Bruce Montcombroux – Palanquin Park

"I am interested in how invention can be interpreted as a physical product or conversely, as a fabricated story." -- Bruce Montcombroux

Part of my interest in Bruce Montcombroux's work is personal. Like him, I grew up moving from air force base to base, and also like him I developed an early interest in aircraft. Curiously, his fabrication of things like post-World War II "jet engines" involves First World War-era aircraft construction techniques. That's a clue to his bricolage sensibility. Bruce always makes the construction of his work discernible if not plainly visible to viewers. His use of the word "invention" in his statement above seems to me to be meant more literally than the way most artists use it. I think of him as working in the tradition of artists such as Murray Favro, Jean Pierre Gauthier and maybe Fischli & Weiss – he's that technologically adept.

I've known Bruce and his work for some time because he was an undergraduate at the University of Manitoba where I teach. Back then he was a skilled painter, but his computer skills were so good that I thought he might settle on making "computer art": that did not happen. His resistance to computer art reminded me that, like a few other painting students I've had over the years (including if you can believe it, at least two young burnt-out former computer game designers) Bruce makes art to get away from computing, even if way back when many of his works incorporated downloaded web images (which admittedly is computer art of a sort). Which got me thinking that perhaps his sculpture should be thought of as a kind of pre-computer hacking, a hacking into "ancient" modernist-era technologies.

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