

# WILL CLIFT

In Will Clift's experience, sculpture exists as the only medium. Unlike the majority of his colleagues, Clift never explored two-dimensional art forms—he simply never saw a reason to. Sculpture always captivated his attention, it's physicality and tangibility resonating with his hands-on nature. Clift explains, "My childhood was spent in rural New Mexico—exploring arroyos, turning over rocks, getting dirty, cut up and bruised. Working with my hands just came naturally." Will's passion for art in three-dimensions started when he was just a young boy, stacking wooden blocks in various configurations to create towers. As Will grew older, this fascination slowly evolved into more refined constructions like making animals out of scrap wood and designing sculptural furniture, all of which ultimately gave way to his current abstract style.

As an artist, Clift feels it's his job to look at the world more closely, not allowing himself to become desensitized to the tiny details that serve as the basis for his creations. However, he remains determined to leave his work open to interpretation, refusing to assign them with specific titles. *Four Pieces Waving* is the perfect example of this intentional vagueness. "One reason I title my works as I do," Clift says, "is that I don't want to limit the viewer to any single reaction, interpretation or conclusion."

## **What inspired this piece?**

I put the first lines on paper for this sculpture almost five years before I actually finished it. The first sketches didn't interest me at the time, but when I came across them later I was drawn to them in a way that I hadn't been previously. Even after my interest was renewed, I worked on it over such a long period that I had no recollection of the original inspiration. For me, this piece has come to be about a gesture or feeling rather than an interpretation of an object.

## **What was your greatest challenge in creating this piece?**

I'm often asked if achieving the physical balance in a sculpture like this is the most difficult part of the work. This isn't the case at all. Once the drawn form is satisfying to me, I already know the piece in and out, balance and all. The hardest part with this form was to decide on its scale. Most of my previous work had been up to three feet in the largest dimension, but I realized that this form had so much motion suggested in it that it needed more height to express itself. That really marked the start of an ongoing study of the effect of scale on my work.

## **Why do you consider this one of your most significant works?**

*Four Pieces Waving* was somewhat of a departure for me. It was one of the largest pieces that I had done to that point. Perhaps more importantly,

though, before that period of time, I worked mostly with horizontal forms. This sculpture helped me become familiar with expressing strong vertical forms in my own vocabulary, which didn't always come naturally.

## **Did this sculpture turn out the way you had envisioned, or were there some unexpected yet pleasant surprises?**

This sculpture surprised me at the last possible moment—the opening of the exhibit in which I first displayed it. The event was well-attended, and the room was over a large basement, which had the effect of amplifying all of the footsteps. At some point during the evening, my shoulder was tapped and I followed a pointing finger to my piece, which was swaying noticeably to and fro from the vibrations! This movement was like a sudden physical response to its surroundings. It was like the motion suggested in the form was suddenly manifesting itself!

## **What does this sculpture mean to you personally?**

The form reflects a state that I've experienced at various points in my life, but have difficulty putting into words. It's a representation of something intensely personal, expressed in a language all my own. But because the piece can convey something to the viewer without words or an intellectual explanation, it is a success.