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a metaphor. An X placed on the back surface of the bottle is transformed into an infinity sign by the refraction of the light passing through the water. In *Supposed To Be*, a fabric-covered wooden block resting at the bottom of a metal cage is illuminated primarily by light that passes through a hole in the cage top. The red fabric reveals the fact that it covers a shape, but the nature of that shape and its material eludes absolute discernment.

A number of the artists represented in this exhibit have, in the diversity of their stylistic approaches, been concerned with the human condition, the human psyche in various emotional contexts, and implications of human interaction in diverse societal circumstances. **Dan Mills'** mixed media piece *Smoked* (page 35) comments on the realities of cultural diversity in our hemisphere. His sculptural work of the 1980s and early '90s was composed of found-object media, especially wood, organized in compositional patterns of strong architectonic reference. However, his most recent work, while still incorporating found objects, is now scaled down, and has focused on the political, social, and cultural implications of mapping systems.

Although the device of using maps as a metaphor for political power and social commentary was perhaps first explored in the Post-World War II period by pop-related artists like Jasper Johns, Larry Rivers, and Robert Indiana, maps came into more prominence as an artistic mechanism of sometimes strong social statement in the 1970s and '80s in the work of artists as diverse as Nancy Graves, Laurie Anderson, and David Wojnarowicz. In *Smoked*, Mills has appropriated an old wooden Habana cigar box from his childhood, a box that had been in his family for decades and was used by Mills as a child to store little treasures. The inspiration for the current piece emerged during the political debate surrounding the quincentenary celebration of Columbus' arrival in the New World. The box lid, when closed, reveals images of the well-known Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch explorers who laid claim to the territories of Central and South America. The inside of the box is a collage of map portions of the United States. Mills draws particular attention to 29 of the 50 states—those with names that refer to indigenous native cultures. The cigars, imported from the Dominican Republic—where Columbus is said to have first landed—each have slightly smoked ends (a task carried out by the artist).

Hence, the title *Smoked* is intended to evoke multiple interpretations. Mills has also hand-painted his own cigar bands with personalities variously associated with the pre-Colonial native cultures of Central and South America.

Like *Smoked* by Dan Mills, the carved wooden sculpture *Tiananmen Square* by Milwaukee-based **John Balsley** addresses a subject of political complexity. Over the last two decades, Balsley has explored a variety of media and techniques. Around 1992 he started creating highly detailed wood carvings, of which *Tiananmen Square* (page 37) is an early example. While carving had not been a major aspect of his work prior to the early 1990s, Balsley had always been interested in art made of wood or of other carved material. His personal collection, for instance, includes folk art, African art, native American artifacts, and carved canes. Balsley's *Tiananmen Square* commemorates the 1989 episode in Tiananmen Square when government military forces brutally quashed an attempt by a group of Chinese (including students) to seek greater political freedom. In commenting on the reason for the subject, Balsley remarked that it was an event that should always be remembered. The highly crafted piece is composed of four tall, square columns rising from a flat-topped pyramidal base, each column terminating with the caricature head of a figure. Among the figures represented are Chairman Mao, Richard Nixon (representing the opening up of greater dialogue between the United States and China during his administration), and two Chinese students, one "tortured."

The life-sized, lifelike painted ceramic figures of **Joseph Seigenthaler** are both fascinating and disturbing. Since his graduation from NIU in 1990, Seigenthaler has focused his creative energies on representing the human figure (complete or fragmented) in various attitudes of physical distortion or disturbed states of mind. Extreme emotion is the rule rather than the exception. Figures are also often precariously balanced, a device that serves to further symbolize, for Seigenthaler, the fragility of the human psyche. And while the figure or figure group may at first glance strike the spectator as repulsive, a fascination with the crafted construction of the pieces inevitably draws the spectator back for a second and third glance and inevitably a closer inspection. As Seigenthaler observed: