



# ROGER ACKLING

FOCUSED SUNLIGHT ON FOUND WOOD

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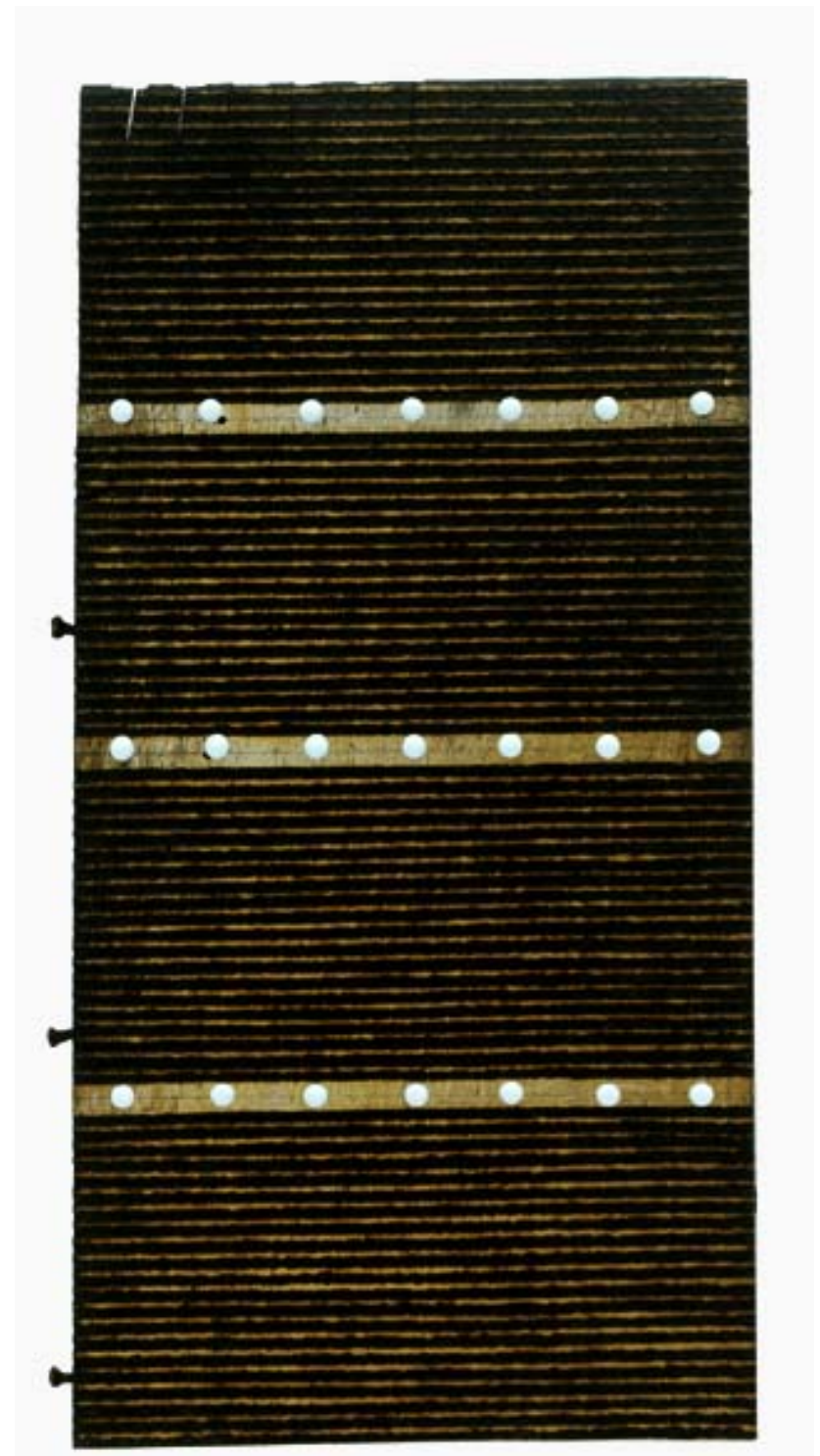
FOCUSED SUNLIGHT ON FOUND WOOD

October 23 – November 20, 2004

Reception Saturday October 23, 3 – 5 pm

## VICTORIA MUNROE FINE ART

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Voewood (RA1127), 2003, focused sunlight on wood with mapping pins and rubber bands,  $4 \frac{3}{4} \times 4 \frac{3}{4} \times 1 \frac{1}{8}$ "

Voewood (RA1128), 2003, focused sunlight on wood with mapping pins and rubber bands,  $11 \times 5 \frac{1}{2} \times \frac{3}{8}$ "

**F**or the past thirty-five years my work has constantly dealt with certain issues.

In 1975, I was attempting to address the ageless concern between time and place, and I discovered an apparently simple method of doing this.

By overexposing the image of the sun, focused through a hand-held lens, lines were burnt on to material – wood found at the margins, usually where the land meets the sea: often discarded, broken, rejected elements from what I saw to be an increasingly materialistic society.

The work was made out of doors, when the sun shone and I felt right. At first at home in England and then, at the appropriate time of day and year, at other places on the earth's surface, in Scotland, Kenya, Japan, Continental Europe, Iceland and North America.

I gradually built up a contrasting collection of lines. For me these were a new way of visualizing time (an almost unknowable continuum) and its measurement and of incorporating a sense of place through the special characteristics of each piece of found material, and the action of that day's sun, cloud cover and wind.

Linking together there are two concerns, time and place, through a single simple almost childlike, but demanding, activity.

I had to be still to make the work and I also chose to try to empty or control my mind of thoughts.

In the 1970's the longest I could sit focusing light was about an hour. With practice this increased to seven hours – the scale and concentrating enlarged and the process became joyfully obsessive – I made a lot of work.

Over the years, my concerns have hardly altered but 'place' has changed from being external (landscape) to internal (mind).

One long-held tradition in painting has been to try to 'record' and develop a sense of an external place through looking (sight). This often demands working outdoors, in situ, absorbing and responding to appearances.

Another tradition is that of place engendering and reflecting a more internal sense of location – as somewhere within the human psyche, a way into self and the soul which is more spiritual (insight). It is this aspect – the move from external to the internal – which has changed within my practice. This has not involved any change in my technique, although more recently I have been experimenting with the juxtaposition of different visual languages.

My last twelve months has been very busy in making work and showing it (my show at Victoria Munroe's in Boston is my 127th one person show in total since my 1st show at the Lisson Gallery in London in 1976).

Whereas all my earlier work was made outside in direct sunlight without altering or adding to the form of the found material, the recent pieces are still made in part by burning horizontal lines on to the wood, but they are then brought inside and at night in the winter months, pins and white rubber bands are sometimes attached, focusing on particular areas of the form and adding to the surface.

This apparently more, playful and lighter language is a counterpoint to what I have always regarded as a somber, meditative and reflective activity.

This new direction and energy does not represent an interest in embellishment or decoration but rather the introduction of language that paradoxically protects and deepens a sense of stillness in the work.

A simple visual comparison might be water lilies in flower on an unfathomably dark lake.

Roger Ackling, Norfolk, 2004



Voewood (RA I 126), 2003, focused sunlight on wood with mapping pins and rubber bands,  $9 \frac{3}{8} \times 5 \frac{3}{8} \times \frac{1}{2}$ "