

Peter Gourfain: Clay, Wood, Bronze, and Works on Paper

Chazen Museum of Art



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Peter Gourfain emerged on the New York art scene in the 1960s showing minimalist sculpture. Since the 1980s his work has become figurative, expressionist, personal, and socially engaged. Many of Gourfain's terracotta reliefs, large-scale urns, cast bronzes, woodcarvings, prints, and paintings deliver specific messages about political and social issues, often of universal importance. Gourfain's carved homage to Michael Stewart, an African American art student from Brooklyn who died from a beating, allegedly by eleven NYPD officers, presents a tragic story with an important message.

A chronicler of our times, Gourfain portrays the human struggle and makes vivid comment on social injustice in America. His 1994 large-scale bronze sculpture "Powerful Days" features images from milestones in African American history. His dramatic narratives also often weave in themes and songs from the work of James Joyce, exemplified by the 1990 woodblock print "Finnegan's Wake."

Trained at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Gourfain has exhibited his work at the Brooklyn Museum, Guggenheim Museum, Museum of Modern Art, and the Jewish Museum in New York, among others. The Elvehjem (now Chazen) Museum's exhibition is the first major showing of Gourfain's work since a presentation at the Brooklyn Museum in 1987.

Distributed for the Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison

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