

Making *The Hunter*

The Hunter began with a quick sketch in my notebook years ago. It depicts an arced form made of marble and wood, and partially covered with tar. I began in 2018, setting out to make something both beautiful and ugly. The transition from the unique flesh-like Crema Valencia marble to a partially burned and corrupted form suggested the polarity I sought. This strange combination reminded me of something the late art historian Hans Rookmaaker once observed. Artists sometimes emphasized the power and seduction of evil by making it appear beautiful. I've thought about that insight for years, and it resonated with what I was seeking.

A large Silver Maple tree in front of our house is home to birds and squirrels that nest and live in its old, hollowed out limbs. Birds' eggs and small rodents are a favorite meal of the black snakes that inhabit surrounding fields, and over the years I've watched many sizable snakes crawl up the tree hunting small prey. So, I decided to make a snake-like form to mount on a wall. By itself, the movement was not directed towards anything. What animated its movement? I added a large burl from an Ash tree I'd cut down, and oriented the snake towards its opening. But, what was it hunting?

The answer was obvious, so I bought bronze Adam and Eve torsos from an antique store and embedded them in an earthen background within the burl's sheltering womb. I had not set out to narrate the Genesis account of the fall, but its presence intensified the troubled relationship between beauty and ugliness I sought, and properly placed them within the moral universe of Scripture. The prey of this troubling image are our original ancestors.

Some people have commented on the sexual overtones within this work. I was aware of those while making *The Hunter*, but I was not seeking an image of eros. Its suggestive presence here is simply the most obvious instance of the corruption of *all* loves that resulted from our fallen estate. The devil is the original seducer, the great violator of *all* human uniting, and of our union with God. The last element I placed in this ensemble is the thorn that serves as a sensing, threatening tongue in the snake. To me it also presages Christ's redemptive act, obliquely foretold in Genesis 3:15.

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