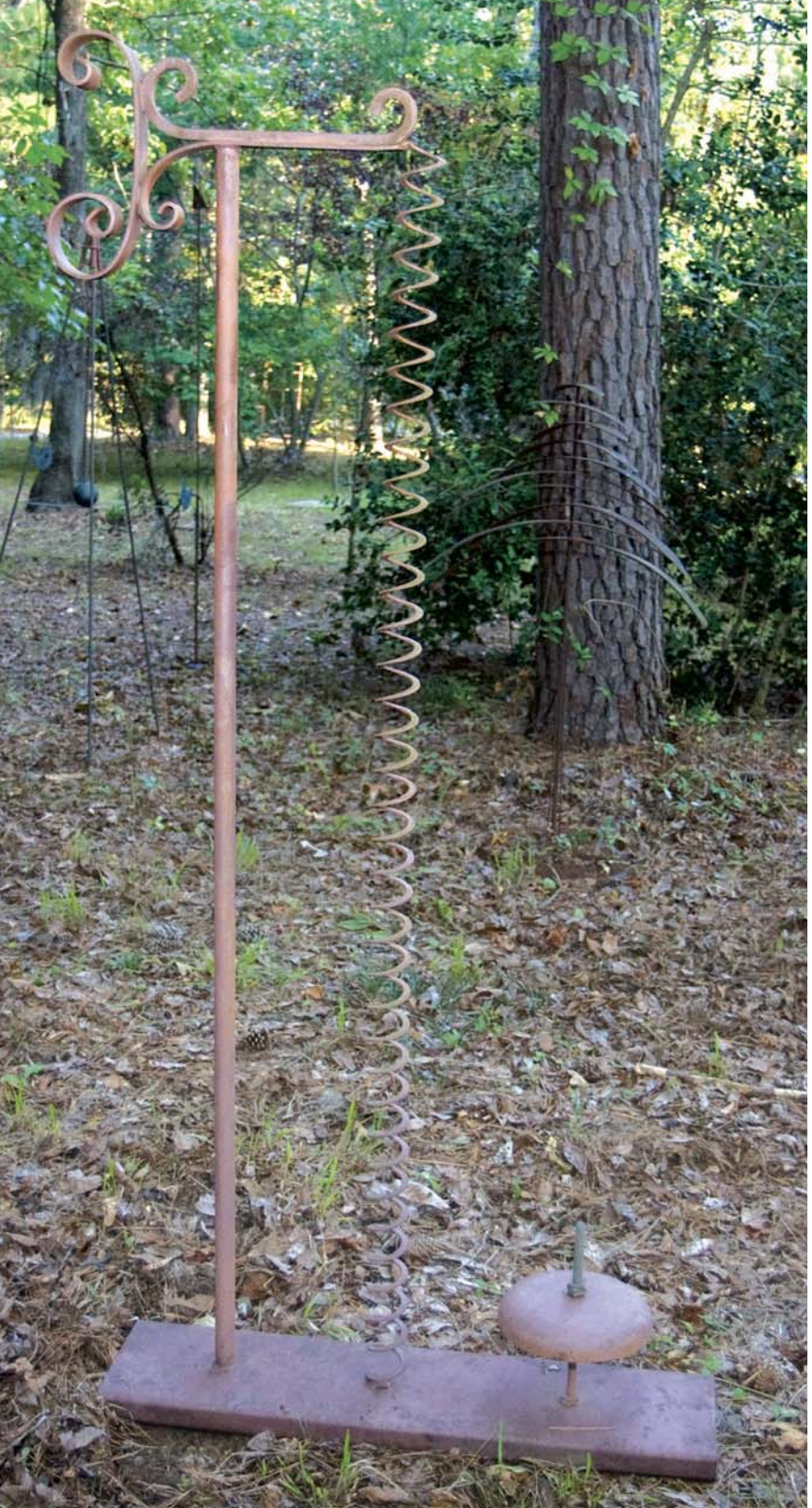
*64" h x 32" w*

Built on a spring steel compression spring with a shower of bent stainless steel rods with small bells on the ends, this piece was commissioned to stand in the Pearlman Comprehensive Cancer Center at South Georgia Medical Center in Valdosta, Georgia. When the spring is compressed, the entire sculpture bounces up and down, and the bells jingle.

After the sculpture had been in place for several months, one young patient, new to the Cancer Center, was asked by her father what she wanted as a gift. She pointed to the spring with its many bells and said: "That's what I want."

The father came to Wilby to ask him to make a similar sculpture for his daughter, but the steel springs, with their remarkable ability to be compressed almost completely flat and rebound, were no longer to be found. Wilby had only bought four and had already used them in other sculptures. He never knew what the springs were meant to do in the real world, but he still wishes he had just one more for that little girl.





## *Captain Billy's Whizbang*

*85" h x 43" w*

The title for this tall sculpture is taken from a popular magazine of the early 1900s and is also the nickname of a destructive WWI artillery shell.

An inch pipe with wrought iron work on top is welded to a heavy rectangular piece of scrap iron. A large grain auger spirals down like a staircase from the cantilevered wrought iron and is welded to the scrap iron base. Beside it is a fire-alarm bell, which sits up on a threaded rod. Wilby's idea was to have a small wheel, with quarter-inch bent steel rods on either side, moving propeller-like down the auger and striking the bell. He says it took him about an hour to make the sculpture and about two days to make the striker stay on the track.

This sculpture is a favorite with all the children who tour the Colemans' yard.

## *All Stove Up*

*67" h x 15" w*

Wilby saw a wrecked electrical stove at the junkyard, and the discarded piece gave him the idea for this sculpture. The stove's magnesium eye is the head. Since it was not a ferrous metal, Wilby wasn't able to weld the piece, but the steel clip that goes into the electrical outlet at the end of the eye solved that problem. The realistic crutches are rods of mild steel, and the body is a steel tube flattened at the hips. The hands and feet are one-eighth-inch rods, flattened and bent, and Wilby thinks the hands are well done.

## *Little Green Men*

### *LGM With Anthropomorphism*

*Man 28" h x 7.5" w Stand 30" h x 11" w*

This sculpture stands atop a burnished steel disk and precedes another piece later called for the sake of brevity: *LGM Without Anthropomorphism.*

The spraddled legs of this LGM show a bolt and wing nut in the crotch and are made from a front bicycle fork. All parts are painted green.

The upper body and arms turn in the same direction and are made of a long stainless steel tube bolted into the head and through the body of the LGM so that it turns inside the fork. The two arms are stainless steel rods, forged and drawn out into three claws; these and the three toes of the sculpture are not human-like.

A locking mechanism sits atop a receptacle, which makes the head of the LGM, and whose use, like so many of Wilby's found objects, is unknown. A snout-like pipe projects from the mechanism, which is the nose and mouth, with the hinge being two beady little eyes. The back of the head opens up, and Wilby placed a miniature Milky Way candy bar inside.


In spite of showing this sculpture numerous times over the years at schools and exhibits where everyone opened the Little Green Man's head, the candy bar remains uneaten.

### *LGM Without Anthropomorphism 1*

*23.75" h x 9" w*

Hoyt Hurt found and gave Wilby this odd piece of equipment. No one knows what it is or what it was used for.

The quarter-melon-shaped wooden base has a forged steel band inlaid and screwed into the wood, and this band extends upwards into a nozzle-like, hollow sheath with various, small squares and projections and a large ring on one end. A bent steel rod projects from the middle of the wooden base, to which Wilby welded and painted three spindly green toes. The only other addition made by Wilby to this mysterious amalgamation of parts is the small circle of green he added to the nozzle, or is it a snout?

## *LGM Without Anthropomorphism 2*

*46.5" h x 20" w*

An unlikely amalgamation of parts that bears absolutely no resemblance to the human form gives children and adults alike the joy of the unfamiliar.

This sculpture, an alien creature, has a stainless steel float head, a flattened stainless steel tube for a duckbill nose, and green eyes with double pupils. Its most interesting body is composed entirely of a Jones Motor Basal Metabolism Machine that Wilby found at the Lowndes County Historical Museum. Its pleated-rubber accordion body, with a piston on either side, rests on a brown-enamel base atop four wheels. This obsolete piece of medical equipment is complete with numbered gauge, two red lights, a switch, and a horn, which protrudes from its backside and emits a mournful honk when the head is pushed back.

Photograph contributed by the TECT Corporation

## *Blades of a Feather*

*Bird 18" beak to tail x 68" wing span  Pedestal 24" h x 64" w x 28" d*
*Tower 44" w at base  Total height 164"*

In 1994, Wilby was invited to submit a design in a competition to construct a sculpture for the front of the home office of the Airfoil Textron Company in Thomasville, Georgia. On receiving the invitation, Wilby commented to Gloria, "My fame has spread a full 45 miles."

For the competition, Wilby built a stainless steel maquette, a foot and a half high, simulating a pylon of the titanium blades made at Airfoil Textron topped by a Red-tailed Hawk with extended wings. Wilby won the commission and was given a spool of titanium mig welding wire and over 500 titanium blades that ranged from two inches to three feet in height–the largest blades retailing for over $12,000 apiece. Titanium is expensive, so when over the years an occasional electrical interruption, surge, or manufacturing malfunction resulted in an imperfection, they did not throw the blades away, and so they accumulated.

Having done a lot of steel welding, Wilby thought this project was going to be a "piece of cake." The commission was handsome, and he felt like he might be taking "candy from a baby." However, the first problem was that mig welding would not work.

Finally, Wilby called the President Titanium Company that made the wire to find out what was wrong. He was told that the welding could not be done outside in the open air. The process, he learned, was to weld the blades in a sealed box with argon gas pumped in. Any contact with oxygen would cause the welds to fracture. He was dealing with a 14-foot sculpture, so the mig-argon-box combination was out of the question. He decided to change the welding method from mig to tig with three separate sources of argon gas to flood the work. Wilby bought a tig welder, went to Valdosta Technical College, and learned how to use it. He had to use both hands and a foot to accomplish this difficult process. Even then a slight breeze would blow away the argon and add oxygen to the mix, crazing and cracking the weld. It became apparent at this point that it was going to be impossible to weld up the entire 14-foot structure and move it 45 miles away without it breaking up.

Instead, he decided to use stainless steel plate with keyways in between each of the segments of the pylon, driving the foot of the blades into the keyways, which were first lubricated with K-Y jelly that would wash out of the sculpture with the first rain. Friction and weight held the structure together.

At last the sculpture was finished. Fellow artists Hollis Barnett, Al Park, and Wilby drove it to Thomasville in a truck full of 60 different parts. A fluted three-foot pedestal of concrete was already set in place.

The presentation of *Blades of a Feather* was made on September 2, 1994. Topper Long, the President of the Airfoil Textron Company, was so pleased with the sculpture that he said there were 11 other plants that could use such a piece and plenty of other blades that did not meet specifications. Wilby, who had spent 12 hours a day for 180 days designing and building the sculpture, declined.

Although the company has subsequently changed its name to TECT Corporation, *Blades of a Feather* still stands erect, still moving with the breeze 14 years later.














The Making of

# Blades of a Feather

Photographs from the Coleman family collection

Photograph contributed by Barbara Passmore

## *Oxymoron: Singletree Forest*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Tallest* | *104" h* |
| *Shortest* | *73" h* |
| *Widest* | *35" w* |
| *Narrowest* | *24" w* |

A singletree farm implement was originally a tree limb with hooks at either end and a ring attached to the middle. The ring drew a plow. The hooks were attached by a harness device to the hames or collar of a horse or mule, enabling the animal to pull a plow through the dirt. Singletrees began to be made of metal around the closing years of the 19th century because they lasted longer.

The eleven trees in this "forest" are of varying lengths and are mounted atop steel rods welded to round steel plates.




## *Fireball Mail*

*Mailbox 25" h x 12" w x 36" l*
*Mailbox and stand 62" h*

For over a dozen years, a frog mailbox stood across the street from the Colemans' home, sacrosanct, untouched. The body of the frog was painted grass green, with a large red mouth–"Ribbit" written on the inside–that opened to receive the U.S. mail. Then one night, someone saw fit to run over the frog mailbox, completely destroying it. Wilby philosophically said, "You haven't arrived until your sculpture's been vandalized."

Still he knew better than to replace the frog mailbox with anything similar in weight and construction, so he fashioned a three-sixteenth-inch rolled steel train body, large enough to hold a big mailbox. To this body, he welded eight train wheels, two drive cylinders, a cow catcher, a chimney, and a engine cab. The sides bear the words "Fireball Mail" with the address number. He then welded the train to a metal platform atop an eight-foot piece of railroad track and put it four feet into the ground with 600 pounds of concrete.

Some years later, *Fireball Mail* took a similar hit as the frog mailbox, but this time the sculpture remained impervious, only slightly aslant from the attack. However, the vandals' "jackass truck," Wilby says, took a great deal of punishment: "There were truck parts all over the place." He and his daughter Sallyann had only to straighten the sculpture a bit with a "come along." They reset *Fireball Mail* in another 150 pounds of concrete, and the sculpture has never been run over again.

At one time, a picture of *Fireball Mail* even served as an invitation. The Colemans sent out a photo of *Fireball Mail* on a white card, stating: "Find this Mailbox and Win a Free Cocktail Party." Most of their friends quickly identified *Fireball Mail* and came to the party at the appointed time, but a few thought it was some advertising gimmick and threw the card away.

Photograph of the frog mailbox from the Coleman family collection.

## *Mower Than Just an Owl*

*22.5" h x 14.5" w*

The body of this owl sculpture is one large red gang mower out of several that are usually lined up in a row to mow wide strips of grass on a golf course. The mower, turned on end, sits atop a cast-iron base, its legs sticking out, somewhat like an owl's claws. On the backside is a tail made of five steel strips. The owl's head and face is the casing of a generator. Brass washers are placed over a drilled-out hole and over the area where the other eye should be. This closed look gives the impression that the owl is winking. A copper tube, coming out of the center of a depression in the casing, is flattened and bent downwards serving as a hooked beak. Square one-eighth-inch rod stock is circled around the eyes and face and welded to the beak to simulate the flatness of the owl's face. Drawn lines complete the impression.

"The tricky part," Wilby says, "was constructing a framework inside the head to ride on a lazy susan, which allows the head to turn a full 360 degrees, somewhat better than a live owl can do."

## *Four-Square, Triple-Wheeled, Iron-Bound, Son-of-a-Bitch With Bells On*

*A War Bird Machine*

*72" h x 36" w*

A powerful figure, seemingly ready to destroy anything in its path, this rust-brown sculpture incorporates a pitcher pump that looks like a bird with extended wings and spikes jutting out from its body.

The wings are constructed of three-quarter-inch flat steel that bends in curves, simulating feathers that do not overlap. A pull ring is set into the front of the sculpture, and an arrow indicates which way to go. The entire structure rolls on three steel wheels, giving the impression that it could conquer any obstacle, but there is a screw device with a crank and a rubber-tipped brake so it can be stopped. Two four-foot rods hold the axle of the windmill, the sharp ends holding two cultivator spiders, one cast steel and one stamped steel.

Wilby created the large windmill-like wheel from four-by-six-foot sheets of galvanized steel, chopping the windmill blades into six-inch long pieces with a chop saw and then welding them at an angle. Welding the blades at exactly the right slant and getting the entire structure to balance was extremely difficult, causing Wilby to say he never wants to make another windmill.

The windmill turns in any breeze and suggests belligerent flight. The spokes of the wheels have bells that slide up and down, jingling as the wheel turns.

The name of this sculpture was partly taken from The *Wave Hangs Dark,* a novel by Alan Dipper.

## *Man With Runny Nose*

*62" h x 20" diameter circular head*

Using the concave side of a disk harrow blade as the face, Wilby welded two slightly different water faucets to its surface and then "since eyes don't stand out on stalks," he welded two steel tubes around the eyes. The runny nose is a ball-bearing platform wheel from a box or chest and turns backwards, forwards, and sideways. The protruding lips are galvanized chain links, chop-sawed. An audio speaker forms the base.

## *Foresight 20/200: Hindsight 20/20*

*102" h x 36.5" w*

Wilby says that often the different objects lying around in his workshop suggest ideas to him that fit in with phrases that he likes. Having some few scraps of stainless steel, he fashioned them into this very stylized eye and hung it by a chain in the tubular circles that came out of the junkyard. He welded the lid, a double steel rod, down on the pupil, much as it appears in real life. The stand is four dark legs, and the eye itself dangles from a chain, and can be seen equally well fore and aft.

## *Manifold Meows*

*Cat 21" h x 10" w  Stand 29" h x 13" w*

This piece of equipment, the manifold from a harvester or some other farm vehicle, suggested the feline shape to Wilby. The legs are square bars with screws for paws and claws, and the tail is rebar, heated and bent ever so slightly at the tip. The face is cut steel, with eyes of luminous green paint, and thin stainless steel wires make the whiskers. The ears are thin steel, scissor cut, bent, and welded in place.

## *Ed Crane* *19" diameter disk x 9" d*

This amusing sculpture, depicting the features of a local philanthropist, has a place of honor at Valwood School. Ed Crane was one of the moving forces behind the erection of the impressive new buildings of this private school located on US Highway 41 north of Valdosta, Georgia.

Wilby immediately saw the resemblance of Mr. Crane's round face in a big round disk harrow blade. The forehead, nose, and eyes are made from a cast-iron corn sheller with wire whisks for thick eyeglasses. The nose is the round middle hole in the corn sheller where the turning crank has been removed. The two jagged ends of the corn sheller are the folds of the cheeks, and the diamond-shaped hole of the blade represents the mouth, and holds Mr. Crane's perennial big cigar, a constant in his countenance. The cigar is a piece of broom handle painted black.

The top of the sheller, where the corn cob was placed for shelling, holds a wire brush, cropped off at an angle, exactly like Mr. Crane's own crewcut. This piece of odd, broken farm equipment, long ago replaced by modern technology, still strangely captures Mr. Crane's expression, and everyone familiar with Ed Crane immediately identifies him.


## *New Blue Cheer* *77" h x 36 w x 26" l*

This sculpture morphed from its title, "Rah-bicca-babicca," coming from the Valdosta Wildcat cheer of many years ago, into a title more fitting to the Valwood School, where the sculpture now lives. The Colemans donated the piece when their grandson, Wilby Wolfson, started playing for the Valwood Valiants.

The football player is up on the toes of one foot on the end of a rolling platform with rubber wheels. Wilby says the sculpture was hard to build since he wanted the classic pose of a player holding a football, fending off all opponents, with only the tip of one shoe on the ground. Wilby had to weld a fan of steel struts under the platform to keep it from warping. The player's legs are gandy dancer's tools called "track liners."

The helmet is the end of a round oxygen tank, the face mask and football are sculpted three-sixteenths-inch rods, and the hands are plasma-cut steel. The helmet and jersey, made of two-inch strips of steel, are painted the blue of the Valwood School colors. Wilby borrowed his grandson's helmet, and a NAPA store mixed paint to match exactly.

## *Crocodile*

*8" h x 10" w x 24" l on a 24" diameter disk*

The sculpture *Crocodile* is an early piece, which Wilby says took 32 hours to complete. He found some discarded carbon steel blades at Rice Iron and Metal and knew their original function was to break up salt cake in the manufacture of paper. Loose blades, they swing on an axle, whirling around like giant bush-hog blades. These blades comprise the upper and lower jaw and look from the side exactly like the leering smile of a crocodile.

The spaced teeth are forged on an anvil and welded in, and a large alarm clock in the back of the crocodile's throat is a reference to the clock in *Peter Pan*. Shiny ball-bearing eyes peek out malevolently from underneath a plow tip brow. Stacks of flat washers make up the nostrils, and different-sized washers and diamond-shaped punch-outs of steel are aligned along the sides to make up the scales. The throat is a spring of three-eights-inch steel wire.

The entire head sits on a large stainless steel disk, atop a revolving lazy susan, which allows it to be seen from all sides. The hidden clock inside the crocodile can be seen by any small, delicious child standing dangerously close, and children always get the *Peter Pan* reference.

## *Foot Soldiers*

*Left Soldier 35" h x 12" w  Right Soldier 45" h x 21" w*

These odd, damaged stake anvils, bent into a curve and welded to a size 18 footprint, were found at Rice Iron and Metal, and their use or the reason for the joining of the parts remain a mystery to this day.

Wilby wonders who went to the trouble of cutting out the huge metal footprints and welding anvils to them. What was their practical value? He hopes, as oftentimes happens, for an eventual explanation of their existence.

These fierce two-foot-tall warriors come complete with one-fourth-inch steel arms, hands, helmets, shields, battle-axes, and halberds. The heads and helmets of the soldiers are bell-clutch assemblies, with the indented rims making the perfect edge for the helmets.

## *Reticulated Giraffe*

*80" h x 78" w*

This amusing animal sculpture is composed of few lines but captures the full essence of giraffe-ness. Painted in brilliant yellow and brown as reticulated patches, the piece has always been a hit wherever it is shown.

The head is a stainless steel latex glove form, which originally had a heating device built inside. Wilby removed the heating element and added rolled sheet metal ears, bolt eyes, and lovely long, twisted copper eyelashes. The copper is blackened with liver of sulfur. Wooden Shaker hanging pegs have just enough texture to depict exactly the furred horns of a giraffe. Two long rods, from the head to the weighted tail, balance precisely on a metal pole, allowing the kinetic sculpture to bend and move slowly, just as the real animal does.

## *Emperor Penguin*

*22" h x 14" w*

This whimsical animal sculpture is made from a large, two-foot oxygen tank. Its scalloped bottom reminded Wilby of the ruffled, feathered bottom of a standing Emperor Penguin, an example of the largest penguin species.

The oversized beak and head, already fused together, came from some mysterious source and were made of some metal that would not weld onto the oxygen tank. A wooden dowel driven into the mouth of the oxygen tank solved the problem and holds the head and extremely long curved beak in place. The wings are cut from flat steel, painted, and welded on, giving the exact appearance of short black penguin wings held close to the body. The painted feathers, in yellow and orange, around the penguin's eye–perhaps a sexual display element–add that authentic touch that makes Wilby's work so interesting.

## *Penguin*

*16" h x 16" w*

Wilby originally envisioned this big shovel with its odd indentation in the middle as a face with a plow sweep as a beard. However, after walking around and seeing the construction from an upside-down point of view, he realized it was already a penguin; in fact, the two pieces of farm equipment captured the essence of penguin.

"As simple as you can get," Wilby said.

The huge shovel–Wilby had never seen one exactly this shape before–is the body of the animal, and the sweep, the pointed end of a plow, forms the stubby wings and head. The feet are the shoulders of the shovel, and the tail is located where the shovel handle is attached.

## *The Company Man*

*Head and Spring 16.25" h x 4" w  Stand 42.5" h x 20" w*

After a very successful one-man exhibit at the Museum of Arts and Sciences in Macon, Georgia, Wilby donated this piece to the museum's permanent collection.

The design was inspired by P.G. Wodehouse's character in the short story, "The Nodder." The head for this bald-headed piece is an acetylene bottle top, with complacently closed eyes and "a real screwy grin," plasma cut into the steel. The large spring that makes up the neck allows the head to bob in agreement at every touch. The metal base has the title spelled out in weld material.

## *Jingle Jangle Morning*

*48" h x 96" w*

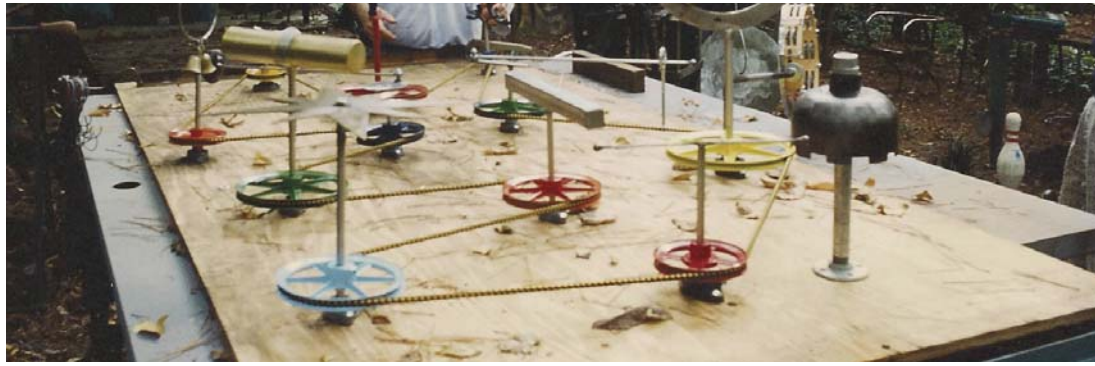
Wilby had his first one-man show at the Madison-Morgan Cultural Center in Madison, Georgia, which is about 60 miles north of Macon, Georgia. Someone at the Museum of Arts and Sciences in Macon heard about Wilby's art, and a delegation was sent to view it. Subsequently he was invited to have a one-man exhibit in Macon.

For the opening, the Macon Museum hosted a barbeque dinner. Wilby did a walk-around talk, explaining his pieces and their history. Afterwards, he and The Comptones, a band made up of the Colemans' son and daughter-in-law, Compton and Glynnis, and their friends, played bluegrass music. A large crowd attended the opening.

Photographs from the Coleman family collection

"To top that," Wilby said, "the Museum commissioned me to make a sculpture for its new children's wing."

There were no specifications as to what they wanted, so Wilby built a kinetic sculpture. On a large sheet of plywood, he placed a colorful, multi-pieced arrangement of 15 or so moving parts. Connected by a long bungee belt and moved by a hand crank, every piece–fan, tambourine, shakers, cowbell, etc.–made a noise: a bang, a whistle, a toot. The sculpture was delivered four months later.



## *Singin' and Dancin' in the Rain*

*63" h x 19" w*

This very kinetic sculpture is a favorite with children since it is one they can touch, causing rhythmic movements in all directions.

Wilby took a large barrel spring–the source of all this flexibility–and welded a three-foot piece of half-inch mild steel to the high-carbon steel spring. About a day was spent bending and re-bending the upward course of this added metal so that the end would be directly over the center point of the spring. He then welded a large steel strainer or skimmer onto it and added 20 curved annealed galvanized eighth-inch wires, curving downwards, to the underside of the skimmer. The viewer has to decide if this sculpture is an umbrella or a large flower. Wilby thinks the title hints at what he thinks it is.

Wilby says this structure, being so flexible, must have fallen over at least ten times, so he had to reinforce the disk base with a 30-pound half-inch plate.

A wonderful story connected to this sculpture happened at the Tifton Love Affair Art Show and Competition. A grandmother, saying it was her favorite piece, left the exhibition and brought her two grandsons back to see the sculpture.

The younger one asked, after the sculpture had been set to dancing, "How come it ain't singin'?"

The older boy answered, "Cause it ain't rainin'."

## *Blacksmith*

*24" h x 11" w*

This sculpture is the result of several previous works using annealed wire, which is easy to bend into any desired shape. Wilby first drew and then used annealed wire to make patterns for the "tattoos." He heated and bent mild steel to exactly match those patterns. No two of these patterns are the same except the two on the dome of the sculpture.

All these curlicues were then fitted into a superstructure of steel forming the face and head. The superstructure was attached to the brain stem. The sculpture was painted with acid that instantly turns steel black. The acid has to be washed off within 45 seconds because it will rust or oxidize the steel. The photograph of Wilby at work shows this sculpture under construction.

Photograph contributed by Gloria Coleman

## *Medusa*

*Head 55" h x 37.5" w  Stand 119" h x 47" w*

This sculpture was inspired by the purchase of a bucket full of bent wrenches–no longer manufactured–at a neighborhood yard sale. Wilby says, "Carrying the wrenches home, I knew immediately that they were snakes."

The huge snarly head consists of a large two-foot-diameter disk harrow blade welded onto a saw blade, with a plow sweep as a thick red tongue sticking out of the mouth. The eyes are steel cogs with copper coils for the verdigris (green) pupils. The nose is copper, sliver soldered onto the disk harrow blade, and the hair is made up of 21 bent wrenches–all sizes–welded in place with a couple of lug wrenches thrown in for good measure. The tips of the wrenches have painted-on snake eyes. A rusty chain hangs from the head, depicting the entrails

that were left trailing after Odysseus cut Medusa's head off. The entire piece is suspended, hanging from a free standing wooden frame.

On seeing the completed sculpture, Nick Carroll, who had sold the wrenches to Wilby complained bitterly: "All those wrenches are ruined; you can't use them anymore." Yet later, Nick used bent wrenches to form safety bars for the windows of his workshop. Well after the sculpture was completed, Wilby came upon a painting of Medusa. The same wild hair, the same mouth and protruding tongue, and the same trailing entrails, which Wilby had worked out in metal, were in the picture.

## *Dawat: A Summons to a Royal Feast*

*128" h x 69" w*

The old Lowndes Valdosta Arts Center on North Patterson Street, founded in 1989, was such a plain, boxy, yellow-brick building that it needed something in the front "to fancy it up" to suggest an artistic location.

Asked to contribute a three-dimensional piece, Wilby came across an interesting 100-pound, half-inch steel circular plate in the scrap steel bin at Voight's Sheet Metal. The disk, five feet in diameter, had a number of step-shaped places, plasma cut, on what became the left-hand side of the sculpture and a large circle cut-out on what became the upper right side. A big cultivator spider fit exactly into the circle, touching at a number of points, allowing itself to be welded in.

"Mainly, I conceptualize what will be attractive," Wilby says, when asked how he comes up with a plan for a sculpture. "At least 50 percent of all my sculptures are drawn out on paper, and I play around with the design until I get what I want. With this piece, I extended the long spring, probably a railroad spring, with a flat metal strap, and welded the entire curved affair to the edge of the disk." A motorcycle sprocket was welded to the spring with another small cultivator spider welded on its tip.

The idea of circles and curves, balance, and asymmetry, is repeated in an almost free-standing three-eighths-inch rod. This rod follows the line of the spring and holds another small cultivator spider at its bending and ends in a small steel ball, painted green with poster paint. The rest of the 13-foot sculpture is painted black with aliphatic-urethane paint, a paint used on Peterbilt truck fenders, which holds up well in ultraviolet light and readily withstands the elements.

A heavy octagonal steel post, welded off-center, is the base, which in turn is welded to a thick metal disk, securely held by "hold-downs," metal clamps, with lag screws bolted into lead anchors.

The Colemans had recently been in New York and had eaten at a new Indian restaurant named Dawat, which means "a summons to a royal feast." To Wilby this invitation seemed an apt name for a sculpture in front of an art center. The sculpture now graces the right side of the Annette Howell Turner Center for the Arts, surrounded by water falling over a curved, rough stone wall.

## *Roseate Spoonbill*

*29" h x 20" w*

A steel ladle with an extremely long handle with a hole in the end suggested this elegant-stepping water bird to Wilby. The spoon itself was forged on an anvil. The outside of the ladle is painted white, and the inside is painted with a mixture of red and white with just a little black thrown in to achieve the right roseate color. The legs are steel rods, painted white to the joints, which in real life are feathered to this point. Wilby took all this information from a picture in an encyclopedia, especially the unique cross-footed gait of the bird, one foot going across the other in a straight line.



## *The Kiss*

*63" h x 13" w*

This sculpture is the result of the "happy accident," that serendipitous event that often occurs when the artist's eye sees immediately what the piece of art will be.

Wilby viewed these two identically-sized circles of some sort of pump system and knew right away they were the components of *The Kiss*. The metal of one piece was already a pale green with two large round holes, suggesting to him the face and eyes of a frog. The other matching piece was reddish with a projection that clearly suggested the nose on the face of the prince. Wilby screwed big Allen bolts into the holes for the frog's eyes and cut the half-way smiling mouth of the frog with a die grinder. He gave the prince serenely closed eyes– after all he's just been kissed–made of weld beads and a tiny cupid's bow mouth, barely visible beneath the nose.

The rim of the frog's face clearly shows identification numbers from its former life, and the two pieces are welded together and sit upon a five-foot rod that depicts the body. The two arms are quarter-inch mild steel rods capped off by ball bearings and project straight outwards, as though asking for an embrace. They allow the viewer to turn the piece, turning the frog on one side into the prince on the other.

Sallyann Coleman, when she was a student at the Emory University School of Medicine, used this piece as her good-luck totem, giving the frog a kiss and turning it into a prince whenever she had a crucial exam. "And they were all crucial," she adds.

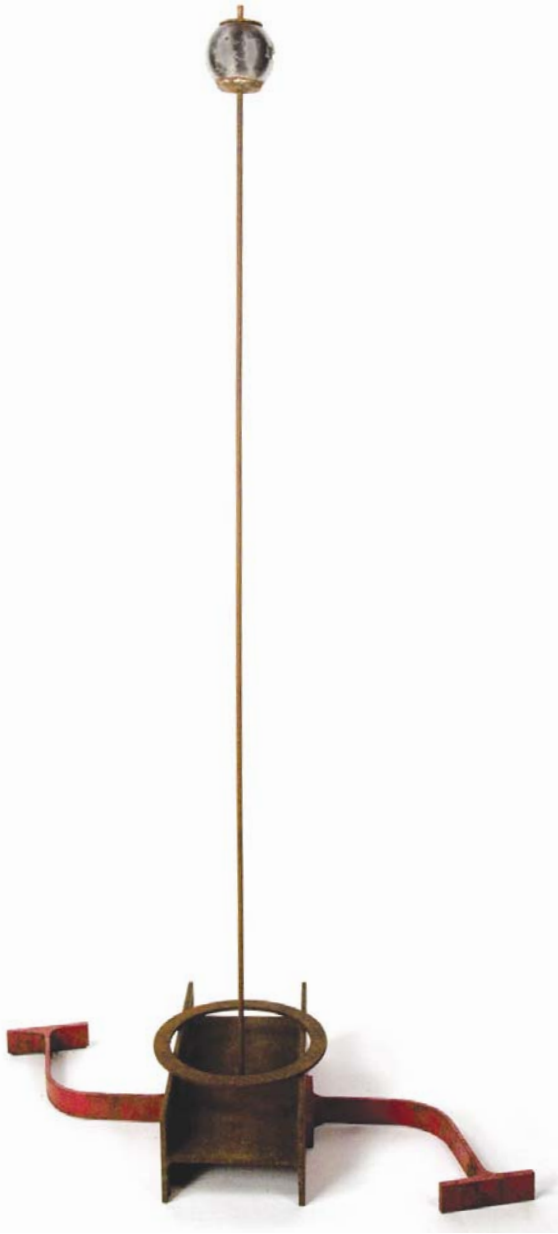
## *Widening Gyre*

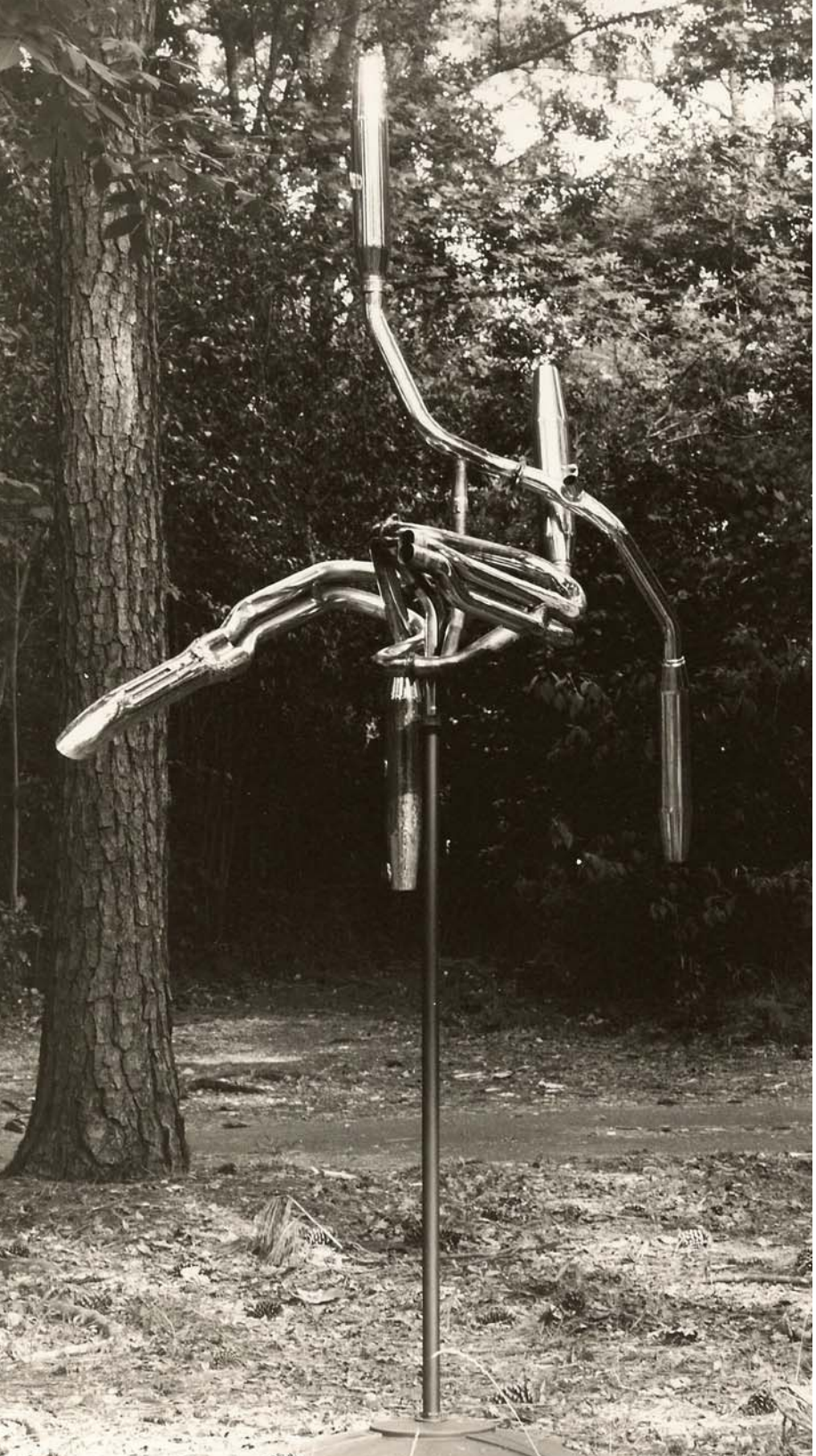
*68" h x 37" w*

While the name for this sculpture comes from William Butler Yeats' poem, "The Second Coming," the piece itself came from an oversupply of heavy spring steel rods in Wilby's workshop. (Spring steel has memory; it can be bent any way and return to its original shape.) Wilby peened steel disks into concave shapes to cap the openings of a steel petcock ball. The ball is hollow and when inside a pipe can be turned to cut off a flow of liquid or turned again to allow liquid to flow. Wilby welded the spring steel rod through the caps, letting a bit stick out on top. The end of the rod was then butt welded to the center of an eight-inch-wide I-beam.

When he moved the ball back and forth, the sculpture toppled over. Wilby said, "It needed outriggers; something on both sides to balance the piece." Using two two-inch sections of I-beam, he heated, bent, and welded them to either side of the main I-beam. This addition created a stable base for the sculpture, so that no matter which way the ball was pushed the piece remained upright. The circle at the bottom was added just to break up the linear look of the base, adding curves to the straight lines.

The motion of this sculpture is an extremely interesting feature. When the ball is pushed, it first goes back and forth, then starts moving diagonally, then moving in circles, then side to side, and then goes back and forth again several times, repeating these four motions much longer than expected. "Perhaps the different actions have something to do with the Coriolis effect," Wilby says, "a result of the earth's rotation."



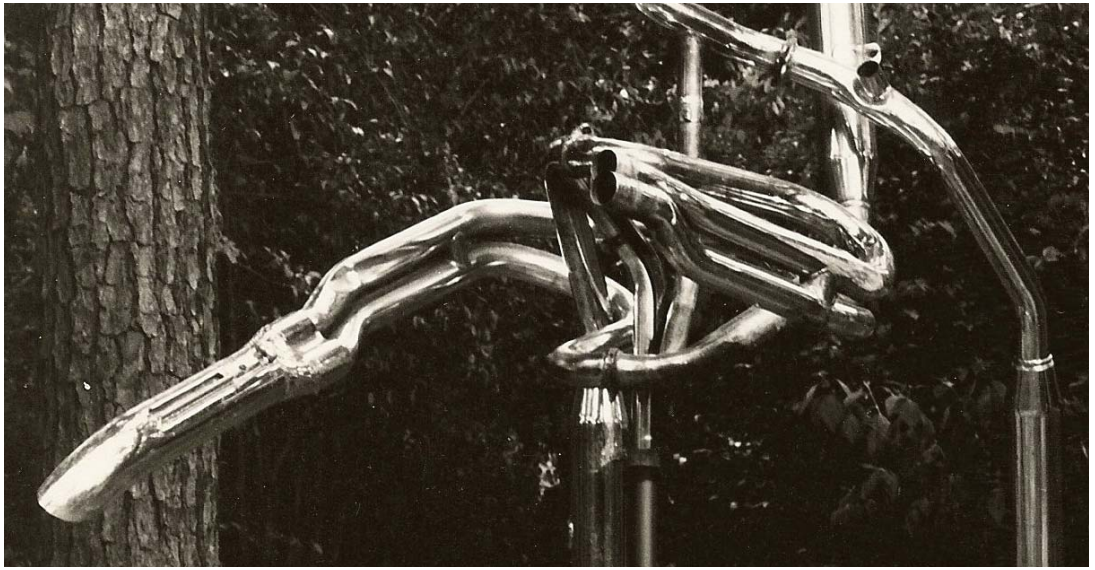


## *Hogs In Space*

*112" h x 43" w*

*The Muppet Show*, a television program created and produced by Jim Henson and his team from 1976 to 1981, featured a recurring episode entitled, "Pigs in Space." These humorous, whimsical sketches, based on *Star Trek* and featuring pigs as the spaceship crew, sparked Wilby to come up with *Hogs in Space*.

He found five chrome-plated exhaust pipes from Harley-Davidson motorcycles, often called hogs, at the local junkyard and arranged and welded them to a steel display stand. The shiny tubes, reaching out in this completely abstract construction, combine the sublime with the ridiculous–a worthy tribute to the genius of Jim Henson.



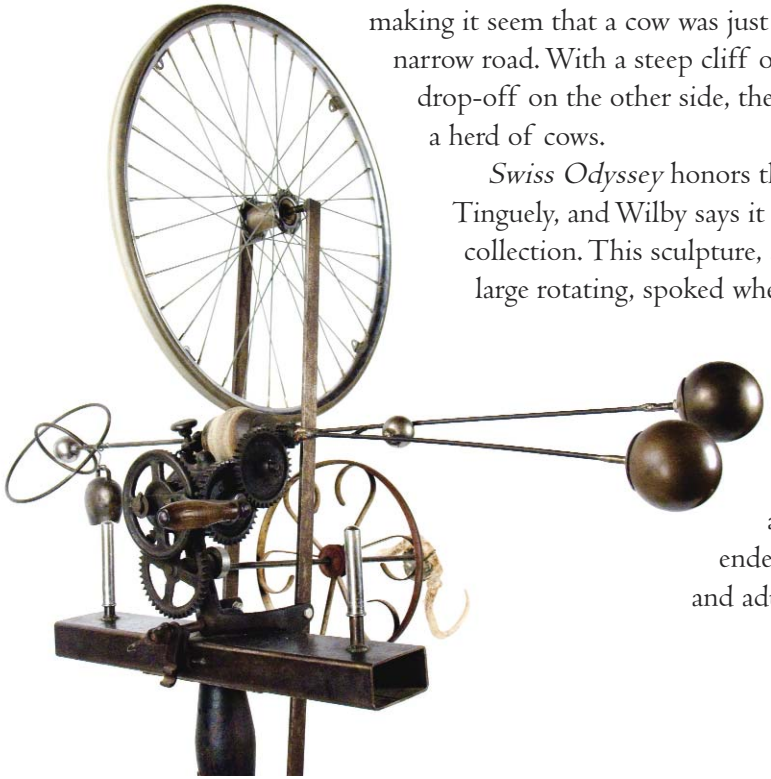
Photographs contributed by Lindsay Brice

## *Swiss Odyssey Après Tinguely*

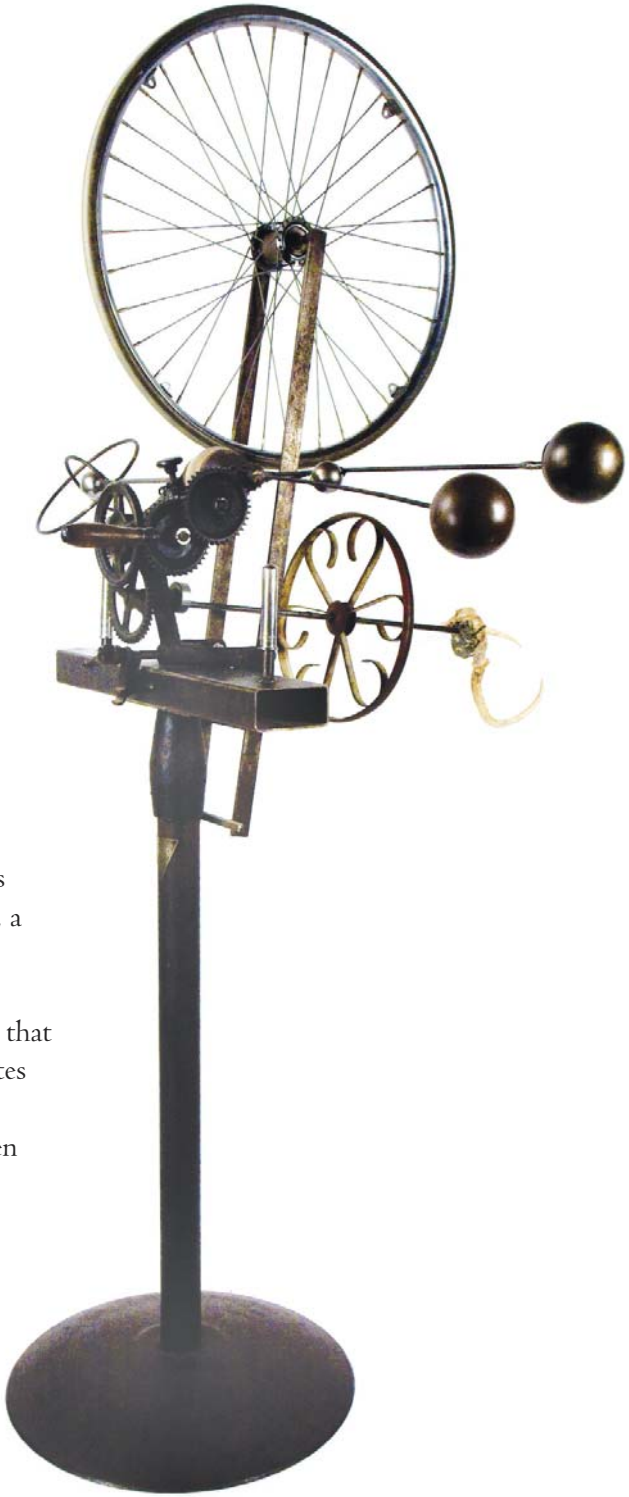
*75" h x 41" w*

This sculpture came about through a convergence of items and incidents while Wilby and Gloria were making a two-week bicycle trip through the Swiss Alps. On one particular leg of the journey, from Lake Geneva to Zermatt, Switzerland, they stayed in a hotel room, which contained a coffee-table book of the work of the sculptor, Jean Tinguely. The pictures showed large kinetic sculptures, all chain- or motor-driven pieces, that impressed Wilby with their size and movement. Later, the Colemans made a special trip to see Tinguely's sculptures in Basel and then in Paris, and even later, to see a 40-foot-high sculpture of Tinguely's in Charlotte, North Carolina. "A wonderful example of public art," Wilby says.

Also, biking the narrow roads up and down the Swiss mountains, the Colemans kept hearing the tones of Swiss cow bells. These musical sounds rang through the clear air, making it seem that a cow was just around the next hairpin curve in the narrow road. With a steep cliff on one side of the road and a 1,000-foot drop-off on the other side, the last thing one wanted to encounter was a herd of cows.



*Swiss Odyssey* honors the Colemans' trip and the work of Tinguely, and Wilby says it is one of the most intricate pieces in his collection. This sculpture, a hand-cranked construction, consists of a large rotating, spoked wheel to represent a bicycle tire, two brass balls connected to a mower-sharpening stone, a pair of deer antlers that also turn, and a Swiss cow bell that rings. In his work, Tinguely incorporated many skeletal jaws that clack together. The entire mechanism rotates and rings when the handle is turned, an endearing visual and auditory quality for children and adults alike.



## *Steel Life*

*Men (group of four) 33" h x 17" w*
*Stand 47" h x 17" w*

Four steel manikins comprise this many-faceted, 33-inch-high sculpture inspired by the elongated figures in the motion picture, *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Wilby was asked to be an artist-in-residence for welding classes at Tift County High School and Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in South Georgia. He was to teach "artistic welding," not practical welding. He brought to the class a box full of pre-prepared steel body parts and a fully articulated and moveable maquette of a human figure. The students adjusted the maquette into various poses and several figures were welded up. Months later, using the same method, Wilby made the four figures that compose this sculpture.

Tubular metal stock makes up the chests, shoulders, abdomens, and hips of these elegant figures, with bent flat steel stock for buttocks. The helmeted heads are weldable caps for pipes, the two pieces cut and fit together to create noses and slots for eyes. The thin arms and legs, and the proportioned hands and feet, stand in graceful poses: dancing, bowing, a yoga posture with a foot pressed to the knee, and a hands-on-hips stance, arms akimbo. Each manikin, facing outward, stands atop a disk and is held fast to a stainless steel stand by small dark vises, which give another mechanical dimension to the piece.

## *Hookeroon Harrier*

*27" h x 16" w*

Before the Civil War, an instrument called a "pickaroon," an axe-like device with a hooked point, was used to roll logs. After the Civil War, a company came in and adopted the design but called their tool a "hookeroon."

Wilby found a hookeroon head at a junkyard and put a handle in it. He deeply incised eyes into the steel with a die grinder and painted them yellow. With its cruel curved beak it began to look like a harrier–a member of the family of birds that also includes hawks, eagles, and kites.

The wings of the bird are two three-tined pitchforks, with the handles welded together with a lot of welding material so that it looks like they were made that way. They are attached to the body by a bolt through the handle and fastened by a wing nut. "Ta-Da!" Wilby said.

The body is stabilized by the three flat steel straps making up the tail. Curved rake tines represent the great claws of the bird.

## *Sail Cat*

*99" h x 27" w*

The idea for this aerial flat cat came from an outrageous story in an early Jonathan Winters album about how a cat up in the hills near Monck's Corner, South Carolina, could be flattened by a semi, dried in the summer sun, and then sailed for miles.

Plasma cut out of one-eighth-inch flat steel–the pattern drawn on by soapstone–the flattened image of the body of a cat, complete with whiskers, rests on three spring steel rods welded together for stability. The entire sculpture is painted black and sways at the slightest touch or breeze.

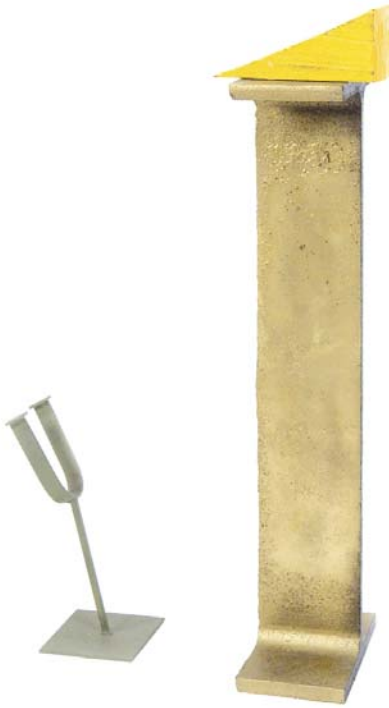
As with others of Wilby's sculptures, the shadow image of the cat, sailing across the front driveway, is an intrinsic part of its appeal.

## *Egoist Series*

### *I The Conversationalist*

*I 68.5" h x 36 " w  U 36" h x 7" w*

If you've ever had a conversation with an egoist, you'll understand the use of numerous slices of I-beams welded together in a random pattern on a square pole and then welded to a heavy plate and painted in red primer. The smaller "U," painted a muted black, is a two-inch steel strip with serifs on the ends, and it stands at a respectful distance, the entire body of the "U" cocked backwards at an attentive angle.



### *II The King and I*

*King 33" h x 16" w  I 18" h x 3" w*

This sculpture is a slice of a 24-inch I-beam. It is painted royal purple and red and wears a crown of brass water nozzles. An arrow with a curled tail, welded to the larger I-beam for balance, points at a slice of two-inch I-beam, which is looking up in supposed awe.

### *III The Big Cheese and You*

*Cheese and I 26" h x 9" w*
*U 10" h x 4" w*

A big wedge of solid steel, painted yellowish orange, sits atop a 20-inch I-beam painted gold.

The small "U" sits in front, looking up respectfully as befits someone meeting the Big Cheese.

## *William Butler Yeats*

"What's Wrong With This Picture?"
*51" h x 12" w*

The head and the body of this sculpture are made out of two acetylene tanks, one welded on top of the other. The greenish-yellow coat–its lapels and collar painted on–bow tie, and pince-nez eye glasses that hook with a chain to a real coat button are typical William Butler Yeats' garb. The hawkish-nose, also distinctly Yeats, is heavy half-inch steel, heated and bent, and the nostrils are simulated by heating small rods and spot welding them on. The arms, five-eighths-inch steel, are bent and then welded onto the shoulders, with the hands hidden inside the coat pockets.

The answer to the question, "What's wrong with this picture?" is the hat, which is an inverted bowl, painted gray with a few strands of hair poking out. Yeats hardly ever wore a hat, probably never feeling a need to cover up his full mane of beautiful black hair.

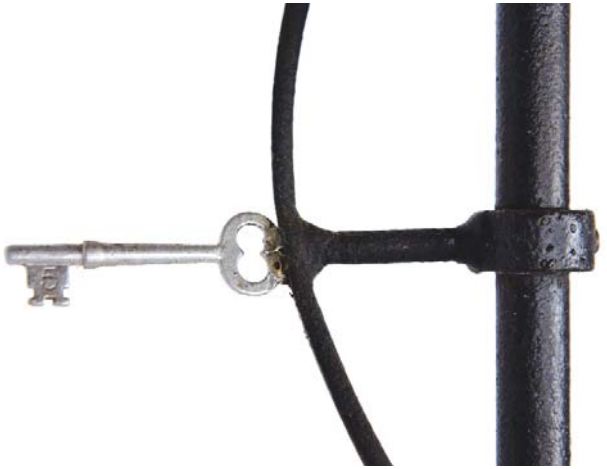
## *DNA Seeks Relationship with RNA for Fun and Translation: Call Gene*

*108" h x 12" w*

The single DNA strand, the helix of this sculpture, was originally a stirring or mixing device attached to a motor. Wilby's daughter, Sallyann, who was in medical school at the time, said what was needed was a strand of RNA to combine and key into the DNA to make a double helix. Wilby prepared the DNA, welded the keys on, and used a personal ad seeking a companion as the name of this sculpture.

DNA "translation" is the process that converts an RNA sequence into a string of amino acids that form a protein.

When Wilby didn't sign this piece with his usual "1691" signature, Sallyann protested, "How can I know this is a real 'Wilby Coleman?'"



## *Wile E. Coyote*

*15.5" h x 7.5" w*

At the local junkyard Wilby found a double handful of wood scoops, the hand-held device that can gouge out a groove or trench in wood. "I just started stacking them up, here and there, and suddenly the two upright scoops were ears and the forward-pointing scoop was a nose, and there it was, almost entire, Wile E. Coyote." The eyes are ball bearings painted shiny black; a flat piece of metal makes the lower jaw; and a wide gear, part of an automatic clutch assembly, is the ruff of fur around the neck.

The cartoon character, appearing in a series of Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies cartoons, was created by animation director Chuck Jones in 1948. Although today it might be considered out of the mainstream of popular culture, almost every child who takes a tour of the Colemans' home and its sculptures recognizes Wile E. Coyote immediately.

Photograph contributed by Lindsay Brice

## *The Imported Fire Ant*

*46" h x 66" w x 149" l*

A commissioned piece, *The Imported Fire Ant,* resides in front of the Ashburn-Turner County Chamber of Commerce in Ashburn, Georgia.

Shelly Zorn, president of the Chamber of Commerce, called Wilby and said that the city of Ashburn was planning a festival and needed a name, but "all the good names were taken," so they had settled on "The Fire Ant Festival." She said they wanted a large red fire ant, and Syd Blackmarr, who advised regional art groups, suggested that Wilby Coleman could make the sculpture.

The Ashburn committee came to the Colemans' home, looked at his many sculptures in the front and back yards, and talked to him about constructing a fire ant, making it as large as possible, and wanting it to be fire-engine red. What would he charge, and was he willing to do it? Wilby agreed to do the commission and started researching the project.

The fire ant turned out to be a very interesting insect. Gloria downloaded pictures from the Internet on every aspect of the bug, finding out that the correct name is the "imported fire ant."

The 12-foot ant is made out of blue and rust-colored water tanks, with short oxygen tanks cut into smaller pieces to make the pedicel, the connector between the thorax and abdomen. The thorax is composed of two water tanks, the abdomen is an even heavier propane tank, and the eyes are stainless steel ladles. The pincers are bent, sharpened ice tongs, and the legs are heavy rebar. The two pincers in front grasp onto a victim's flesh, and a large stinger in back delivers formic acid, which burns like fire.

One problem Wilby faced was how to keep people from climbing on top of the insect, possibly breaking it or falling off themselves. Research showed that short stiff hairs grew on the back of the real ant. So short, stiff wires were welded into place that would stick anyone trying to climb aboard.

Upon completion, the entire ant was sandblasted, primed, and painted a bright red as the committee required, but Wilby says he still prefers the blue and rust of the original materials.

## *Baby the Rain Must Fall*

*119" h x 48" w x 16" d*

On his many trips to Rice Iron and Metal, Wilby, not knowing what he planned to do with them, collected some 20 brass water faucets.

Finally an idea came. He bought two sheets of flat steel and, with a plasma cutter, cut out five cloud shapes so that they lined up one behind the other and looked three-dimensional. He stacked the clouds and drilled eight quarter-inch holes through the stack. He then added spacers of quarter-inch pipe between the sections of clouds, ran a threaded rod through the spacers and through the entire mass and tightened a nut on each end. Over the nut at the end of each threaded rod, he welded a one-inch threaded nipple and screwed on 16 brass faucets or "spigots" as they are sometimes called in the South.

A disk was welded onto the bottom of the cloud bank, which in turn was welded to a large pipe that fits over a smaller rod with a ball bearing welded to the top. This system, one which Wilby uses often, allows the entire structure to be turned by hand or the wind.

Wilby was rather proud of his original invention of a cloud with faucets. Later, he and Gloria went to the Tate Modern, an art museum on Bankside in London, where over a doorway they beheld a cloud affixed with faucets. Wilby said, "There is nothing new in this world."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## *Gone But Not Forgotten*

*Each 78" h with 15" diameter disk*

The shapes of seven extinct birds of the world are plasma cut out of round metal disks, throwaways found in a junk yard. These disks are held up by from five to nine spring steel rods–also found objects–welded onto steel disks. Whether displayed indoors or outdoors, the cut-out shapes create a dramatic absence, an integral part of the sculpture's message.

The vacant silhouettes include the following species: 1. Heath Hen, 2. Ivory-billed Woodpecker, 3. Carolina Parakeet, 4. Dodo, 5. Passenger Pigeon, 6. Labrador Duck, and 7. Great Auk. All are easily discernible, both in the shapes and in the shadows they cast.

Wilby, in showing these metal sculptures, often relates interesting information about the birds. The Ivory-billed Woodpecker had not been seen since 1944, and then only in remote areas. Now that the bird has reportedly been seen again in Arkansas, Wilby spot welded the cut-out image back into place. The Heath Hen abounded in such numbers that work crews were recruited by the promise that a dish of Heath Hen would be served only once a day. Passenger Pigeons, in their heyday, flew over the countryside in such numbers that they darkened the sky for over 30 hours.

### *Row O'Shark*

*75" h x 15" diameter*

For Wilby this intriguing sculpture was inspired by an excess of hammer heads, often found around workshops and in junk yards. At the top are eleven ball peen and claw hammer heads welded to a steel ring. This mass is held up by spring steel rods attached to a square steel plate.

### *Tomato Surprise*

*34" h x 20" diameter disk*

A very large disk harrow blade welded to a large heavy spring and then welded to another heavier disk harrow blade for a base is a basic structure that Wilby often uses to depict a character.

For *Tomato Surprise,* he added arched eyebrows of sliced angle iron over hexagonal nuts for eyes and painted them white on the inside with the centers left black. A draw hook became a prominent down-turned nose, with the two holes of the base of the hook creating a surprised mouth and the dimple in the chin. Painted tomato red, these diverse elements all came together to make the title, *Tomato Surprise*.

Photograph from the Coleman family collection

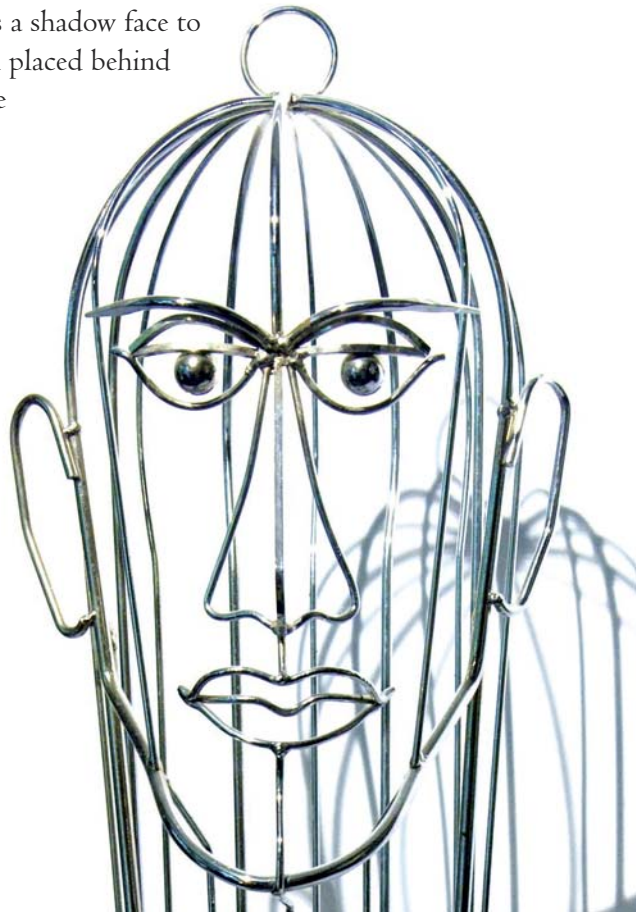
## *The Shadow Knows*

*32" h x 18" w*

This two-foot-tall classic head made of chrome-plated mild steel wire used to hang by a hook like a birdcage on a stanchion. The name it bore in that incarnation was *La Cage aux Folles.*

But when the sculpture was taken down and left against a white wall, Wilby saw the possibility of incorporating shadow into the piece. He placed it on a turntable, which rotates about once a minute. A spotlight on the ceiling causes a shadow face to show on a white canvas screen placed behind the sculpture. As the sculpture rotates, the shadow face elongates and widens, first looking up and then down, and continuously goes through a series of transformations.

The artwork here has transferred from the cage head to the shadow thrown by the light, resulting in the new name.



## *Jackie and the Banana Fish*

*100" h x 27.5" w*

J. D. Salinger's short story, "A Perfect Day for Banana Fish," which was first published in *The New Yorker* magazine on January 31, 1948, provided the background story and inspiration for this sculpture. The horrific tale chronicles the day, on his honeymoon, that Seymour Glass commits suicide.

At Rice Iron and Metal, Wilby saw some log pullers, huge ice-tong-looking instruments that are used to snake logs out of the woods. These pointed grappling hooks made him think of the banana fish day and of another horrific day, November 22, 1963, the day President Kennedy was shot, and the look on Mrs. Kennedy's face immediately thereafter.

"The story, which describes a beautiful sunny day, much like the one in Dallas, Texas, and the shooting all came together for me," says Wilby. "It's probably one of my most complicated pieces as far as people understanding the title." Jackie's hairstyle is very identifiable, and the look on her face was influenced by Edward Munch's 1890 paintings of *The Scream.*

Everything in the sculpture is sharp: from the base, a gang mower turned on end; to the long, curved cylinder, a grain auger that pulls corn out of storage, also turned on end. The hooks of Mrs. Kennedy's hair are two-inch-wide, half-inch-thick flat stock reduced and drawn out to fine, turned-up points. The wire features are cantilevered and don't rest on the square, raw stainless steel face but are suspended along with the hair from a point at the top.

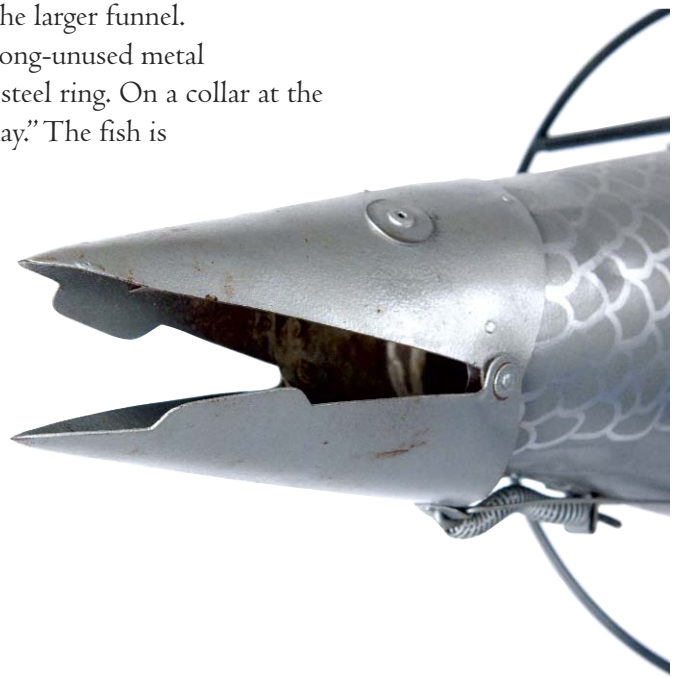
## *Mackerel Snapper*

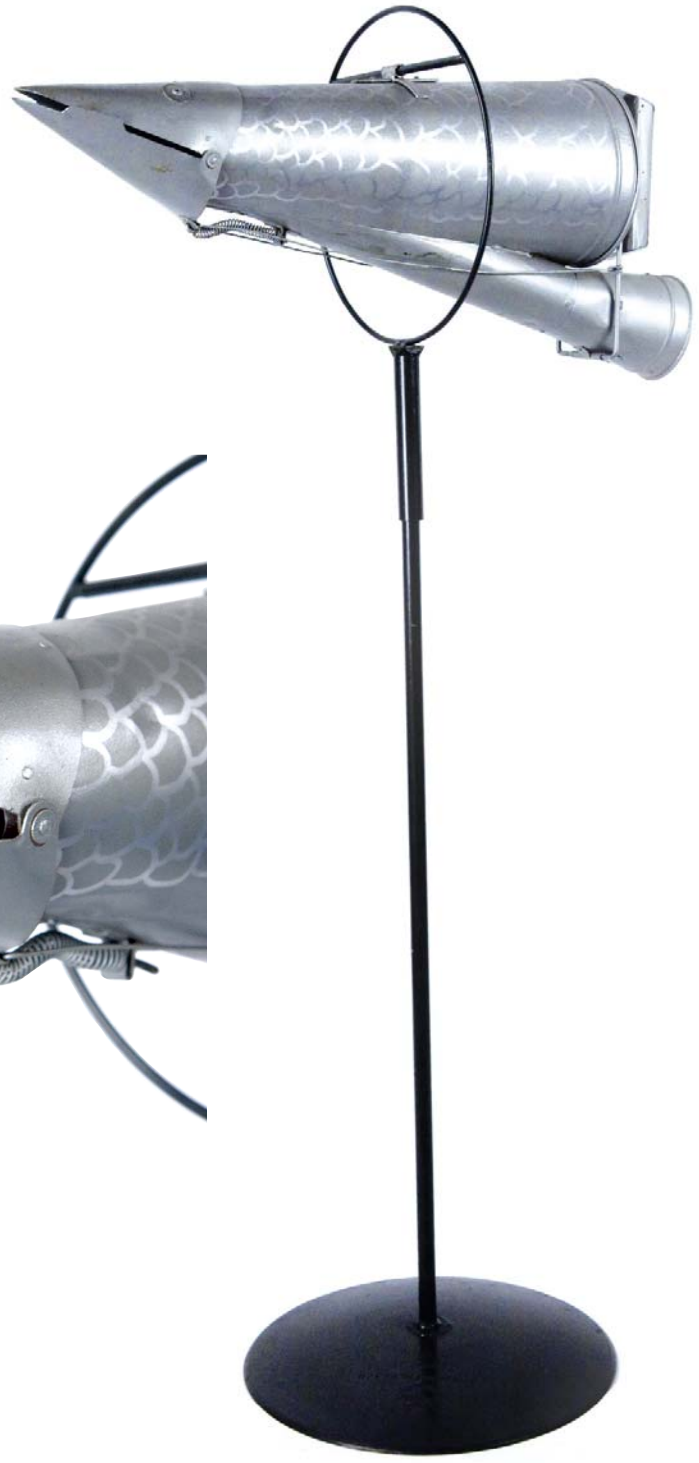
*56" h x 30" w*

Only old-timers would recognize the original purpose of this metal sculpture's body. Going through an ancient barn, Wilby found what was once standard equipment for farming–a planter, brand new and shiny.

Before mechanized farming, a worker would walk the fields, sticking the sharp nose of such a planter into the plowed earth. A young plant would be dropped into the smaller funnel, and a squeeze of the trigger mechanism would widen the hole and release the plant into it, along with a squirt of water from the larger funnel.

Wilby knew immediately what he would make of this long-unused metal contraption, and now a silvery, large-bodied fish hangs in a steel ring. On a collar at the large end of the fish is printed, "Friday, Friday, Friday, Friday." The fish is gimbaled so it can turn around and up and down, and the mackerel's mouth snaps open and shut by pulling the trigger. The scales, interlocking half circles, are painted with a metallic marker to contrast with the dull silver color of the body.





## *Out at Third . . . sic transit gloria mundi*

*47" h x 13" w*

For this sculpture Wilby traced his hands on a one-quarter-inch steel plate and plasma cut them out, bending them slightly upwards at the joints to catch the ball. The heavy ballast ball was found along with many others at a local junkyard and came from a crane that had split open. The ball weighs about ten pounds.

The hands and ball are welded to a short steel tube. Wilby employed his commonly used technique of a rod with a ball bearing welded to the end and inserted into this tube to allow the sculpture to turn freely.

Like many of Wilby's other titles, this one contains at least two meanings. See if you can figure them out.

## *Behold!*

*Angel 36" h x 36" w  Stand 36" h x 15" w*

A rusted-steel sign holder makes up most of the body of the angel, with a plow sweep completing the shoulders and arms, giving it a reared-back posture and a wide-armed pose, as if saying, "Behold!" The face is a small steel disk, rusted into freckles, and the halo is a stainless steel disk polished by an angle grinder. The plasma-cut eyes and mouth are made luminous by shiny, stainless steel spoons, welded in place. Five spirals of spring steel make up the wondrous coils of the wings. The entire sculpture stands on a stainless steel tube. "A leftover," Wilby says, "from some unknown metal project."

## *Sentinel*

*78" h x 31" w*

Wilby says that this sculpture, one of the heaviest in his collection, is probably the most abstract construction that he has ever attempted. Weighing over 300 pounds, the sculpture was moved only once, from Wilby's blacksmith shop at the back of his property to the front drive, where it stands "on guard" today.

The 31-inch steel plate was one of those leftover pieces from some unknown construction that Wilby came across at Rice Iron and Metal. The former owner of the metal plate plasma cut the shapes, leaving seven perfect dragon teeth shapes and two equal-sized circles. Wilby filled in the rounds with a stylized eye–to keep watch–and strips of metal to form a shuttered effect. Masses of jutting bullets and blades on one side and a male power symbol on the back complete the idea of a sentinel on watch.

## *Hope Springs Eternal*

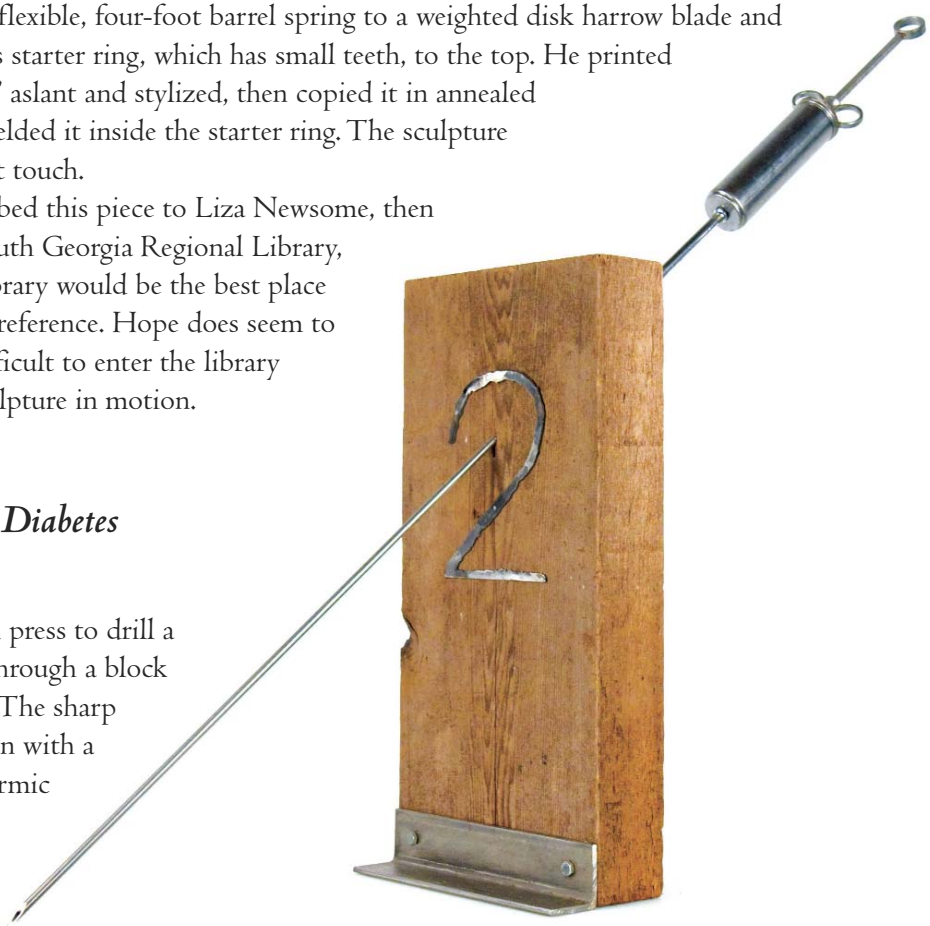
*42.5" h x 16.5" w*

Wilby, as with so much of his work, was inspired by literature to build this sculpture; in this case, by Alexander Pope's lines from *An Essay on Man*:

> *Hope springs eternal in the human breast*
> *Man never Is, but always To be blest.*

He welded a large flexible, four-foot barrel spring to a weighted disk harrow blade and welded an automobile's starter ring, which has small teeth, to the top. He printed out the word "HOPE" aslant and stylized, then copied it in annealed galvanized wire, and welded it inside the starter ring. The sculpture bounces at the slightest touch.

After Wilby described this piece to Liza Newsome, then the Director of the South Georgia Regional Library, they agreed that the library would be the best place to display this literary reference. Hope does seem to spring eternal. It is difficult to enter the library without seeing this sculpture in motion.



## *Welcome to Type 2 Diabetes*

*21" h x 10" w*

Wilby used a drill press to drill a diagonal hole through a block of mahogany. He plasma cut the numeral "2" and attached it around the hole. The sharp end of the needle is a steel rod, chop sawed at a steep angle. The "hole" is cut in with a die grinder and darkened. The other end is a veterinarian's large-animal hypodermic syringe found at a junkyard. A brace at the back and a piece of angle iron screwed to the front hold the piece steady.

*The Divine Comedy: The Inferno, III. 9.*

## *Un-arranged Flowers: Where Is Mack, Now That We Need Him?*

*Base 122" diameter  Flowers 158" h x 140" w*

In 2002, Wilby was commissioned to create a flower sculpture for a small pocket park in downtown Valdosta. The park was named after Mack Freeman, a much beloved and very popular local florist, known for his activism in revitalizing downtown Valdosta and for his wonderful ability to arrange flowers. The untimely death of this young, vital man in his early forties caused deep grief to the people in this South Georgia community.

Wilby bought a gigantic disk harrow blade, almost 36 inches in diameter, the largest one he'd ever seen, to serve as the base for this sculpture. It weighed 90 pounds and seemed perfect to hold an explosion of heavy metal flowers simply butt-welded to its convex surface. However, the high-carbon steel blade would not support three-quarter-inch steel stems. They simply broke off. To overcome the problem, he welded four-inch washers in a spiral design to the disk harrow blade. He then cut thick-walled pipe into eight-inch lengths and welded each tube onto the tops of the washers. In all, at least a linear foot of weld material was used for each washer and tube. With these receptacles in place, he inserted the stems into the tubes and then welded the tops closed. All the welding was done on site, powered by an electric generator.

The flowers, the tallest one over 13 feet high, and the shorter ones of varying heights fanning out below it, look truly "un-arranged" and are a variety of real and imagined flora. Some are made from cultivator spiders, and others Wilby built to simulate flowers. A large columnar multi-doughnut cutter,

which makes about 40 doughnuts at a time, is a blue hyacinth, and an orange enamel fan is a daisy. A bicycle wheel is a fine-wired flower, and silver oscillating fan blades make up another.

On one occasion, Wilby met one of Mack Freeman's good friends, Lane Smith, in a grocery store. "I hear you're going to do a sculpture for Mack's park," the lady said.

"Yes," Wilby replied. "I'm going to call it: *Un-arranged Flowers: Where Is Mack, Now That We Need Him?"*

Instantly, tears sprang from the eyes of the young woman and streamed down her cheeks.

## *Gettin' a Grip on the Future*

*84" h x 35" w x 26"d*

Large and small pipe and box wrenches are welded to a bent metal pole creating this seven-foot-tall assemblage, all painted black except for the golden key on one side and a green-to-yellow painted "star" on the other. The legs are hand cranks for Model T Fords with a couple of lug wrenches spread out on the bottom for balance. The sculpture gives physical form to the impossibility of the title.

## *Five South Georgia High Rollers Headin' for Vegas*

*129" h x 35" w*

This sculpture derives its name from the practice of South Georgia men banding together for a gambling junket to Las Vegas, Nevada. The plow wheel and three cultivator spiders are all attached to a red rubber-tired wheel at the top of a ten-foot metal pipe and rod, which is anchored to a disk harrow blade at the bottom. All the separate parts turn, showing that these fellows are indeed high rollers.



***Hath the Rain a Father?*** Job 38:28

*80" h x 85" w*

Coming across the question in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, Wilby built this sculpture, perhaps as an answer.

A long steel rod balances a stainless steel hand, plasma cut with a pointing index finger on one end and a small one-quart bucket on the other. The sculpture sits in the Colemans' backyard, and when it rains, the bucket fills, causing the hand to point, completely vertical, toward the heavens. When the sculpture is being displayed indoors, an attached copper cup can be filled with water to pour into the bucket and answer the question. Two metal circles sandwich the hand at the wrist and two circles hold the wire that holds the bucket. In the middle, Wilby fashioned scrollwork out of one-inch flat steel, and the small copper cup sits on a hook under the scroll.



## *Barnyard Rorschach*

*Flower* *155" h x 16" w*
*Wheels* *76" h x 42" w*
*Three Pieces* *113" w*

This sculpture, composed of two large wheels on steel bases and a large grain auger in between, sits in the exact middle of the Colemans' front yard. The wheels with the bases have actually been turned upside down to accommodate the design that Wilby had in mind, although he wonders what they had been used for, since they sit up so high when upright. As with many farm implements, their use has been lost in the past. A large cultivator spider sits atop the grain auger.

The name of the sculpture comes from the inkblot psychiatric test. Wilby says of the sculpture: "Make of it what you will."

Photograph contributed by Robert Winter, III

## *Along Came a Blackbird*

*87" h x 33" w*

Using another literary inspiration, Wilby found the title of this piece in a line from the well-known English nursery rhyme, *Sing a Song of Sixpence:* "Along came a blackbird and snipped off her nose."

The heavy wheel on top holds an assortment of metal snippers from the small needle-nose pliers to the much larger tin snips. These "birds" hang from stiff rods attached by a hook to the wheel, which allows them to flair out when it is turned. "Like a ride at the fair," Wilby says. The birds are painted black, and the rivet holding the snipper blades together is painted silver to simulate an eye.

## *Skewball Pony*

*48" h x 46" w*

This sculpture came about after a request for a saddle stand from a Coleman daughter-in-law, Rosemary.

A skewbald horse is brown and white, whereas a piebald horse is black and white. The "stewball" horse of the song, "Stewball," is a mispronunciation of the word "skewbald."

The entire horse is balanced on its spine on a large green enameled cast-iron stand, used for some unknown purpose, and found at Rice Iron and Metal. The shoulder and hip girdles are rounded, arched, and perforated sheets of galvanized steel, probably used at one time by the Georgia Power Company. The prancing legs resemble ink drawings in quarter-inch steel with hooves made from galvanized steel tubes, sawed off at an angle. The tail is a three-tined pitchfork with the tines pulled together, and the mane is a steel spring with a forelock of nested spring steel. The nose and jaw are plasma-cut, quarter-inch steel with shiny ball bearings, giving the animal a wild-eyed look.

Photograph contributed by Robert Winter, III

## *Lord of the Flies*

*129" h x 68" w*

Wilby says, "It didn't take much imagination to come up with this sculpture and its name."

The two giant zippers, each 20 feet long, were purchased from a surplus supply store, and easily fit the description, although some will remember it as the title of a novel by William Golding. A tall, thin tube rises from a cast-iron base, and the crossbar in the middle holds two double-carcass meat hooks. The end of each looped zipper is attached to a meat hook.

## *Pearl Fishery*

*65" h x 24" w x 36" l*

It was the habit of Len Mederer and his brother, George, father and uncle to Gloria Mederer Coleman, to play pranks on each other, once even shipping a live pig to New Jersey. Somewhere in the give and take of odd objects, a giant-sized clam shell was exchanged, which then came into the Colemans' possession.

Wilby, of course, made good use of the unusual object, coming up with a sculpture that used the bottom of the shell and a broken hydraulic lift and tongs that originally were employed in the moving of creosote cross ties. To keep the lifting ability of the hydraulic mechanism, he devised a handle that cranked a rope to pull a multiple block pulley. Now the three-foot giant white clamshell holds a large black "pearl," which can be fished out by the crank and pulley device. The pearl is a steel ball, painted black, which just happened to have indentations on both sides that the sharp points of the tongs fit into perfectly.



## *Genuine (No Fluke) Anchor*

*92" h x 43" w*

The joke behind this sculpture is that the anchor has lost its flukes, the hooked arms that make it adhere to the bottom of a body of water. The frame to hold this piece is made out of tubular steel with a short shackle holding the anchor shaft of galvanized steel. The welded legs of the frame hold the sculpture steady, and the heavy ball on the end might have been part of a scale system.

The shape is symmetrical and appealing, but it would take a nautical person to appreciate the joke.

## *Random Symmetry*

*61" h x 27" w*

When Dr. Joe Brannen retired and closed his medical office, he had innumerable bent and plated metal constructions for holding patients' file folders. "Here, see what you can do with these," he told Wilby.

Wilby said, "The pieces were randomly placed and welded." Regardless of their randomness and irregularity, the overall sculpture achieved a symmetrical shape. A round steel disk, a throwaway from Voigt's Sheet Metal, polished to a high shine with a grinder, sits atop the other throwaways.



*Travels With My Ant*
*53" h x 76" w*

Upon first seeing this dark metal contraption, a linotype brazier, where lead was melted and poured out of a long funnel to feed into the mechanism that made type, Wilby saw it as a bird dog on point. Gloria said, "It's an anteater," and Wilby immediately agreed.

The final sculpture turned into a giant South American anteater, one with a big bushy tail, that walks on its knuckles to protect the long claws that it uses to rip open ant mounds.

The body is the brazier with cupped steel ears, and the tail is long flat steel, bent inch-by-inch in an open vise. A pea-weight for a cotton scale was used during construction to maintain the sculpture's balance. When it was completed, the weight was removed, but the sculpture didn't look right, and so it was put back on as a permanent feature. Small rakes are the claws, one bent backwards, protected, and one extended forward ready to dig into an ant mound. An 18-inch painted red tongue licks out, ready to devour the black ant, made out of one solid piece of three-quarter-inch steel forged on the anvil. The ant stands on a stainless steel disk to which its wire legs are glued.

The name, of course, comes from Graham Greene's *Travels With My Aunt*.

## *Cretaceous Gifts*

*74" h x 32" w*

This construction basically consists of a 20-gallon oil barrel and a 20-pound piece of water-eroded limestone from the Withlacoochee River in North Florida. It commemorates the fact that most of the earth's oil and limestone was formed during the Cretaceous period.

## *Earth on a Unicycle: The World Turned Upside Down*

*130" h x 18" w*

At 12 years of age, Justin Coleman had a small unicycle. Later, he designed and had built a ten-foot unicycle, one he had to climb a ladder to mount. When he rode the unicycle anywhere, he had to find a telephone pole to hug and slide down on, letting the unicycle fall to the ground. He rode this tall mechanism, wearing a top hat and a swallow-tail coat, in two or three Christmas parades in Valdosta, with a lot of other little unicycles circling around him, as Wilby says, "like fleas."

Then, when Justin discovered girls, the unicycle lay in the bushes, forgotten. Years later, Wilby converted it into a sculpture, turning it upside down and welding holding struts to the base to keep it upright.

An English martial tune from the 1600s is called, "The World Turned Upside Down." Wilby reasoned that if the world were turned upside down, the earth would be on the unicycle. Tradition has it that when Lord Cornwallis surrendered after the Siege of Yorktown in 1781, the British band played this tune.

## *Black Holes*

*87.5" h x 21" w*

In the late twentieth century, the big buzz was about the newly-discovered black holes in space. They were supposed to be at the center of every galaxy. The holes, according to the theory, suck up all energy and whatever else is around them. Even light cannot escape.

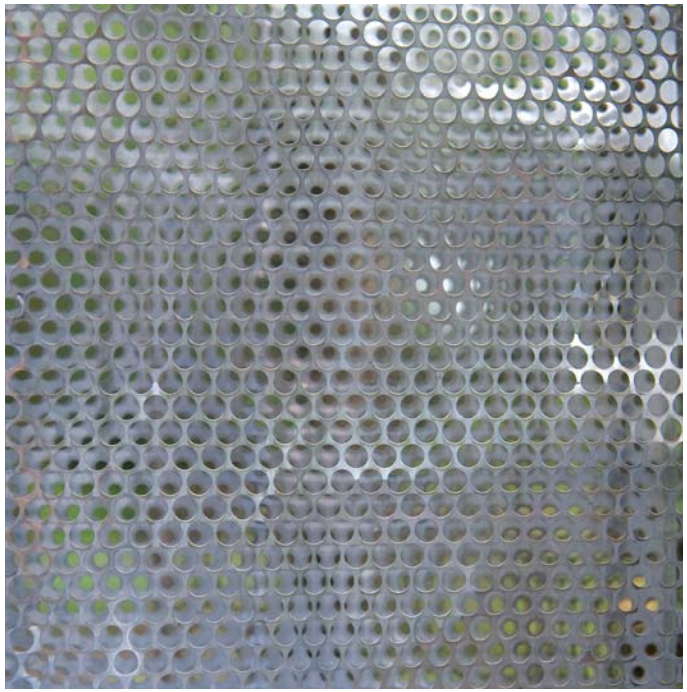
The different-sized tubes and pipes of random thickness were cut to form circles, welded together, and painted black. The sculpture stands over seven feet high on a rod, the small holes and larger holes suggesting holes within holes.

## *Rigamarole*

*117" h x 21" w*

Eight nine-foot-long swathes of perforated stainless steel material hang from a wheel, and a small fan blowing at its base causes this sculpture to turn silently, a tall, silver apparition.

Wilby guesses that the light, flexible sieve-like metal sheets might be some kind of straining equipment from a local paper mill but is unsure of their true use. The interior construction of the tube has one ball bearing set upon another, which accounts for the slow, noiseless revolutions, light flashing across the different, angled steel draperies.





Photograph contributed by Wilby Coleman

## *Wind in the Willows*

*103" h x 73" w*

With a title taken from the children's book of the same name, this sculpture aptly seems to represent both the wind and the tree.

The base is two cam shafts welded together and then welded to a heavy steel plate. Four quarter-inch mild steel rods, which can be bent with the hands, are turned and twisted into loops to form graceful shapes. At the top of the cam shaft, Wilby drilled a series of holes, and the rods are just placed into the holes, not welded, which allows them to be rotated by hand or by the wind.

When the wind blows, the rods all turn in one direction, easily giving the impression of the wind and tree branches blown to one side. Shadows behind the sculpture add to the wind and tree effect.

## *Wok Man*

*16" diameter wok*

Wilby crafted this sculpture from two large steel Chinese woks with handles. He drew on the eyes, eyebrows, nose, and mouth, and then cut them out with a plasma cutter. The Walkman earphones are plugs of steel with a headband going across the top of the head. The face strongly resembles the face of Leon Colvin, a Valdosta visual artist, who walks several miles a day, wearing a portable audio player, possibly a Walkman.

## *Two to Tango*

*Head 14" h x 14.5" w on 8.75" diameter disk With stand 77" h*

As these two stylized silhouette heads made from quarter-inch steel, one white, one black, turn together on a rotisserie motor, they symbolize that the races should work together for the benefit of all mankind. The piece was donated to the Colquitt County Arts Center in Moultrie, Georgia, through Jane Simpson, the Center's visual arts director.

## *Wise Old Owl*

*74" h x 20" w*

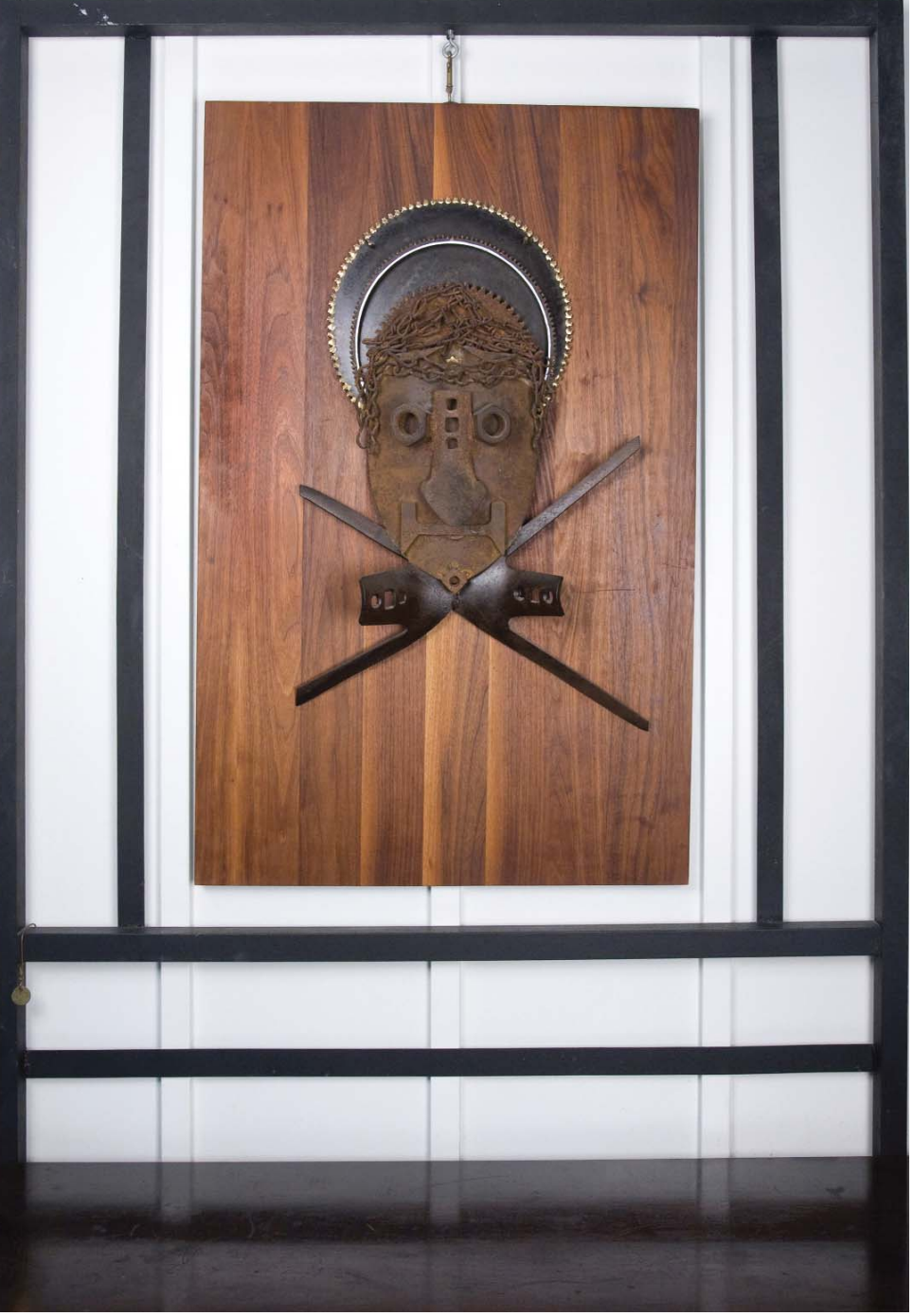
On one of their many travels, Wilby and Gloria saw a two-foot-tall figure made out of twigs on display in a glass case in a museum in Zurich. The figure was very simple. Later, it gave Wilby the idea of a simulation of a woman's torso in steel. Spiraling circles were breasts, and a V came at the joining of the legs–a very simple but obvious piece.

Wilby asked his three-year-old grandson, Christopher, if he knew what the sculpture was. He said, "Sure, a wise old owl," and that became the name of the piece.

At the Love Affair, an art festival in Tifton, Georgia, Wilby put the sculpture on display, and Gloria overheard an interesting exchange between two women in their thirties discussing the piece.

"Wise Old Owl?" one of the young women said, "I don't get it."

The other woman, after some hesitation, said, "I do! Hooters."



## *Lord of the Dance*

*Wooden panel with sculpture 40.75" h x 27.25" w*
*Stand 95" h x 51" w*

*They cut me down and I leapt up high;*
*for I am the life that'll never, never die;*
*I'll live in you if you'll live in me,*
*I am the Lord of the Dance, said he.*

lyrics by Sydney Carter
set to the tune of a Shaker hymn

This sculpture, made in 1988, was the first large piece Wilby ever attempted, and he says he didn't know how to weld very well and had Wayne Morris do part of the job for him.

The high-relief image, positioned on walnut plywood, has a halo made of a saw blade with the teeth braised (brass coated). The head is a shovel, the nose a plow scoop, the mouth a slice of an I-beam, and steel sweeps (plow points) make up the arms and legs.

The Valdosta Spring Arts Festival of 1990 was held outside, and Wilby needed some way to display this piece of art, something to hang it on. In one hour, he made the frame out of steel, painted it black, and carried it, still wet, down to the show, where the sculpture won a ribbon. The frame, a last-minute idea born out of necessity, adds considerably to the whole.

## *Orbit*

*83" h x 30" w*

*Orbit*, a sculpture almost seven feet tall, is made out of large throwaway stainless steel scraps that Wilby came across at Voight's Sheet Metal. Three of these circular scraps are welded together to form a mass. These disks are mig welded to a stainless steel, plasma-cut disk, which sits on top of the stainless steel column, also a throwaway, and the column sits on a toothed disk harrow blade.

To achieve the singular swirling effects of the interlocking orbits, Wilby ground the stainless-steel disks with a heavy sandpaper grinder, carving tiny swirling grooves that reflect light. The light causes *Orbit* to become three-dimensional and glow in reflection.



## *Zulu Uprising*

*80.5" h x 16" w*
*Blade 14" h*

In 1990, Wilby and Gloria went to an exhibit of African art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The show of authentic spears, swords, shields, bowls–all made for practical use–"was superb," Wilby said. "It just blew me away." Although he didn't see anything in the exhibit that he wanted to emulate, he came back with an idea.

Within two days after their return, he went to a hardware store and purchased a 30" long, five-eighths-inch-thick bolt, cut the head off, and forged (hammered out) a 14-inch-long sharp blade. The marks of the hammer divide the blade into two sides with a rise in the middle and give it a somewhat shiny appearance, very much like a spear that a Zulu warrior might have carried in the past.

Wilby squared the area below the blade, locked it in a vise, and with a crescent wrench twisted the squared end into a loose cold twist. He then heated the inch of steel immediately below the first twist and did a tight hot twist. He welded six square quarter-inch rods to the flat planes of a nut into which the new blade was screwed. The lower ends of the square rods were fixed into a larger nut welded on a round plate by pouring in molten lead.

The red shield at the bottom completes the Zulu reference.

## *Daddy Sang Bass . . . Mama Sang Tenor*

*31" h x 23" w*

This sculpture came about from experimentation with several pieces of metal: a black pump head with a hole in the front and the back, a red fire extinguisher tank, and a large red adjustable clamp with the screwing mechanism still intact. Wilby, familiar with the song's lines, "Daddy sang bass, Mama sang tenor/Me and little brother would join right in there," saw that in placing the pump head atop the fire extinguisher Daddy's mouth was placed low and round, perfect for Daddy's double-bass voice.

Turning the pump head by the arms of the clamp, the viewer sees that Mama's mouth is higher, also perfect for showing the higher tenor voice. Lines of weld material applied with a mig welder make Daddy's and Mama's arched eyebrows, and bolts with wing nuts make a lacy collar for Mama.

The head of a carriage bolt makes a nose for Daddy and peened washers make the eyes. The attached clamp simulates arms with hands clasped in the rear for Daddy and demurely in front for Mama. The double-bodied fire extinguisher is mounted on a lazy susan attached to the sculpture stand so that it can be turned to show Daddy singing bass and Mama singing tenor.


Photograph contributed by Lindsay Brice

Photograph contributed by Lindsay Brice

On June 13, 2006, Wilby Coleman became legally blind as a result of macular degeneration. His workshop is closed.

A dragonfly on a wing of *Dragonfly*

This book contains photographs and descriptions of 127 of Wilby Coleman's sculptures, as selected by Gloria and Wilby Coleman from the total body of his work. Photographs of an additional 109 sculptures by Coleman, as well as copies of all of the photographs of the sculptures in this book, are included on an accompanying DVD. This index includes a page number for the works that are in the book and a "DVD" designation for those solely on the disc. The DVD contains a text file with instructions for its use.

## *Alphabetical Index of The Metal Sculpture of Wilby Coleman*

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Photograph from the Coleman family collection

The Harlequin Ball

Seven o'clock in the evening
GWINNETT FINE ARTS CENTER
6400 Sugarloaf Parkway
Duluth, Georgia

*You are invited to dress as your favorite Twentieth Century personality, International attire or Black Tie*

Wilby Coleman was invited to exhibit selected works at the Gwinnett Fine Arts Center as part of a show entitled "Marking the Modern Era" which featured a book illustrated by Joan Miró; a ceramic pitcher by Pablo Picasso; prints by Kandinsky, Lichtenstein, Leger and Rauschenburg; portraits by Alice Neel; paintings by Ford Crull and Salvadore Dali; a silkscreen by Andy Warhol; a woodcut by Kirchner; sculpture by Wilby Coleman; and folk art by Howard Finster. The show's opening was celebrated by an International Patrons' Gala, The Harlequin Ball. Patrons were advised to wear International attire, Black Tie or come dressed as their favorite Twentieth Century personality. Lucy Elliott mentioned that a number of people were planning to come dressed as their favorite artist.

Twenty-three friends and relatives of the Colemans from Valdosta, Atlanta, and its environs attended, each wearing blue jeans, a shirt emblazoned with 1691, half-glasses, and a paste-on grey mustache. The group was asked to pose for a newspaper photograph for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Afterwards, the reporter asked the real Wilby Coleman to step forward. All 25 "Wilbys" stepped forward.

Photograph contributed by Lindsay Brice

**Wilby and Gloria Coleman**

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