

STUDIO CHECK



Mark Handforth

PHOTOGRAPHS AND TEXT BY SARAH TRIGG

THE SCULPTOR MARK HANDFORTH'S artistic investigations focus on our perception of scale and the exploration of representational modes for common symbols and objects. The results range from a seemingly spray-painted heart symbol silkscreened directly onto a wall to a 29-foot-long aluminum wishbone. Handforth creates his enormous pieces at his riverfront studio in Miami, just west of the city's downtown, but for his smaller sculptural and projection-processed work he uses a home studio. He also employs fabricators, including one specializing in custom metal that produces work for Disney as well.

Handforth moved to Miami in the early 1990s with his girlfriend (now wife), the artist Dara Friedman. Immediately, he was inspired by the city's trashed-out Art Deco buildings, its film-noir feel, his sensation of otherness, not to mention the blinding Florida sun. "You know, in England the light never gets very bright," says the artist, who was born in Hong Kong but raised in the U.K. "Here you get off the plane and you can't even see anything. It's incredible. Everything becomes a kind of fog. Add the soupy humidity to that and you end up like this Thomas Mann character stumbling through. I found it quite exciting, that

sense of being really lost. It was wild."

In addition to Miami, William Blake is a major influence, a fact particularly clear in Handforth's light works. A massive fluorescent-light piece, described as a solar eclipse, will span 80 feet of the gallery at the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, (MOCA) for his show from November 30 through February 19, 2012. And at an off-site location fluorescent fixtures will delineate a giant banyan tree, illuminating the branches from underneath. The show extends to several locations in MOCA's plaza and courtyard, to Griffing Park, and to a billboard in the Wynwood Arts District.

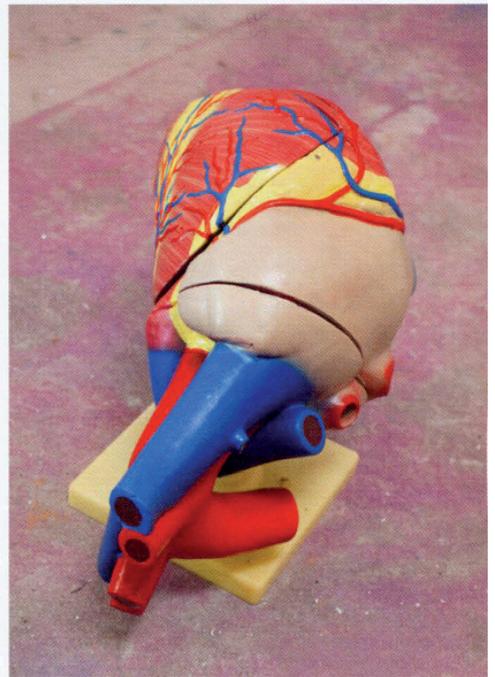
▶ **HANGER SCULPTURE**

"One of the pieces for the MOCA exhibition will be this hanger, which will be hanging from the rafter. That building has that big sort of curved roof—almost a school-gym kind of feel. And the architecture of the building is, in a way, quite extreme. So it seemed to me if you were going to do a show within that space, you were really going to have to take on that architecture. When it's hanging, it will be about a foot or so off the floor. I can't hang it right now because it's too big, but I can just about fit it in the studio space to make it."



▶ **MEDICAL MODEL**

"I've made quite a few pieces about hearts. This medical model is made of wood and comes apart. I wondered about making this as an actual piece at one point, probably larger, and how that would feel. Or an actual heart, which is another way to go—taking a heart and scanning it. I mean, not a human one, obviously, but an animal's."



▶ **CUT SIGN**

"I work with signage, both as readymades and as models for larger pieces. This one had two gangly figures hustling awkwardly across its yellow face, stiff legs locked in painful knee bends. I needed to make a model of the spade of a card deck. I cut the shape out of this sign, partly because I liked the way the disembodied figures became a Vorticist pattern of lines and angles on the spade. What's left here is the void of that process, the blank dots of heads and strips of feet whose core has simply vanished."



▶ **SCULPTURE MODELS**

"Bonnie Clearwater, the curator of the MOCA show, was keen to show models, so we're going to do a table of them with loads and loads of different models of different sizes, some of them really big."