



Rebecca Johnson, *Winged Victory*, 1995,  
sycamore, walnut, and maple woods, 67¼ x 73½ x 36".

## PHILADELPHIA

### REBECCA JOHNSON

LARRY BECKER GALLERY

Echoing natural forms and materials, Rebecca Johnson's most recent sculptures range widely in scale and their degree of complexity. To produce these works, Johnson carves many varieties of wood and stone, which she occasionally combines with cement reinforced with fiberglass, and sometimes paints or chars. The pieces in which the natural materials underwent the fewest transformations were the most rewarding.

The water or moss used in two of the smallest works lends them a kind of organicism. *Dream Pool*, 1995, a marble sculpture shaped like a pillow, in which a hollow resembling the imprint left by a head is filled with water, lay on the floor. In that depression floated a small piece of slate that suggested a single, centered eye or perhaps the formation of a thought. Less recognizably organic, but ultimately more characteristic of Johnson's work, *Wetlands*, 1995, sat obliquely above a mound of cement whose shape suggested a pile of stones or large eggs. This sacklike marble form contained a handful of moss. In *South Light*, 1995, a recessed shape also disturbed the surface of the marble spiral that rested on a circle of sand, but it was left unfilled.

With its suggested rather than fully realized forms, *Dark Places*, 1995, a larger work of charred and painted box elder, exemplified the complexity of Johnson's work as a whole. In this sculpture, which resembled an oversized, inverted root, the severed appendages seemed to trace the outline of a figure or a head whose "face" was defined by several dark hollows, the largest of which held a group of small glass spheres partially filled with water. The presence of these

wet "eggs" in this dark place evoked a strange kind of breeding ground.

A cross between the *Victory of Samothrace* and the *Venus of Willendorf*, Johnson's preposterously fecund *Winged Victory*, 1995, was outfitted with impossibly heavy wooden wings. This obvious art historical reference reminds us how subtly Johnson cites her precursors in the other sculptures shown here, how well she deploys the lessons of tradition and how confident she is of her place in it.

—Eileen Neff