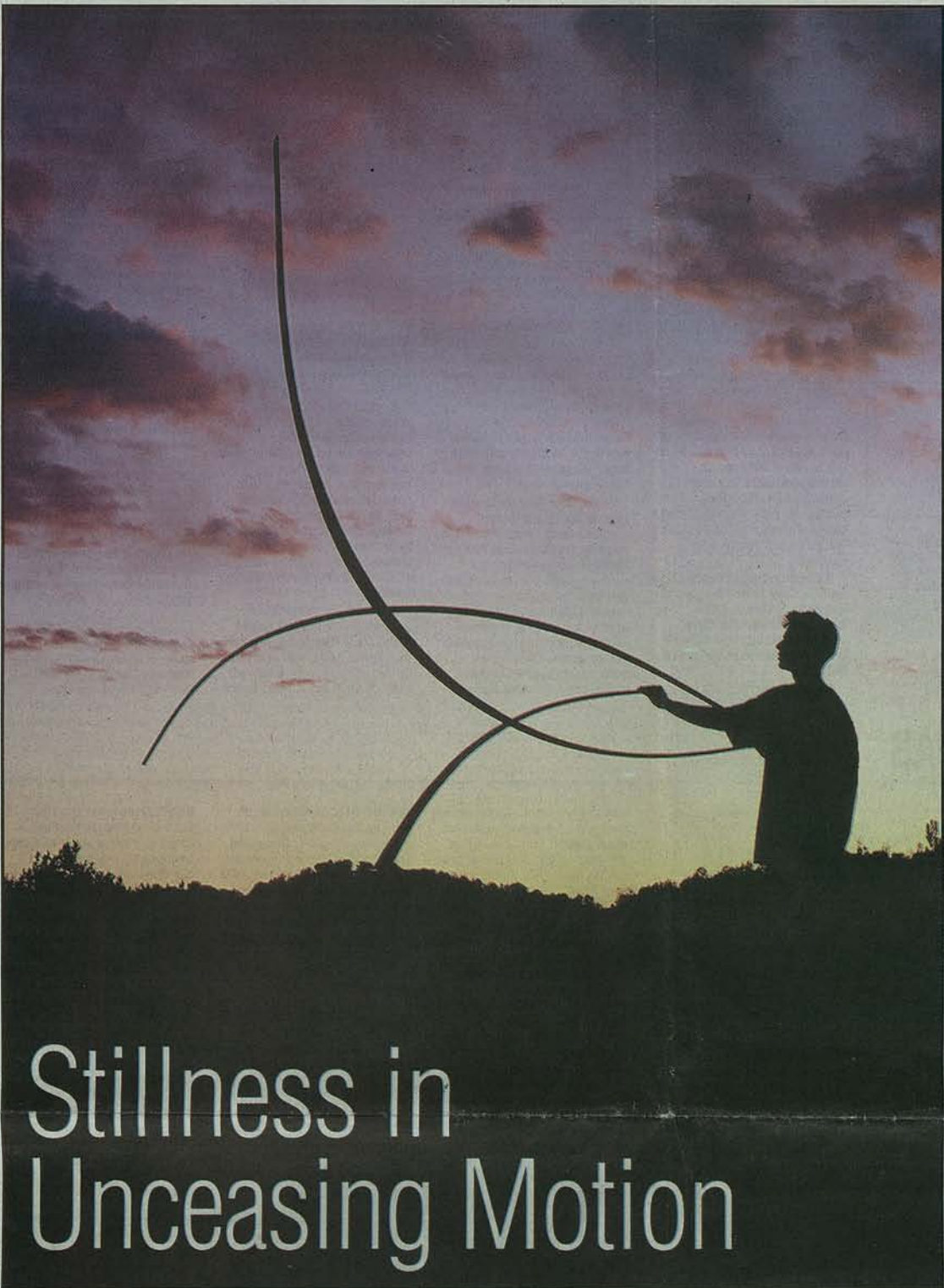


Send gallery notices or
arts briefs to Arts,
Journal North, 328
Galisteo St., Santa Fe,
N.M. 87501.

The Arts

VENU



Stillness in Unceasing Motion

Artist Will Clift forms strips of wood into carefully balanced sculptures.

Will Clift's sculptures are perfectly executed to keep their balance and maintain their beauty

BY MICHAEL MORE

For the Journal

How can they stand up?
How can they be so alive?
Spontaneous questions arise when people first set eyes on Will Clift's sculptures, each animated by its own soaring life.

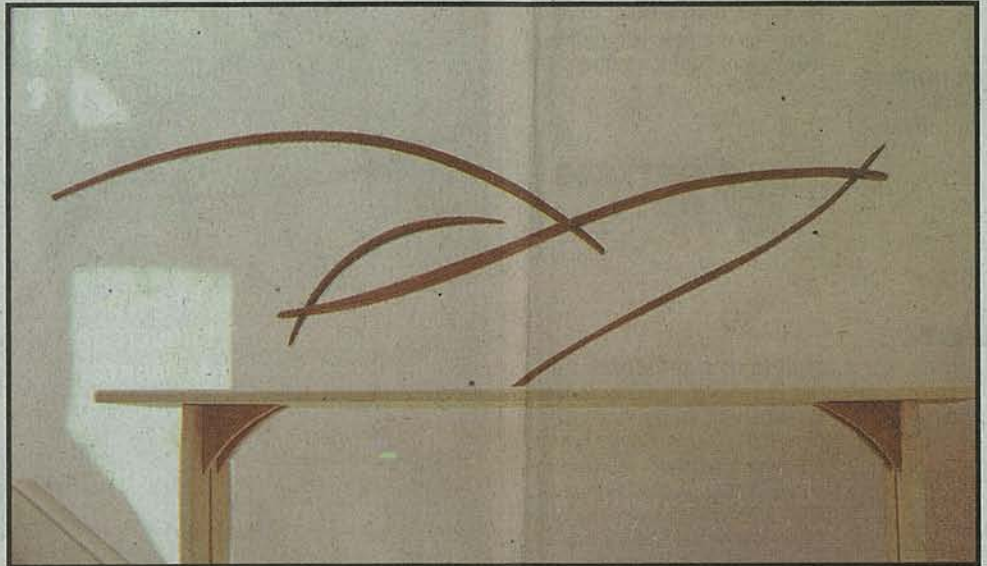
That they balance seems miraculous. You suspect there must be some trick. This short piece could never support that long one. Nails or glue or screws or hinges must be hidden in there somewhere to keep these sculptures stable. Your eye persuades your brain that without elaborate blueprints (more likely expensive software) and days of trial and error, these pieces could not fly.

Your eye is all wrong. There are no tricks — no pedestals, plinths, nails, screws, glue — and no plans or software. Clift starts with a simple sketch — a few lines on a napkin will do. He tacks the sketch on the wall and looks at it, sometimes for months, adding or changing a line now and then.

Then he fashions elongated curves of wood, which he tapers into sinuous forms that could pass for sculptures in themselves. He joins them by inserting one into another through carefully chiseled slits.

"There are amazing moments when everything simply comes together," Clift says. "This can happen when I stand back and see a sculpture standing intact for the first time. But it is also true when it is still just lines on a piece of paper. Suddenly, occasionally even by mistake, the final element is drawn, the parts become a whole, and it becomes a distinct reality in my mind."

Clift assembled his first sculptures at the age of four, when he started gluing together blocks of wood scattered by construction workers building his parents' house. He sold his first sculpture when he was 12. By 18, he was designing and building furniture on commission. But he soon left furniture design behind in favor of sculpture, which permitted



Will Clift's sculptures stand on their own, without nails, screws or glue.

If you go

WHAT: Sculpture by Will Clift

WHEN: Opening reception 5-7 p.m. today; show continues through Nov. 8

WHERE: Photo-Eye Gallery, 370 Garcia St., 988-5159.

Hours are 1-5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. This weekend only, the gallery will be open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

him more freedom to push the limits of stability and structure.

Timothy Anglin Burgard, the Curator of American Art at the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, says Clift's sculptures "walk a fine line, exploring and refining the boundary between three-dimensional sculpture and two-dimensional drawing.

"Their intersecting and tapering lines, like branches blown by the wind, animate the surrounding space and make manifest the motion that is everywhere present," he said.

Clift resists influence. He has never taken a

sculpture or woodworking course. He graduated from Stanford last spring, picking up both a bachelor's and master's degree in five years.

He is now working on several large-scale commissions. A 9-foot-by-9-foot wooden model for a bronze about to be cast is on display at Photo-Eye Gallery. Gallery director Wendy Lewis reports that when the piece was being assembled on the Gallery's patio, no one was sure it would stand.

"Will slid the pieces together in seconds," she recalls. "It balanced perfectly."