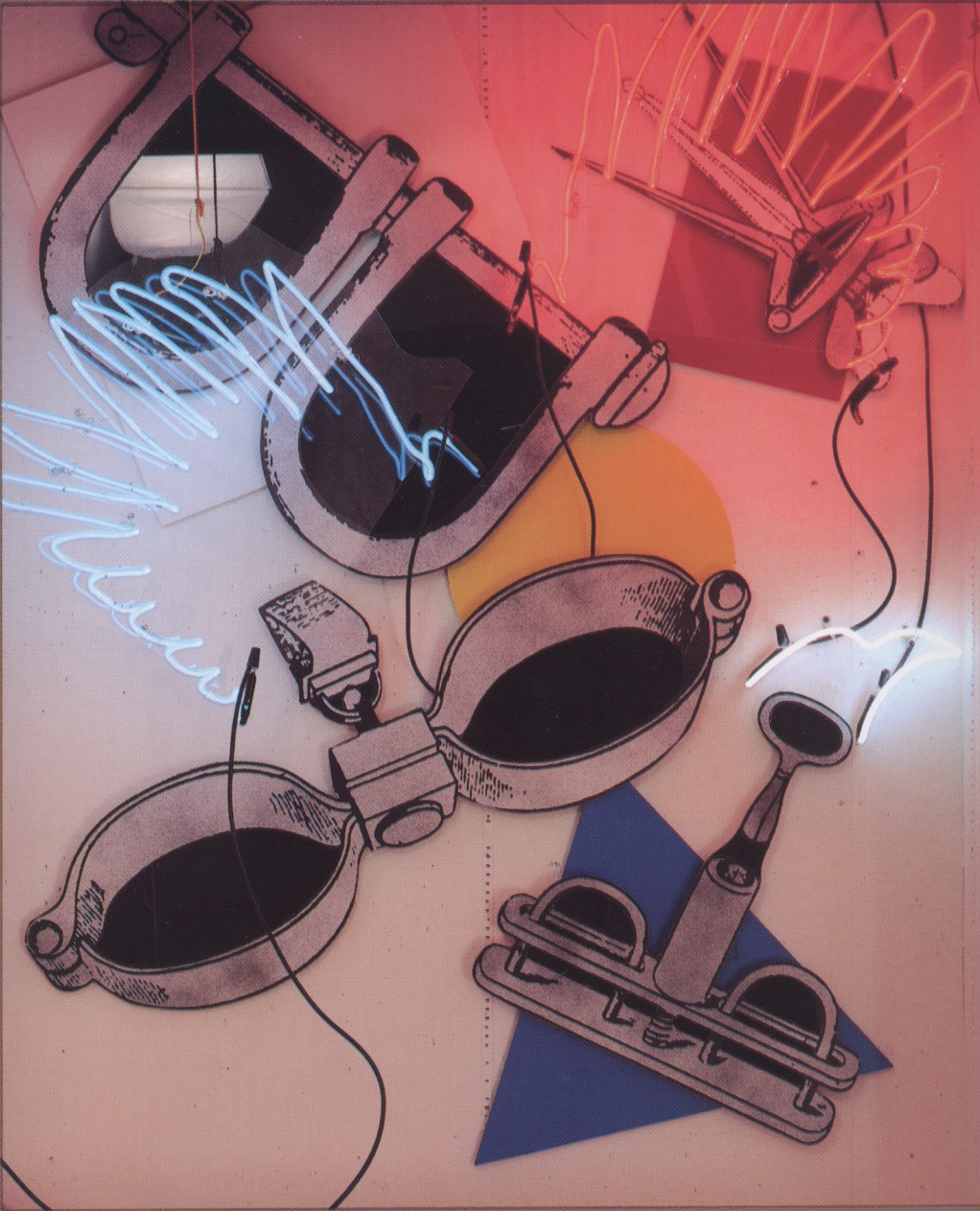


P·R·I·M·A·R·Y

PEOPLES, COLORS AND SHAPES



RECENT WORK BY JOE LEWIS

August 19 - September 26, 1993

UNIVERSITY GALLERIES

110 Center for the Visual Arts • Illinois State University
Normal, IL 61790-5620 • (309) 438-5487

"THE SWEETNESS OF LIFE"

Excerpts from a conversation between
Joe Lewis and Barry Blinderman

JL: When people tell me that something I make is too political or that it's "not art" or that it's too didactic, my retort is: Who's going to cast the first stone? I don't think that art is anything in particular. People say there has to be a definition for art--all right they can define it, but I look at it as inclusive. That means that if somebody's going to make an abstract painting or if somebody's going to make a painting or an object that's very gender-specific, that's fine; I think there's room for all of it. But many times what I hear is "it's OK if I do something but **you** can't do it," or "it's not OK for you to do anything because it bothers me." A lot of people have problems with art that has political content because it makes them look at themselves, and that's the thing that makes them upset. It makes them think about things that they'd rather forget or shows them that they aren't really who they say they are. And what they do isn't really what they say they're doing.

From my point of view, what I'm really grappling with in my art is problems like: How much do I leave in? What do I need to take out to make the piece more successful? I try to make the idea work visually.

BB: *Speaking of the look of the work, you've been using a fabricator to help you realize some of your more recent pieces.*

JL: I work with a fabricator, but I design the pieces. The thing that really concerns me the most is how far from human hands I want my art to look, and how much nitty-gritty, funky down-homeness I want to have in the piece. I've been trying to find a balance

between those two finished surface of you know, my ear handmade and ro

BB: *Yeah. It looked yourself on it.*

JL: People react designed look that There's a hidden involved with that

BB: *The work is pos You're used to look polished when you that usually tell yo medicine, or they t Your work makes s about our relations*

JL: In movies like send back a cybor supposition is that outstepped the hu become cognizan it's perfect, and th out everyone else. about that is it's ju

BB: *That's why we c and kill anything th humans that aren't*

JL: Exactly. So that technology. Actual low-tech. I mean l

BB: *It's been around*

JL: And neon. . .

BB: *It's as old as h 1940's. How did th*

ings. I like the highly
fabricated look. As
work was really
you were going to cut
ently to the polished,
t were handmade.
da, an illusion
rication.
as something else.
t things that are highly
o public places-- things
out science or about
ou that you're in a mall.
pretty barbed comments
with technology.
inator where they
kill this guy, the
nnology has
species--it has
tself and realizes that
ore it wants to wipe
ll, what's really funny
that **humans** think!
et rid of all the wildlife
e want, or even some
erfect!
ow I look at
he work itself is pretty
is not high-tech.
twenty years.

ay motel signs in the
A Black and Blue

*sculpture come about? I'm sure that the
juxtapositions were pretty intuitive. Genetic
engineering is a controversial topic right now.*

JL: That piece is really about the sweetness of
life. The enzymes in the **DNA** piece are
Tootsie Roll pops. The chain saw represents
the idea of the government taking control of
the sweetness of life . . . the DNA
chain/chainsaw. If you look at what the CIA
is involved with, and what the Department
of Defense is involved with, you can bet
they took all of the experimentation on
people that was done in Panfang and the
Nazi research that was done in the
concentration camps, and just continued it,
and in some cases even brought over the
medical researchers.

BB: *That's why so many war criminals ended up
alive in Argentina and Bolivia.*

JL: Bolivia? Brooklyn!

BB: *With all your cynicism toward the powers
that be, there's a life-affirming quality to your
work, a sense that truth will prevail.*

JL: Did I ever tell you that my undergraduate
work was in fourteenth century Italian
painting? Those paintings of saints and
martyrs signify something about how people
pass their lives and the obstacles they
confront. There are similar stories in all
cultures. All these stories are about how
people gather strength to go on to a new
situation.

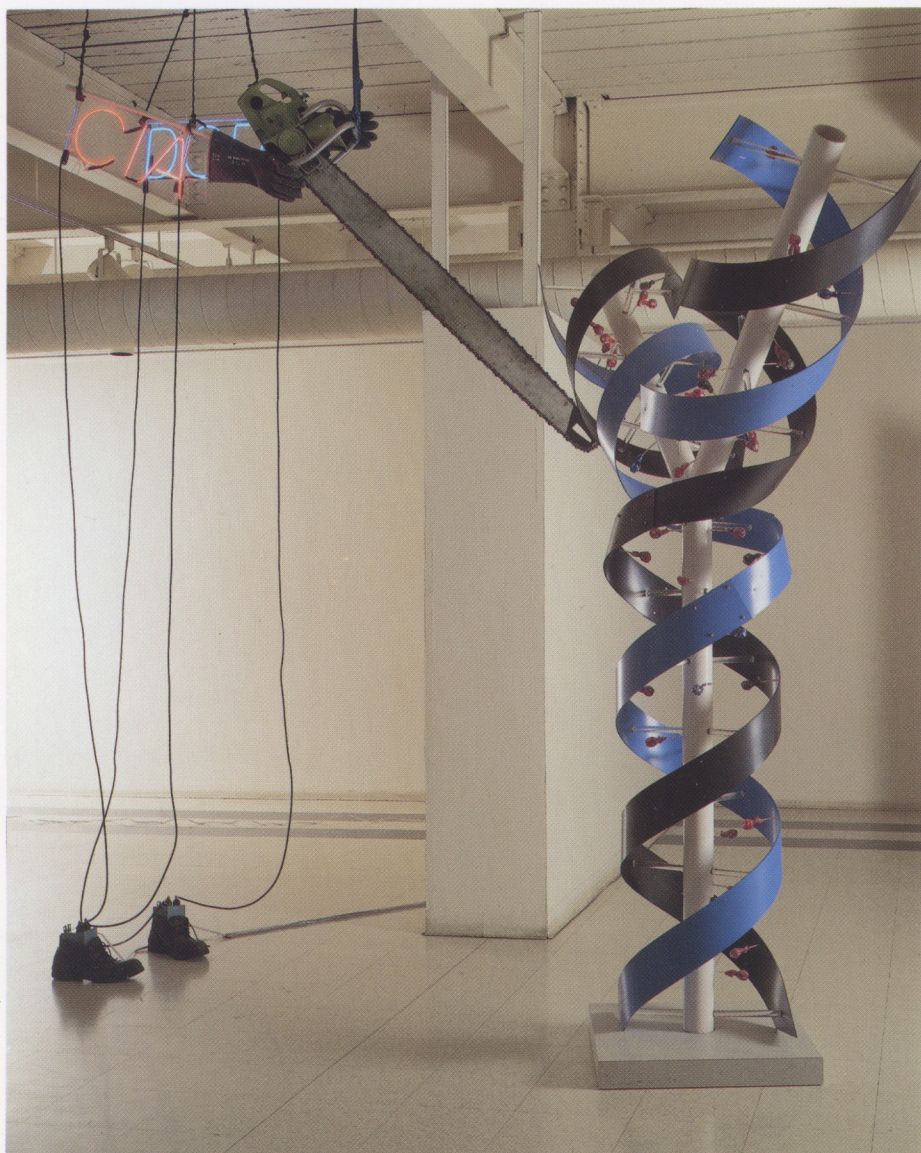
June, 1993

ARTIST LECTURE

Thursday, September 2, 7:00 p.m. in Gallery I

Reception immediately following.

This event is free and open to the public.



Above: **D.N.A. Black and Blue**, 1989, PVC, sentra, neon, chainsaw, formica, 14'x8'x8'

Left (detail): **H.I.V. : What You Don't Know Can Kill You**, 1989, photographs, neon, wood, LED, 15'x11'x65'

Public programs for *Primary Peoples*, *Colors and Shapes* are sponsored by the College of Fine Arts, the Division of Student Affairs and the Multi-Ethnic Cultural and Co-curricular Programming Advisory Committee. This exhibition is funded in part by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

Design: D. Risberg



Above: ***The First Time I Saw A Radio Like This Was The Day After I Heard That White People Could Get Sickle Cell Too***, 1989, plaster, PVC, boom-box, LED, plexiglas, neon, 12'x5'x9'

Cover: ***Primary Peoples, Colors and Shapes, Vanquished by the Bald Eagle***, 1991, rawhide, neon, plexiglass, photostat, 70"x54"x16"

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• Free parking for all gallery exhibitions and events is available on the fourth level of the Stevenson parking ramp (corner of Beaufort and School) in **non-reserved** parking spaces.

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GALLERY HOURS:

closed Monday

9:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. Tuesday

9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Wednesday - Friday

12 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Saturday & Sunday