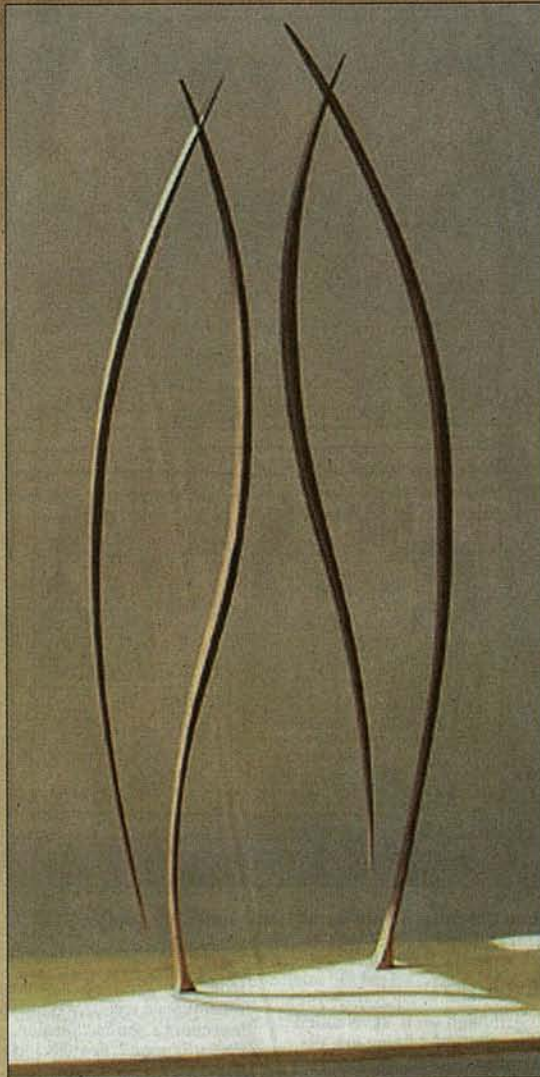


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328 Galisteo St.,
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Gallery Guide

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2006 S4



Will Clift's "Two Standing Pairs," 2006, is made of mahogany. The sculpture is part of the exhibition "Will Clift: Gesture in Balance," opening today at Gerald Peters Gallery.

graceful gestures

Sculptures made of thin, curved pieces of wood have magical quality

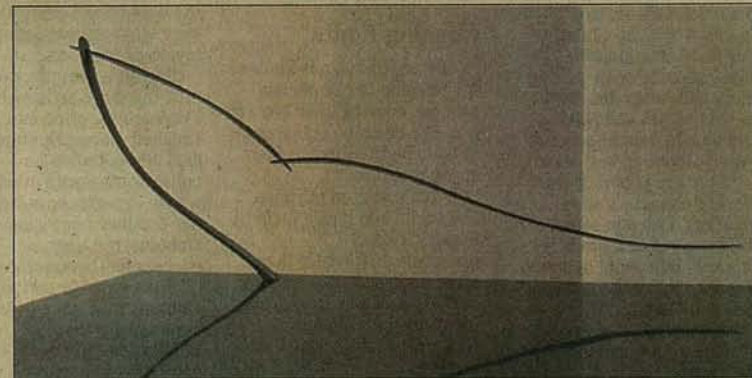
BY DOTTIE INDYKE
For the Journal

Will Clift's sculptures have a magical air. Made of thin slats of curved wood, assembled without permanent adhesion of any kind, they wend their way into horizontal and vertical space. That they seem in no danger of falling is part of their marvelousness; yet, in the catch of breath they evoke from viewers, they resemble houses of cards at the moment before collapse.

Of course, they are more than feats of ingenious engineering. The delicate line drawings in mahogany, black walnut and teak create forms often compared with Asian calligraphy. It is as if Clift has invented his own spare language of symbols to represent water, trees and clouds, painted them in quick, graceful strokes of black ink and then rendered them in three dimensions.

Since 2003, when he completed his master's degree, Clift has been moving toward his now full-time life as a sculptor. But his roots date back to the early 1980s. At age 4, he was gluing and stacking wood scraps. At 6 or 7, he was using a saw to cut out forms. By 10, he was selling wood animals at the Palace of the Governors shop and, in his teens, he was designing and building furniture.

In his senior year of high school, a physics teacher gave him an exercise to



Will Clift's "Three Pieces Reaching," 2006, is made of thin slats of curved wood with no permanent adhesion.

bring balanced objects that didn't seem able to balance. The morning before class, Clift hastily connected three pieces of wood with two chiseled holes.

This crude construction, which he describes today as "probably the quickest sculpture I've ever done," planted the seeds of the idea he has been perfecting ever since.

Throughout his early life, Clift's observation of his father, the esteemed Santa Fe landscape photographer, Bill Clift, instilled in him an appreciation of

If you go

WHAT: Sculptures by Will Clift

WHEN: Opening reception 5-7 tonight. On view through Nov. 25.

WHERE: Gerald Peters Gallery, 1011 Paseo de Peralta.

CONTACT: 954-5700, www.gpgallery.com

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graceful gestures

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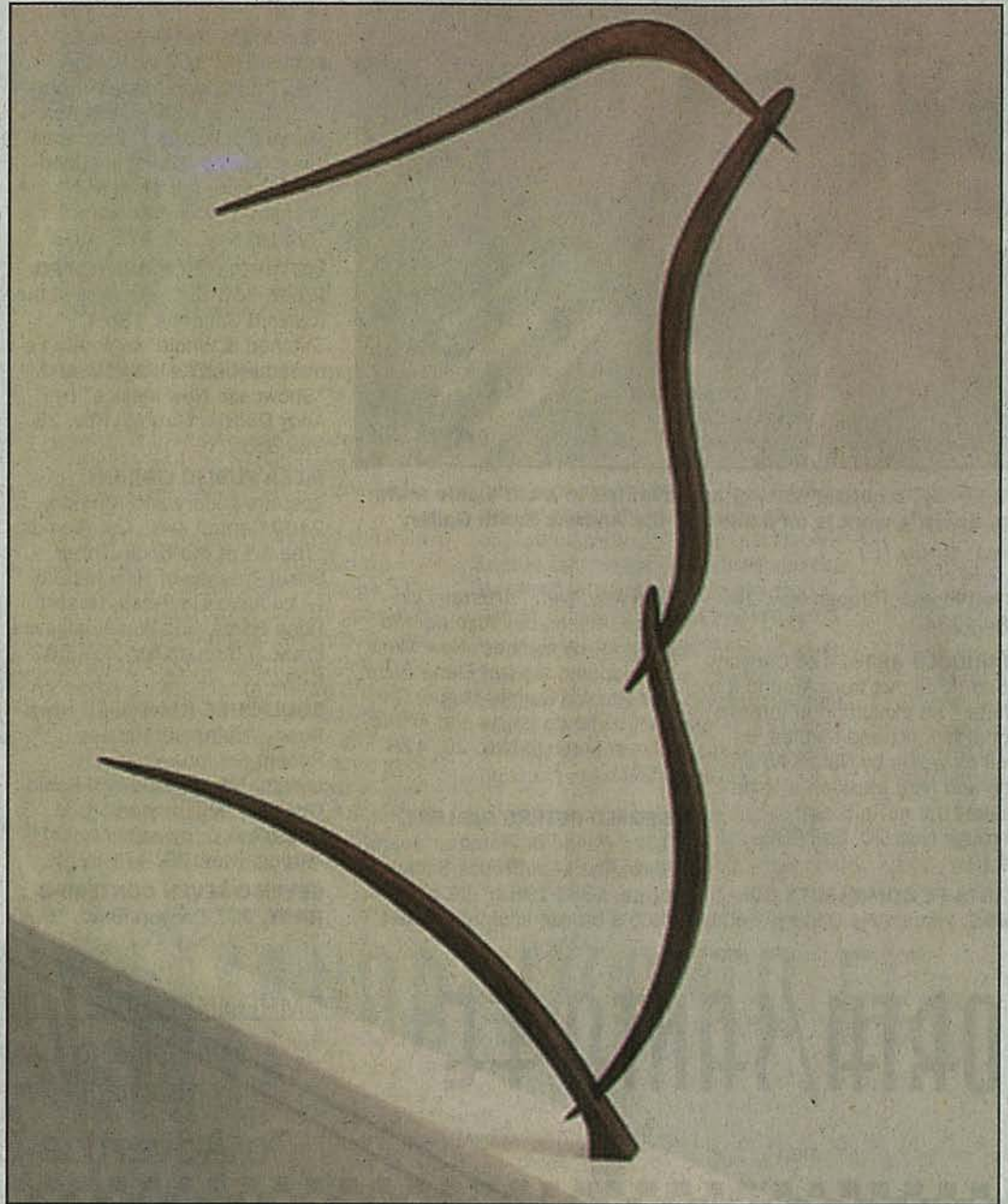
the freedom and difficulties of an artist's life. He was visually sensitive, responding to shapes and objects in the world around him that others might not even notice. But at Stanford University he chose to study business and engineering.

"I'm glad I didn't go to school for art," he concedes. "Art is a really personal thing for me. I took maybe two art classes in college, as electives, and there was a huge emphasis on the intellectual, social and political. My work is not about that."

Indeed, his sculptures elucidate the power and beauty of line and balance. The latter comes naturally; it takes no more than a simple 2-inch by 3-inch sketch for Clift to know that his piece will stand. Over time he is evolving in scale, from table top to life-size and beyond. One sculpture in tonight's show at Gerald Peters Gallery is 8 feet tall, constructed as precisely as his smaller work.

"Whereas some of my older pieces focused on the delicacy — how thin I could get each component — now I'm putting more mass into the sculpture," Clift says. "I'm trying to balance the mass and the gracefulness."

Working larger tests the limits of his material, requiring denser, less brittle wood that will maintain its integrity as he places it in the service of his balancing acts. He is also experimenting with bronze and, as he contemplates the possibility of making monumental outdoor sculpture, with materials used in shipbuilding and aeronautics.



Will Clift's "Two Verticals, Two Horizontals," 2006, is showing at the Gerald Peters Gallery. Clift's pieces are often compared to Asian calligraphy.