



“And then he cried out, as if in a Godard film or a Shakespeare play, But where should this music be!”

All of this begins with an abstract concrete bodybuilder at the Muscle Beach Venice complex. The bodybuilder is at the scale of architecture, a kind of triumphal arch maybe. The original Muscle Beach started further south in Santa Monica in the years after The Great Depression and for many decades it was a loose group of gymnasts and athletes who worked out on the beach with basic equipment. It wasn't until the late 80's, as suburban malls were on the rise in other parts of the country, that Muscle Beach moved to its current location and was branded as Muscle Beach Venice with a complex of architectural elements in a brutalist-Disney style.

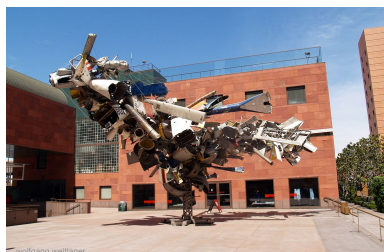
If you take this concrete bodybuilder and shift the scale of it way down so that the horizontal bar is at 17 inches, it can become part of a bench. Imagine it working in the way that cinderblocks or sawhorses do. The bodybuilder units are recast in hollow fiberglass and can be filled, through a plug on top of the head, with water, quinoa, millet, chia, etc. Filling them makes them heavier. It

also obviously turns them into containers. The first prototype titled, *Bench 2016*, is on view from May 2 – June 19, 2016 in a 1994 Dodge Caravan that is parked near 2130-2178 Castilian Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90068. The van is on site 24-hours a day and there is no appointment necessary.



* * *

Bench 2016 was enabled in its production through an invitation from Public Fiction for a new commission of a sculpture / bench that would be located outdoors in the plaza area at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Positioning works in situations where they will actually be used by virtue of their location is exciting but I also feel anxiety about the museum in general and the MOCA plaza specifically where everything feels very scripted, sanitized and commercial. Another beast to contend with is this gigantic Nancy Rubins sculpture. The beautiful thing about the Rubins sculpture though is that, at present, it operates as a giant bird hotel. I decided that I wanted my bench to be a feeder for both the birds as well as the people who inhabit the plaza. The people feed by sitting, the birds feed by eating.



The seat part of the bench is made out of coated wire shelving (often found in closets or laundry rooms) and is similar to what bird cages are made of. First, the shelving is covered in Magic-Sculpt epoxy clay and then it is woven with dental floss. The empty and used containers of floss hang below the seat like ornaments. On the left and right of the bench I attached these special “cage clips” and hung millet spray from them. In this context, the clips also look like those spikes that they have on buildings so pigeons don’t land there. MOCA ultimately rejected the work over concerns that the millet spray would disrupt the ecosystem of the plaza. It’s okay, and in fact their language in refusing the piece seemed to succinctly describe anything that I could ever want out of any artwork.



I then made the decision to exhibit *Bench 2106* in my 1994 Dodge Caravan. The van was given to me a couple of years ago by my father and is nearly identical to the one that my parents bought in 1993 and I grew up riding around in, in Flagstaff, Arizona. This was a really popular car in the 90’s and so I’m sure many others have had a similar experience. We drove it until it died. Towards the end it was a really embarrassing junker and no one was sad to see it go. But then less than a year later my dad found a nearly identical Dodge Caravan with about 80k. They were only asking 1k. He couldn’t resist, bought it and gave it to me.

For the exhibition of *Bench 2016*, the van is parked near this house in the neighborhood where I live in the Hollywood Hills (another story). The house, like the van, is white. It’s built into the hill in this severe and dramatic way that feels like a middlebrow version of Richard Meier’s Douglas



House on Lake Michigan. I first saw the house in Hollywood on a walk in 2007. As I passed by, there was a woman with bleach blonde hair down to her butt, wearing a pink string bikini, carrying a tray of food to the pool on the roof. It seemed like a movie or like a dream but it was really happening. I found out later that this was not an uncommon sighting at the house. Some years after, the woman in the string bikini moved and sold the house. It was bought by a developer who smoothed over the entire stucco exterior, ostensibly to modernize it although somehow it made it look cheap.

So then the thing about Muscle Beach which is true for the van as well as the house in Hollywood is that they are from a time and embody ideals and achievements whose significance no longer registers. This is the set of the present. Shapes, surfaces, bodies, habitats and public infrastructure are formed through collective ethos and latent desire. But there is a lag in the process that projects embodied ideals of one decade into a future which may no longer want them. Not every car on the road in 1950 was from 1950 and anyway the 1950's were more "the 40's" than "the 50's". It's the same now where we live in a world that is set in the recent past. We are alive here and now but all the while wondering what the world of the future will someday look like.