

Beyond Sight

Singapore artist Victor Tan found a unique solution to his drawing problem.

Artist Victor Tan is completely blind. Feeling, holding, and seeing the exquisitely delicate wire sculptures that Tan has bent and twisted into shape you cannot help but be moved by the sensuality of the curves and the eloquent expression of emotion captured within each figure. Each sculpture twisted from strands of copper or stainless steel wire is a rich fluid form.

It is ironic that it was the tragedy of falling blind nearly three years ago that led Tan to realize his artistic potential. After meeting a blind painter, a curious Tan enrolled in his blind school's art classes, initially working with clay. He quickly became an avid convert and the fruits of this new passion persuaded Tan to apply for art college. Today, Tan is a final year student at Singapore's La Salle-SIA College of the Arts, majoring in ceramics.

Tan's enrollment presented a challenge not only for the artist but also for the

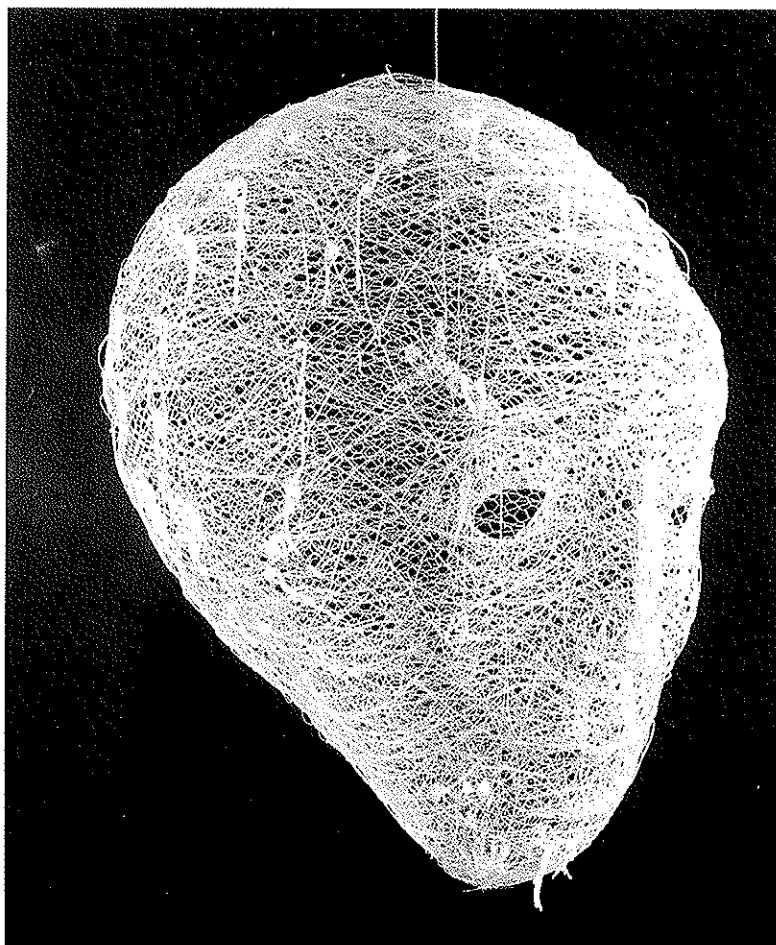
teachers as they sought to find a way for him to complete a set curriculum which included studio and life drawing. He found one. By using himself as a model in the classes, Tan says, "I started doing these figures during my life-drawing classes. When everyone was using paper and pencil to draw the figure, I started using wire. At first, I started doing just the outline of the figure, then I started to develop volume."

Tan's spacial explorations with cubes, spheres, and figures soon developed into metaphors for emotional ones. "Sometimes I just make objects, but figures are more interesting," he says. "Because I'm quite a passive person—I don't yell or shout—when I do a sculpture, I can put a kind of expression on which to release my stress. I feel much better after I've finished a sculpture."

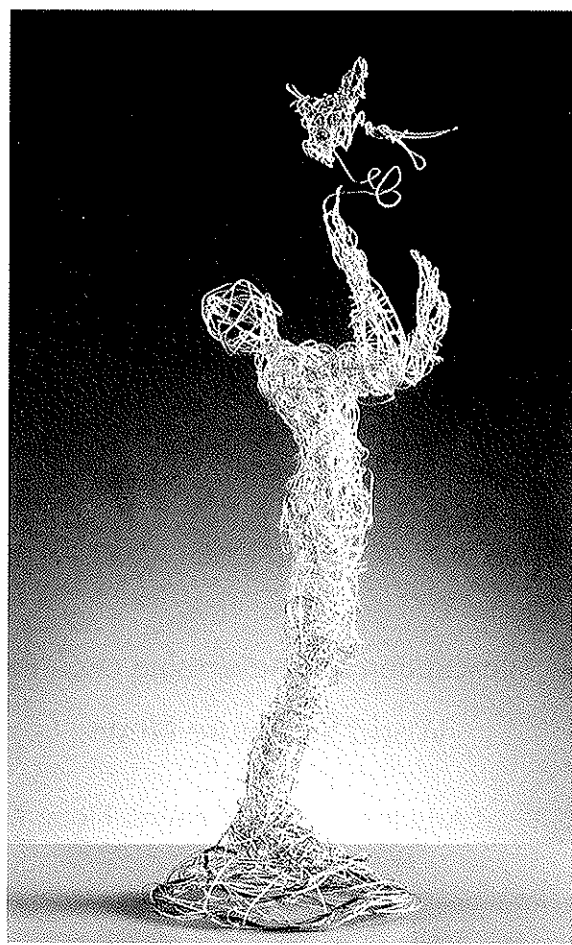
Even though Tan has worked with both wire and ceramics, he says, "If I was

to do pottery, it's just a round pot with no expression of my emotion. Sculpted forms are able to express my emotion and I think I am more able with wire, more comfortable. I'm not required to fire them, firing is a stage beyond my control, and I don't have to worry about color or texture." Tan's ceramic pieces are equally distinguishable for their sensuous lines and deeply personal, expressive form.

Although most of Tan's pieces are small—due to lack of studio space—experimentation with larger scale and volume have resulted in several stunning life-size pieces which ache with emotion and languid elegance. His current project is to make another large piece to hang against the wall in a lying position. Watching Tan's nimble fingers quickly fold and wrap the wire into form is fascinating, but to see the finished work is to see budding creative energy pushed and stretched to bright new horizons. *[Rachel Farnay]*



Victor Tan, **Freedom Within**, 1995, steel wire, 36 cm.



Victor Tan, **Set it Free**, 1995, steel wire, height 1.5 meters.