

Jocelyn Philibert Extraterra
JOHN K. GRANDE

With a sense of how ludicrous the extent to which science and technology have come to inhabit our interpretation of the phenomena of the world that surrounds us, Jocelyn Philibert has recently been busy building ironies. The latest forms are telescopes but they are totally false, mere semblances of the real thing. They actually look like strange agglomerations and juxtapositions of cardboard boxes, all held together with Dollar store tape.

What one sees when looking into these "telescopes" is what looks like stars in a night sky. The images we see of night sky, sometimes with a black hole in the centre, are entirely fictitious and illusionary. The intent of the artist, I believe, is to redirect our interest to the immediate and three dimensional physical world that surrounds us. These works become a comment on quasi-scientism and the degree to which science has invaded the folklore of today's world. Indeed, science has replaced human intuition and even more structured social orders such as religion in daily life.

This same sense of the tactile world can be seen in the poured fast drying cement sculptures and, more recently Hydrocal works Philibert has made. The aesthetic look of these sculptures is ambiguous, and one is never sure what one is looking at. The variation in form and physical surface of each of these small scale freestanding pieces is intriguing. It spurs us on to imagine and think creatively. The effect is cathartic as when looking into a fire. Philibert refers to these concrete works as extra-terrestrial, yet ironically they are made by a process of pouring cement into something very land-based - the earth in his garden. The chaos of nature is unleashed in varying forms and varies greatly. The general feeling one has is of finding a found object from some foreign or ancient civilization. Even the natural aesthetic of these works remains an unanswered question. Who made them? For what reason?

More than anything Jocelyn Philibert's recent investigations and explorations encourage us to see art as a vehicle for better understanding ourselves and the world we live in. Art in this sense becomes a kind of instant anthropology where the culture we are investigating, though it looks extra-terrestrial, is actually our own.

June 2003