

CHRISTOPHER HEWAT  
brass

From July 10 through August 11, 2008, The Drawing Room in East Hampton is pleased to present an installation of reflective brass sculptures of books and familiar cultural artifacts by Christopher Hewat. Fabricated by hand and soldered from brass sheet metal, this personal inventory of treasured objects includes a disc of Handel's arias, a drawing tablet with eraser, protractor and pencil, a burned copy of Keats' poetry, and a miniature folding screen incised with geometric drawings. Sparkling with the warm glow particular to brass, Hewat's iconic memories of real objects remind us of the pleasures of reading and artistic pastimes so vulnerable in our digital era.

Inspired by literature, scientific discovery, the visual arts and favorite pastimes like games and drawing, Hewat recreates his own library of beloved texts as well as the very tools and materials of artistic practices. In doing so, he immortalizes the tactile qualities of the original objects, conjuring up both the humble presence and weight in our hands of treasured books, drawing tablets, chocolates and scrabble letters. Rarely used in the history of Western sculpture except by Constantin Brancusi, the luminous, gold-hued medium of brass is here transformed into the platonic forms of a connoisseur's book collection. The intimate scale of *The Delphic Oracle* invites the viewer to peer into the open pages to decipher the tiny hand stamped letters on the title page.

Hewat constructs his materials - sawing and soldering brass sheets of varying thickness together - to evoke the recognizable textures of leather, linen, paper, foil, and wood scrabble letters. In one brass book, *Alexander Calder: Stabiles*, Hewat simulates the paper book cover with a painted white sheet of thin brass folded over the gilt edges of the volume. In another work, a green linen-bound book lies open on its spine revealing a typed library lending card tucked into the paper pocket that identifies the text as *Virgil's Pastoral Poems*. Nearby, the very tempting imitation of four chocolate squares wrapped in foil are stamped "80% Noir". An elongated construction of a 19<sup>th</sup> century album embossed with "Vues Panoramiques" is an elegant homage to early photographic expeditions that documented new corners of the world. Standing on a tripod, a flat viewer equipped with a lens is another eloquent monument to early photography.

This unique installation conceived for The Drawing Room is one of several Hewat has created for specific gallery, museum and library rooms. In 2007 he installed a room at The New Britain Museum with 160 brass books in a remarkable project that paid tribute to the great texts in the western canon. In October 2008 he will assemble a smaller brass library in the New York Society Library. From 1982 to 1996, Hewat's exhibitions of wood sculpture at the Victoria Munroe gallery in New York City included inlaid wood screens and an installation of neoclassical cemetery monuments. Hewat, who lives and works on a farm in rural Connecticut, acknowledges the influence the history and architecture of his village have had on his work. In particular, a rare bookstore and the 18<sup>th</sup> century cemetery have inspired sculpture in stone, wood and for the last ten years, brass.

Hewat's work is in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Addison Gallery of American Art and Princeton University Art Museum as well as numerous noted private and corporate collections, including those of Graham Gund, David Rockefeller Jr., and Wellington Management.

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