

# Making Art

FORM AND MEANING

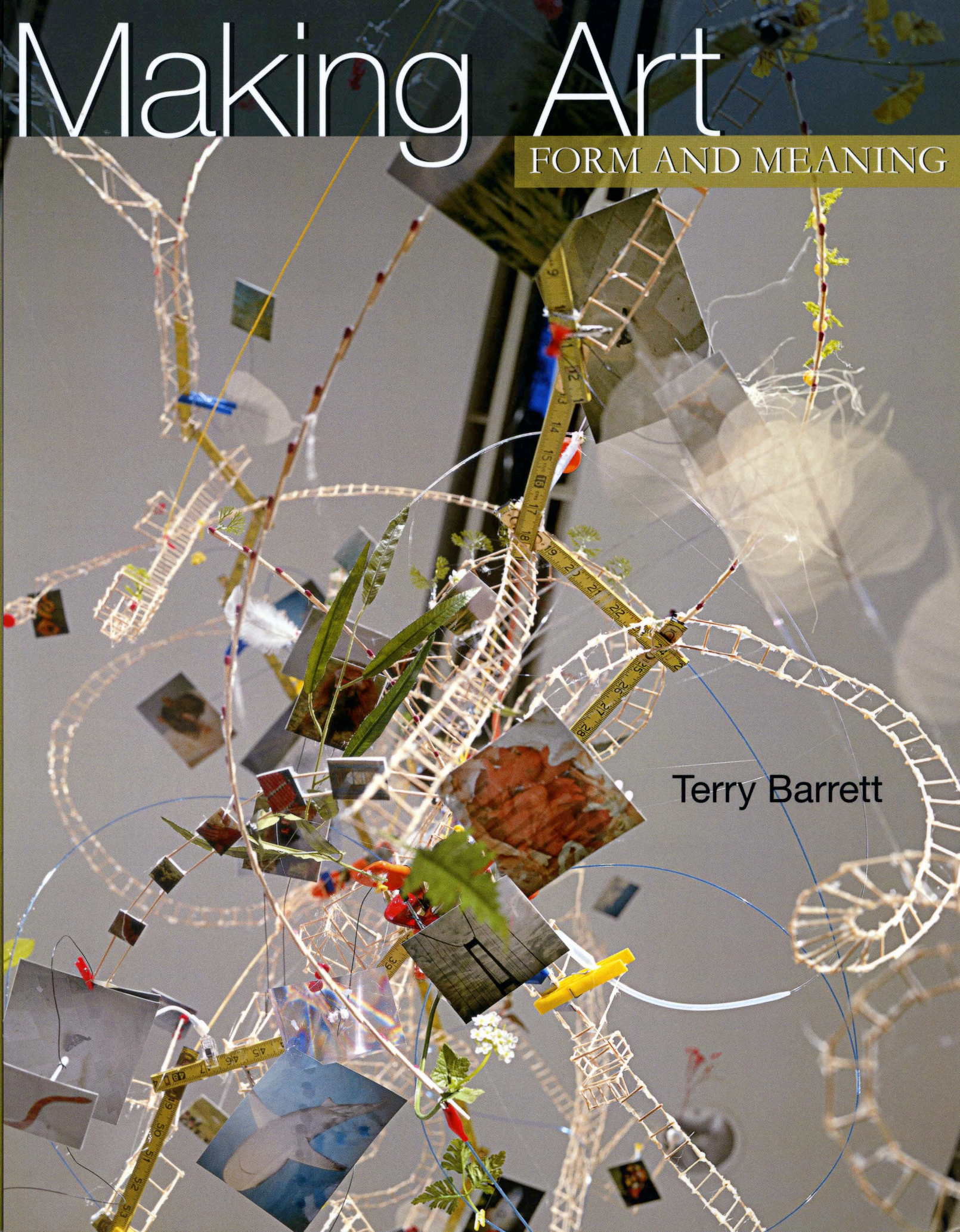
Terry Barrett

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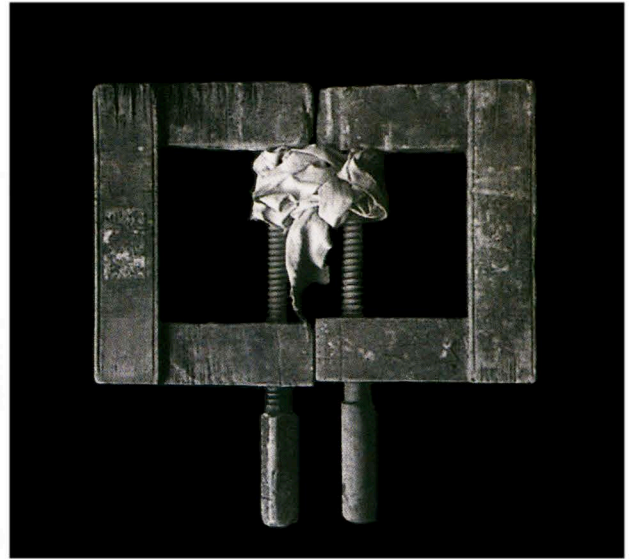


11.35 **DO-HO SUH** *Public Figures*, October 1998–May 1999. Fiberglass and resin, steel pipes, pipe fittings, 120 × 84 × 108 in., installation view, Metrotech Center Commons, Brooklyn, New York.

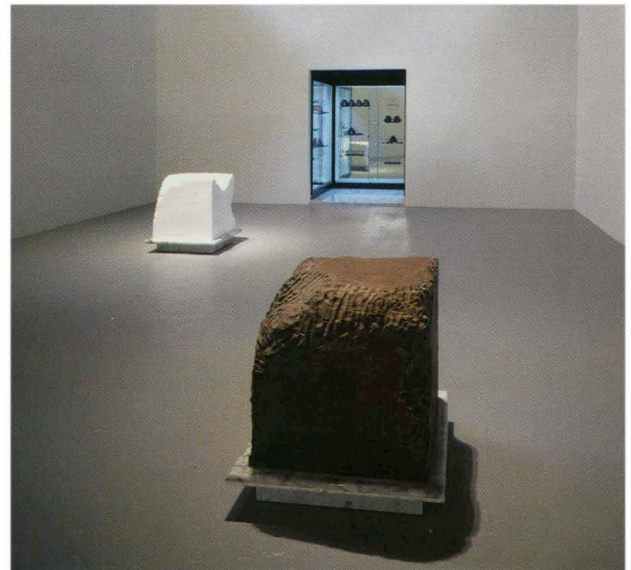
Some visual metaphors are open to a wide range of interpretations due to the lack of specificity in their references. Stephen Althouse's *Clamps* (11.36) shows two antique wooden C-clamps holding a ribbon of torn fabric. It suggests general themes such as control and restraint, hardness and delicacy. One possible interpretation is that the image is about relationships: two people hold something between them that is fragile, trying not to crush it, but not letting it slip away or unravel due to a lack of careful holding.

We have already examined how the use of formal elements, such as line, shape, and texture, contributes to the meanings of artworks. An additional way for you to communicate ideas about your subject is through the creation and use of metaphor.

**Using Irony and Parody.** You can use words and images to convey the opposite of what they say and show in a technique called **irony**. While this strategy is not new, many contemporary artists are reemploying it to engage viewers in questioning what they have received as knowledge. Knowing whether something is ironic is essential to understanding works of art, as we can clearly see in Michael Ray Charles's *Cut and Paste*



11.36 **STEPHEN ALTHOUSE** *Clamps*, 2003. Photograph, 41 × 60 in.



11.37 **JANINE ANTONI** *Gnaw*, 1992. Six-hundred pounds of chocolate, gnawed by the artist, 24 × 24 × 24 in.

(see 11.21). Some fear Charles's images will be misunderstood and taken as straightforward *reinforcements* of racist views that actually encourage what they are meant to resist. If you use irony in your own work, you have the challenge of letting the viewer know what your work is for and against without it being overly didactic and preachy.

Native American performance artist James Luna attempts to communicate his views through parody. A