

Art

Sculptor tests the limits — and succeeds

By Alan G. Artner

Art critic

Frances Whitehead's new sculptures, at the Dart Gallery, 750 N. Orleans St., have allusive forms that grew from questioning the capabilities of materials.

How would copper look if grafted onto rubber? Whitehead's unusual answer is: like a tarnished mark on a manuscript or, more specifically, a single Oriental character.

How would shellac look if poured over wire? Transparent and golden, like a funnel coated by honey.

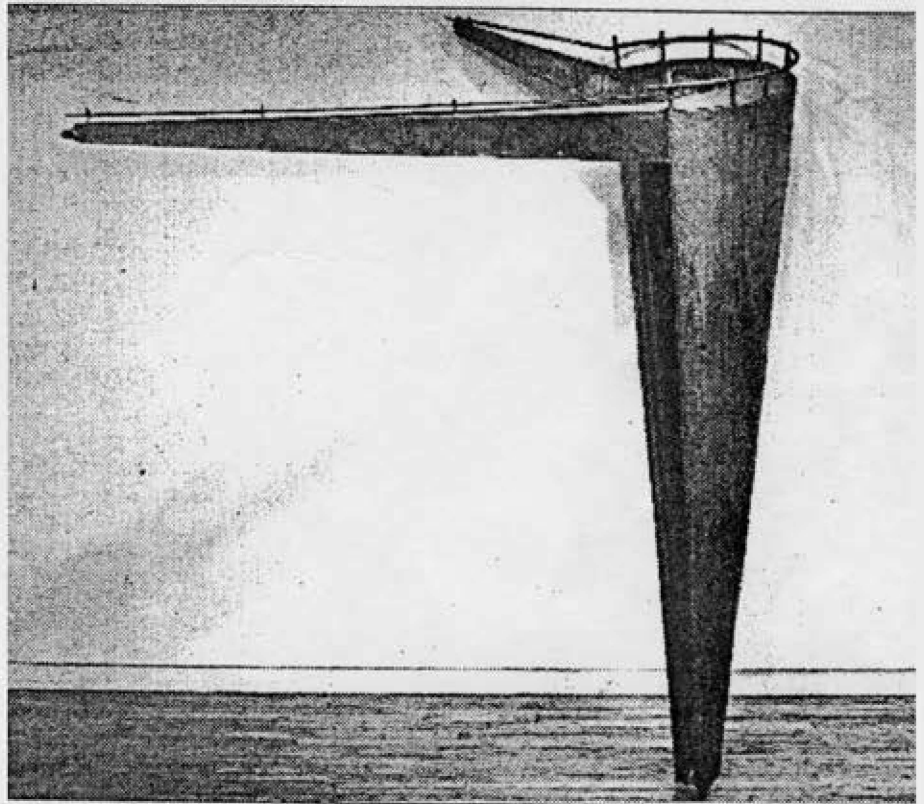
Her large-scale pieces come, then, from poeticizing materials pushed to their limits.

But lest we think the process too airy, she often refers to chemistry, suggesting her sculptures have the rigor of science.

In some of her drawings Whitehead is rigorous, indeed, working with the material whose symbol she has used as a motif. In others, she is more straightforward, showing the influence of cartography.

Whichever, the results are offbeat, impressive, clearly inspired.

Showing with Whitehead is Donald McFayden, whose small panel paintings have gone back to old movies, crisply recreating a *film noir* atmosphere by combining several atmospheric "shots" in seamless progression. (Through September.)



"alembic II," by Frances Whitehead at Dart Gallery.