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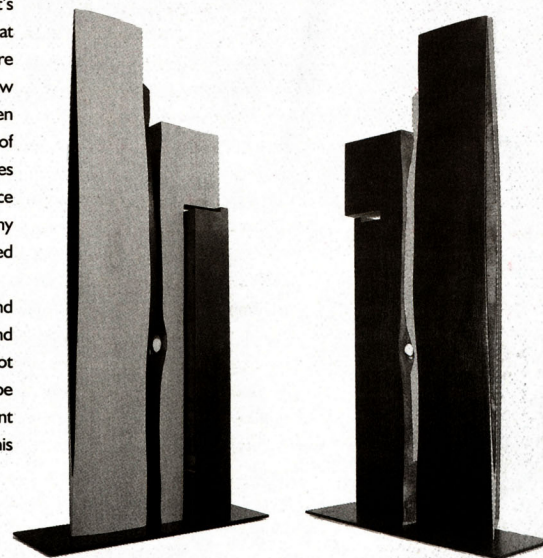
PASCAL: SOLUBLE DANS L'AIR

SEVEN-0-SEVEN CONTEMPORARY
707 CANYON ROAD, SANTA FE

Extrapolating from the English translation of the title of this show of wooden sculptures, "Soluble in the air," it seems reasonable to wonder about the seeming reference to the dissolving properties of wood. And not just any wood, mind you, but the artist's most favored one, mahogany, which, more than any other wood, carries such grand and formal, almost monolithic, connotations. Pascal, the French sculptor who has lived in Santa Fe since 1997, has created a body of work that yields unexpected revelations. Some of them, like *Future Sphere 1*, are contemplative sculptures that invite psychological introspection. Elegant, yet strong and vital, it gives out something of the power and energy of great trees. Other sculptures, like many of the pieces attached to the wall surfaces, such as *Les Origines 35*, reflect the artist's great facility for creating pleasing, geometric compositions. There are subtle variations in the repetitions of form that keep these masterfully executed pieces from slipping into a variety of corporate slickness. In addition, wherever there is an underbelly in Pascal's sculptures, wherever the wood has been sliced open, there is evidence of a brand new texture that doesn't look like wood at all. To achieve these varied, seductive patinas—speckled, rusted, blue, and even with small, tasteful, surprise bursts of vermillion—the artist covers the wood surface with one, two, or three coats of a mixture composed of liquid and metal powder (iron, copper, bronze). Next there is a drying phase before he applies acid to achieve an oxidized surface. In some cases he will cover the rusty surfaces with paste wax, giving the surface the look of leather, as with the central "stalk" of *CO*, a mixed-media piece that has the slippery look of being many things: an object of the Orient, or maybe a sage green fan swirled open to its maximum circumference, the basic ridged material being of a substance we can't quite pin down (it too is wood).

So—solid objects of beauty, three roomfuls of them to be precise, all solidly present and accounted for, and not about to change their forms. What is soluble is one's changing reaction to the pieces, many of which demand an individual and intimate encounter: *Porte of Intimacy 2* is one such piece. Made of mahogany, side-by-side but not touching, the tall, rectangular shapes suggest the tentative nature of approaching "the other." The other could be anything from lover to object to mere thought. There is a small round bit of white holly that marks the pivotal point of meeting, or exchange: Yet one more example of the artist's judicious experimenting and ongoing dialogue with his beloved medium.

RINCHEN LHAMO



Pascal, *Porte of Intimacy 2*, mahogany, 36" x 20" x 20", 2006