

## Chicago Lawyer, 1999, Bell Boyd Lawyer Mixes Sculpture and Law

**Neil Weinfield** spreads slides and snapshots of sculptures across the conference room table at Bell, Boyd & Lloyd and talks about the art he has created over the past 10 years. Weinfield, a partner in Bell, Boyd's environment practice group, has crafted a singular existence with two distinct roles: He is an artist and a professional. I have often been told by artists that you could not do both—be a sculptor and be a professional—and I have never found that to be the case, he says. You can do both. Despite the long work week at Bell, Boyd and the self-imposed rigors of producing an average of three sculptures a year, Weinfield says his schedule does not overwhelm him.

With the aluminum sculpture, Weinfield has shifted to producing larger outdoor works; these are about five feet tall and six feet wide.

I started out sculpting birds when I was very young, 12 years old, Weinfield said. And I do not know why. But I think as I grew older, I realized that it was the flight, you know, as the birds flew through the air, their wings and the way they would work.

And as I got older, and I was able to analyze that, conclude what I liked about it, I realized that I liked things that have that sort of motion and where you especially can see the structure, like the wings of a bat.

Weinfield describes his favorite artists' work with quick sketches on the back of an envelope.

Naum Gabo, a Russian-born sculptor, created high-tech pieces out of Plexiglas and metal; the Basque Eduardo Chillida worked in cast iron, not quite as organized as [my work] but very powerful; and Isamu Noguchi, a Japanese-American, sculpted in stone and steel, similar to Weinfield's work. As though reciting from a written essay, Weinfield quickly synthesizes the work of all three.

All those artists shared some things common, and what that was, was using abstract forms to convey motion and force and also to define spaces. Their work is all purely abstract, they are all very powerful works.

He is extremely diligent, almost to the point of going overboard at times, but it always seems to work out, said Michael K. Ohm, chair of the environmental group at Bell, Boyd. Ohm described Weinfield as detail-oriented, intense and aggressive. Weinfield emphasizes, however, that Law always comes first. Law is what enables me to sculpt.

Two of Weinfield's undergraduate pieces are still on display at Cornell, one at the university's Olin Library and the other at Beinkorb Admissions Center, a rare accomplishment for a college art student, his former professor, Jack Squier said.

The law is incredibly cerebral, he said. The aspect of sculpture [ I like ] is the physicality, bending the wood. As far as a carry over to the law, it be very good, actually, because I do not think many lawyers are that familiar with a lot of the physical things out there.

The law can become so pervasive that you can sit around, and often I do, for days, hours on end, turning over the same legal problem. This provides a break.

Weinfield keeps himself to a set schedule each year: he culls ideas in early summer ; he spends roughly half the summer constructing three to six models out of clay or cardboard; then he contacts suppliers and figures out how to put the art together. Christmas break, I sculpt, he says.

Professor Squier approves. More people should do what he did, he said T.S. Eliot was an executive in a publishing firm throughout his life...It's possible to make a living...and make good art.

Mr. Weinfield received his B.A. magna cum laude from Cornell University and his J.D. from Vanderbilt University School of Law.