

**GREG REUTER**



**FOR THE RECORD**



Sentry 2013 72" x 44" x 28"  
Front Cover: Beach Ball 2009 13" (diameter)

# GREG REUTER FOR THE RECORD

Art Museum of South Texas  
July 14 - September 29, 2013



Sand Yacht 2013 23" x 24" x 12"



Affiliated with Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

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Tree of Knowledge 2010 72" x 20" x 8"

## INTRODUCTION

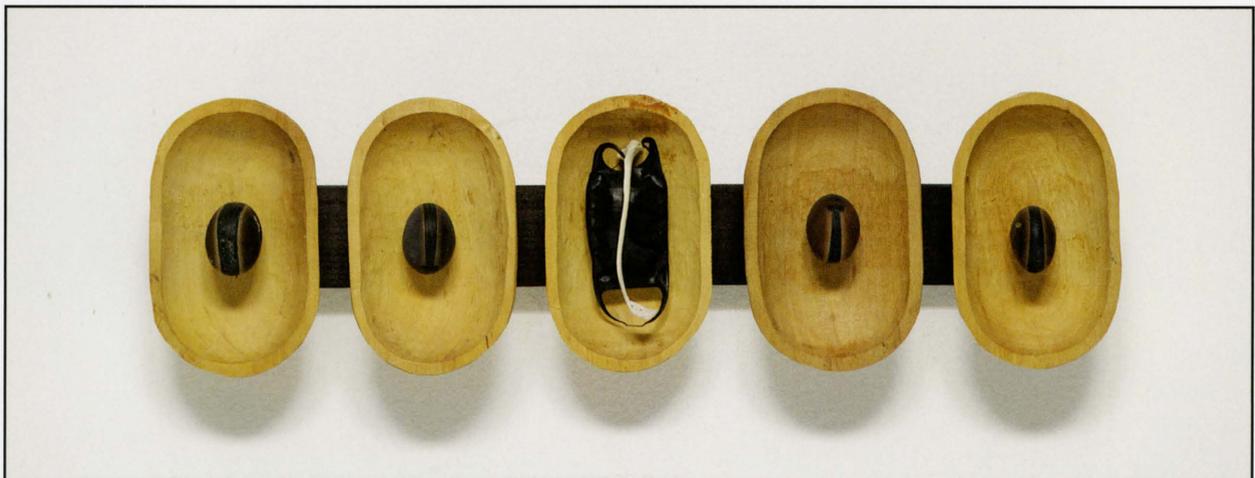
Greg Reuter has worked as a sculptor for over 40 years. He finds that making sculpture from lasting materials allows him to leave objects of art that record this time and place. In talking about what art does and what artists do, he reminds us that art is a visual record. For his record that he captures in bronze and assembled media, the artist selects conditions from the beach and his surroundings, which exemplify nature's evolution, fragility, and resourcefulness. The ephemeral gesture of impressions in sand and the lasting strength of bronze make this art so encapsulating.

As a professor of art, Reuter nurtures the seeds of ideas in others. For over 35 years he has helped students realize these ideas through the instruction of technique, presentation, and the elements of design. In 2010 Reuter applied for and received faculty development leave from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, which allowed him the time to focus on the specific project he laid out in his application. Works resulting from this project make up this show. The environment he lives in and his movements through these surroundings become a point of preoccupation for Reuter. A leaf from the plant that he and his wife brought home from their honeymoon grew to later become a subject for a casting in bronze. The memory, the placement, and the focus on the inanimate and the animate present themselves in situations that give the artist pause.

Viewing these textured and modeled surfaces, we begin seeing anew the science of nature through artful representation isolated and discovered. This artist operates with metaphorical acuity in the mixed media installation of *Grounded*, 2013. The cast iron bench-like form provides a place of rest and examination, while serving as a record of the path taken on a walk. The placement in the gallery, the function of the materials, and the artist's intent allow for various interpretations. With a generosity of spirit the work serves as a metaphor for finding harbor and "tying-off" where one may find a grounded place in space and time.

It is with admiration and appreciation that I say thank you to the artist, for what he sees, what he communicates with his thoughts and materials, and how he transforms the temporary into the enduring. On behalf of the art museum, I thank Reuter's family - Bibi, Clay and Camille - for all their time and assistance with many details and preparations, as well as Julie Buckley, Phyllis and George Finley, Robin and John Kennedy, and Verna Stone of The Foundation Circle for their support of this exhibition.

Deborah Fullerton Dunn, Curator  
Art Museum of South Texas



Bean Bone Shark 2013 4" x 14" x 2"



Shriveled Fruit 2011 27" x 13" x 6"

## GREG REUTER: *FOR THE RECORD*

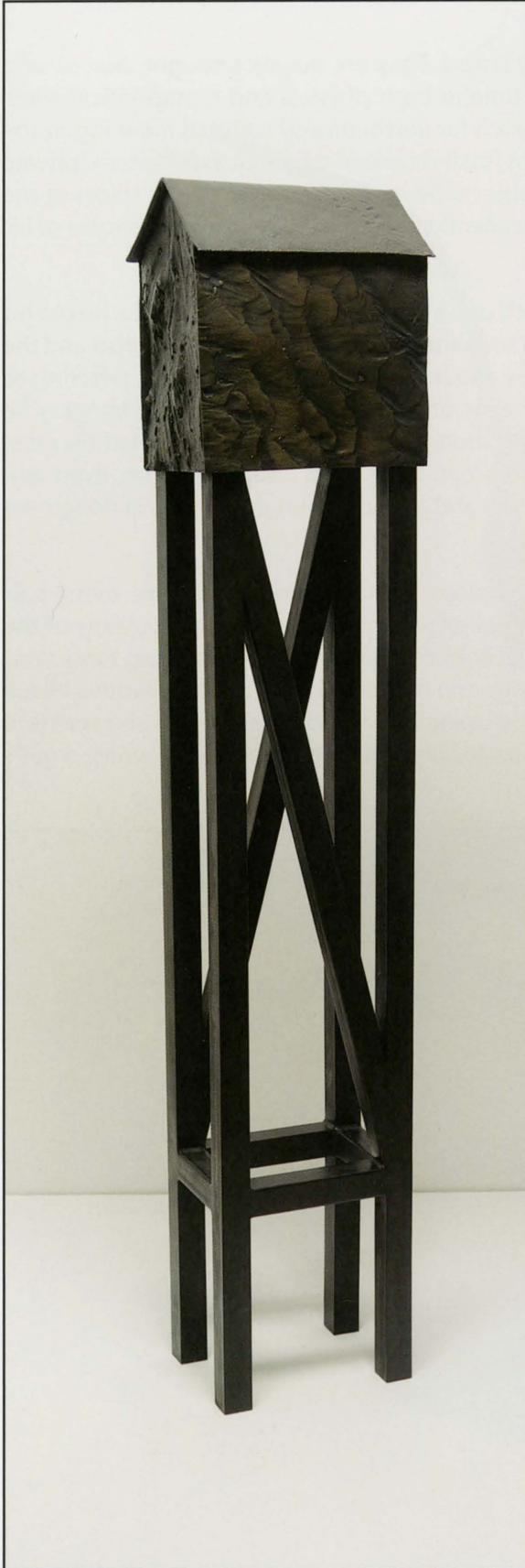
Observation, experience, and knowledge are intimately linked. They are qualities sought, honed, and refined by scientists and mystics alike, bound up with time in both physical and metaphorical ways. Greg Reuter is neither scientist nor mystic, but in his search for aesthetic and spiritual meaning in the world, he's employed the tools of both to create his own fossil record of personal experiences, private observations and shared knowledge, all rooted in the objects he makes from ephemeral traces in the sand or detritus borne on ocean currents, deposited for collection and observation on the shores of his artistic practice.

The beach and the ocean are never far from Reuter's reach or his identity. Raised in California, he did his graduate work in Hawai'i and has spent the past 35 years roaming the beaches of Corpus Christi and the Texas Gulf Coast. "I always have to have the water on my shoulder," he remarked recently, referring to his creative process and his preoccupation with the shoreline environment as much as the imagery he captures in the body of work featured in the present exhibition. The suggestion is that he's at his most focused on the beach, and perhaps that the press of the ocean at his back drives the work, even as it facilitates and nurtures both the ecosystem Reuter revels in and the spirit that drives him to document and decipher it.

It would be a vast oversimplification to say that Reuter employs coastal imagery, or marine themes, or even that he makes art from stuff he finds on the beach – all of which is more or less true. Many of the works presented in this exhibition are comprised of objects or traces found on beachcombing excursions over the years. The assemblage works, for example, literally and figuratively encapsulate various beach finds in a glossy, formalized matrix. By isolating them, or grouping them in various ways, Reuter seems to consider the physical history, meaning, and aesthetic potential of each object, pondering where a gull's



Great Blue Heron 2013 2" x 21" x 14"



Beach House on Stilts 2010 60" x 9" x 12"

feet might have wandered, where and why a crab lost its shell, or the geometric complexity of a cluster of barnacles. The formal isolation of a weathered ceramic disk brings into focus its physical beauty, as well as the mystery of its practical function and the conditions of its abandonment: was it intentionally discarded, or accidentally lost, and under what circumstances did it find its way to this particular shore?

Reuter's man-made fossil record is here dominated by thin slabs of cast bronze, taken from plaster casts made directly on the beach. Sometimes presented on their own as wall-mounted plaques or flat plates on a pedestal, Reuter also uses these casts to fabricate composite sculptural forms, often altering the molds to conform to a curve or bend needed for the new shape. Reuter has noted that these thin sheets are like skin peeled from the beach, a physical remnant of a particular spot and history, a hand-made fossil of events that would otherwise go unrecorded. Whether capturing animal tracks or rain patterns in the sand, casting complete crab burrows below ground, immortalizing found fish remains, or meticulously recreating the peculiarly evocative form and texture of tree bark, Reuter captures the physical reality of his subjects without sacrificing the poetic, spiritual, or ecological implications. To this end, he's not averse to manipulating his subjects in the studio, as is the case with *Ruby Throated*, *Turtle Landscape*, or *Peril*.

The human intervention and perspective in all of these works is key. The obviously man-made arrangement of *Bean Bone Shark* references the impulse to collect, identify, formalize, and aestheticize our daily finds. *Crustacean* shows a similar impulse, indulging the tendency to anthropomorphize with a bit of humor. The eye-like barnacle on the claw of a crab immediately imbues the grasping anatomical structure with the character of a goofy wide-eyed smile, tucked neatly into an amorphous plaster body clothed in a metal sack, itself a remnant of someone else's casting project, challenging our assumptions about material and intent. The exquisite elegance and refined technique

of bronze works like *Beach Ball* and *Sand Box* contrast with their commonplace titles, evoking both the simplistic charm of mundane human pastimes and the power of elemental form, the physical beauty of the tracks captured in the casts, and the character of the metal itself.

One of the most recent works in the show, *Sentry*, features an unaltered buoy with a large, generic, hand-carved Styrofoam bird form perched on top. The work suggests the peculiar symbiosis that exists between the natural and the man-made environment, and Reuter's willing appropriation of both. Despite the difference in material and form, this work is allied to the bronze pieces in that they all involve the chance find, and the manipulation of what is found to enhance the meaning of any particular mark, object, or assemblage through the artist's careful observation, editing, and emphasis of various elements. Tracks in the sand, whether made by a deer, a crab, the tide, a tire tread, or the artist himself, all attest to activities, actions, and experiences that take place on the beach at any given time and place. Reuter's assiduous editing in selecting the parcel of beach to document, and the considerable effort he takes in getting a good plaster cast to be made later into bronze, are all part of the aesthetic, intellectual, and spiritual process that make the physical process meaningful. He combs the sand with a tracker's eye, reading the signs and looking for the remnants of an encounter or sequence of events with poetic and formal potential, such as the peculiar chaos of *Sandpipers Dance*, or the isolated clarity of a single pair of footprints in *Great Blue Heron*.

As with any record, time is an important element in this body of work. In one series, Reuter documented a specific place at various times of year. Because the casting process allows for repeated versions of the same mold, Reuter sometimes creates a sort of abstract, implied narrative by juxtaposing different plates in the various faces of the objects he fabricates, as in *Assume* or *Beach House*. When these surfaces are used as the subject for the frottage works, notions of remembrance come into play, a nostalgic memento from a fleeting



Oak 2010 82" x 12" x 12"



Beach Seed 2013 8" x 15" x 15"

event preserved for future reference or reverence. The image captured in hard metal becomes soft and velvety again when rendered in graphite, more akin to the water and sand environment of the original tableau.

Reuter's use of objects and imagery found along the shoreline is compelling, but to focus solely on beach ephemera would give an incomplete picture of a rich, deep body of work that has been decades in the making. Plant forms make their appearance in Reuter's visual lexicon as well, sometimes in the straightforward elemental guise of works like *Trine* or *Hackberry Scar*, and other times in a more overtly complex formal/metaphorical mode, as in *Oak*. Reuter's ongoing series of plaster seed forms evoke some sort of primordial, fierce fecundity tinged with a strange, compelling beauty. *Carved Seed* suggests some exotic, hard-shelled nut capable of traversing time and ocean currents before a tenacious seedling slowly works its way to the surface. The slightly menacing protrusions emerging from the lovely, delicately shaded "fruit" in *Origin* and *Liquid Act* expose the dual nature of survival. *Beach Seed* reveals an ambiguous distinction between animal and vegetable, like some strange anemone fossilized in an ancient seabed or the lush undergrowth of a primordial forest. These fanciful, invented relics are Reuter's meditations on natural form, on processes that go way beyond human intervention, and survival mechanisms that exist from time immemorial.

The concept of knowledge looms large in Reuter's work, encompassing our feeble attempts to attain it, the spiritual and physical risks involved in seeking it, and the often ephemeral nature of thinking we've found it. Works like *Chrysalis* and, more blatantly, *Tree of Knowledge*, are pregnant with potential meaning, suggesting a fundamental, spiritual, maybe even inborn possession of conscious awareness waiting to be realized. Yet our capacity to misread or disregard such gifts is also addressed in works like

*Shriveled Fruit*, which suggests the dangers of both seeking and ignoring knowledge, or the fleeting sense that we ever really had it in the first place.

Like the wall-mounted crab burrows reaching out into space, these works suggest something deeper below the surface, something that requires a bit of faith to delve into, and a sacrifice of sorts: a laying bare of one's own convictions. In the case of the crab burrows, the possibility of the inhabiting crab becoming enveloped by the plaster presents a moral dilemma for the artist. In a more metaphorical way, *Tree of Knowledge* suggests the slow gestation of experience, the burgeoning possibilities of consciousness, and the burdens and risks that truth sometimes entails.

Ultimately, *For the Record* presents a coherent physical overview of the body of work that has occupied Reuter for the past several years, and conceptual ideas that have characterized his work from the beginning. Individually, Reuter's works are compelling, intimate observations rendered in bronze, iron, plaster, and graphite. Cumulatively, they reveal the long-term project of observing, documenting, and reflecting on the actions, events, patterns, and accidents that occur around us, with or without our knowledge. Reuter's attention is focused on these things, and in making them concrete he raises our awareness of both the physical remnants and their metaphorical, perhaps even mystical, implications. The record he presents in this exhibition is at once deeply personal and timelessly universal, a man-made geological record of ephemeral conditions, a document of the profound power of poetic observation.

Diana Lyn Roberts



Top: Carved Seed 2013 4" x 5" x 4"  
Center: Liquid Act 2013 3" x 6" x 4"  
Bottom: Crustacean 2013 6" x 3" x 1"



Front Yard Find 2013 7" x 7" x 2"



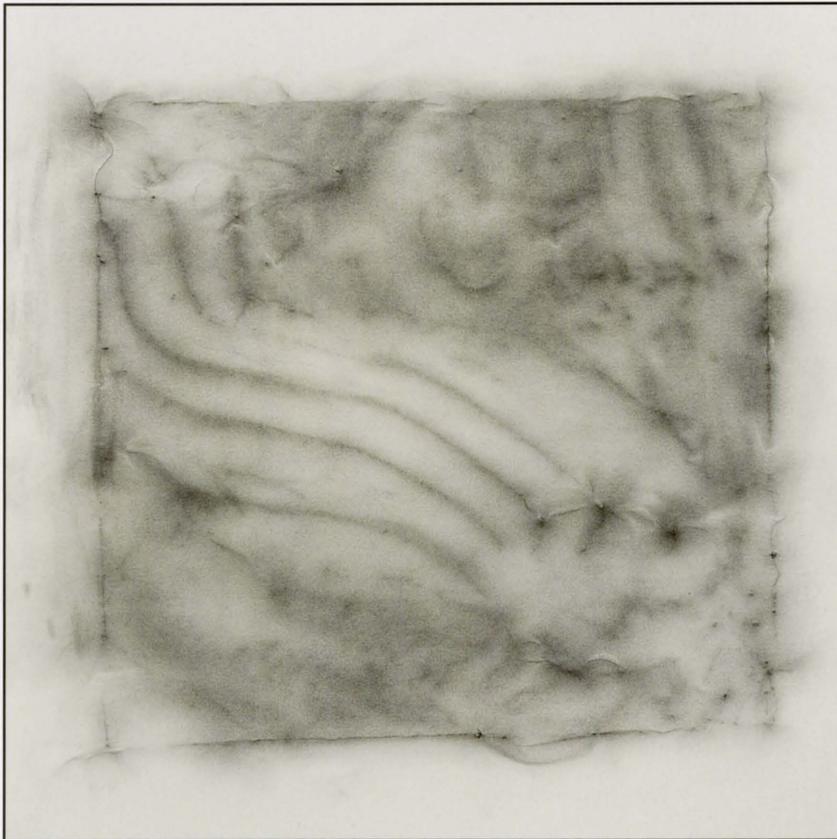
Buoyant 2013 5" x 5" x 2"



Blue Blood 2005 20" x 9" x 3"



Top: Ruby Throated 2013 6" x 8"  
Bottom: Sandpiper Dance 2013 8" x 11"



Top: Signature 2002 12" x 12"

Bottom: Frottage 2003 12" x 12"

## STATEMENT FROM THE ARTIST

I am captivated by the story of Van Gogh walking through fields of sunflowers selecting the composition for his painting. I have searched for a way to recreate that experience, and I eventually discovered my own method for creating sculpture in nature.

For the past 20 years, the beaches of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf of Mexico have served as my open air studio. I venture to the beach in search of nature's offerings; I collect washed up objects and compose sections of sand. Then I preserve these selected surfaces through plaster casts that serve as molds for waxes. The final products of these selections are bronze casts and frottages. These works are then combined to form objects that reference the animal and human presence in nature.

As I began observing the surface of the beach and the surrounding natural landscape with an artist's editorial eye, I became intimately aware of the endless variety of patterns and textures in the sand. I discovered that these unique textures are created by various natural forces like tides, wind, rain, sun, vegetation, wildlife, and other artificial forces such as shoes, tires, and refuse. These forces leave ephemeral traces in sand that create areas of sublime beauty; it is up to us to notice them.

I intend my sculpture to record the present language of the natural world in the permanent medium of bronze and communicate it through the lasting language of art.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank people who made this project possible. To my family, Bibi Dalrymple and Clay and Camille Reuter, for their support and patience with my obsession and all the disruption that goes along with creating a show. Thanks as well to Joseph Schenk, Deborah Fullerton Dunn, and David Hill of AMST, and to Lynda Jones and the rest of the AMST exhibition committee for their commitment to this exhibition. Thank you to two of the best foundry men in Texas and true collaborators, Ken King and Donnie Keen. My appreciation also goes to Gale B. English and Shelia Rogers for their support of this catalog. I am indebted to Danville Chadbourne, and recognize that without his encouragement and insistence, this catalog would not exist. To Conan Chadbourne, whose expertise, persistence, and endurance helped me through this project. In 1999 Diana Roberts and Danville Chadbourne visited my studio and asked me to show at the Center for Spirituality and the Arts in San Antonio. This was the beginning of a friendship both professional and personal that made a positive and significant change in my artistic career. It is a rare opportunity to have insightful conversations about my work and I thank them for that. And finally thank you, Diana, for a beautiful and thoughtful essay.



S. S. Kemp's Ridley 2013 3" x 4" x 2"

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Chrysalis 2013 19" x 5" x 5"

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