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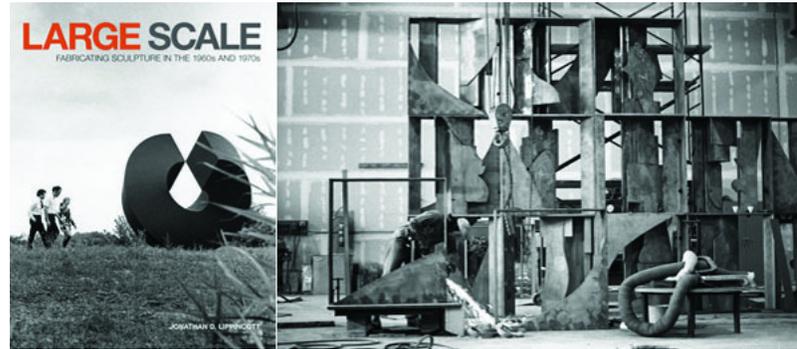

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Jonathan Lippincott

04.27.11



Left: Cover of Jonathan Lippincott's *Large Scale: Fabricating Sculpture in the 1960s and 1970s* (2011). Right: Louise Nevelson's *Sky Covenant*, 1973, in progress at Lippincott.

Jonathan Lippincott is the author of Large Scale: Fabricating Sculpture in the 1960s and 1970s, a book published by Princeton Architectural Press that chronicles the formative years of Lippincott, the first industrial-style fabrication plant to collaborate exclusively with artists. Illustrated with photographs from the Lippincott archive—many of which have never before been published—the book gives a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the creation of some of the most iconic public artworks in the US. He will discuss the book at the School of Visual Arts on Thursday, April 28.

SCULPTURE IS SO MUCH ABOUT ONE'S EXPERIENCE OF SPACE and one's physical relation to the subject: Is it bigger than you? Is it smaller than you? Can you walk under or around it? And to have that experience be successful, I think the artist has to be closely involved with the fabrication of the work. Most artists would come to Lippincott for a few days at a time while their work was being made—the shop was close enough to New York City, in North Haven, Connecticut, that artists could also make day trips as often as they liked. Usually an artist would review the sculpture about half a dozen times during the fabrication, so they could see what was happening and guide the process of creating the work.

Most artists started out with models or drawings, and used these as a basis for creating the large-scale work. Louise Nevelson was the exception, in that she often worked directly at scale. She would collage together found metal elements in very much the same way she worked on her wood sculptures. My father had collections of scrap metal on hand for her and she would work with a couple of welders at the plant for four or five days at a time, putting together these massive sculptures. She would direct the assembly, and the welders would cut and join the pieces together according to her configuration. The workers could do very quick welds while Nevelson was on site and then finish up the construction and paint the sculptures later. She would come back to review the pieces a few weeks later, and make any adjustments or changes. Her work was very much created in the moment; she could see what it should be.

Claes Oldenburg is another artist who created a lot of work with Lippincott, and he explored many different materials over time—various kinds of metals, plastics, and Styrofoam, among other things. The shop was always game for that sort of exploration—looking into different materials and ways of creating the sculptures. They were incredibly flexible and could really run with whatever an artist came up with.

Many of the artists as well as many of the crew had long working relationships with Lippincott. Each time an artist would come to the plant to work on something, they would have the same crew to talk to, and so they developed a mutual language to discuss how the sculptures were made, and what the end result should be. The collective knowledge generated over time between artists and fabricators made a lot of really amazing work possible because the exploration and experimentation was very much ongoing and reciprocal. It wasn't like, "All right, this is what were doing and now we're done." It was much more, "What do we want to do next time? And how can we do it?" That whole experiment was really exciting. Every project was a new challenge.

— As told to Mara Hoberman

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