

JBBunk

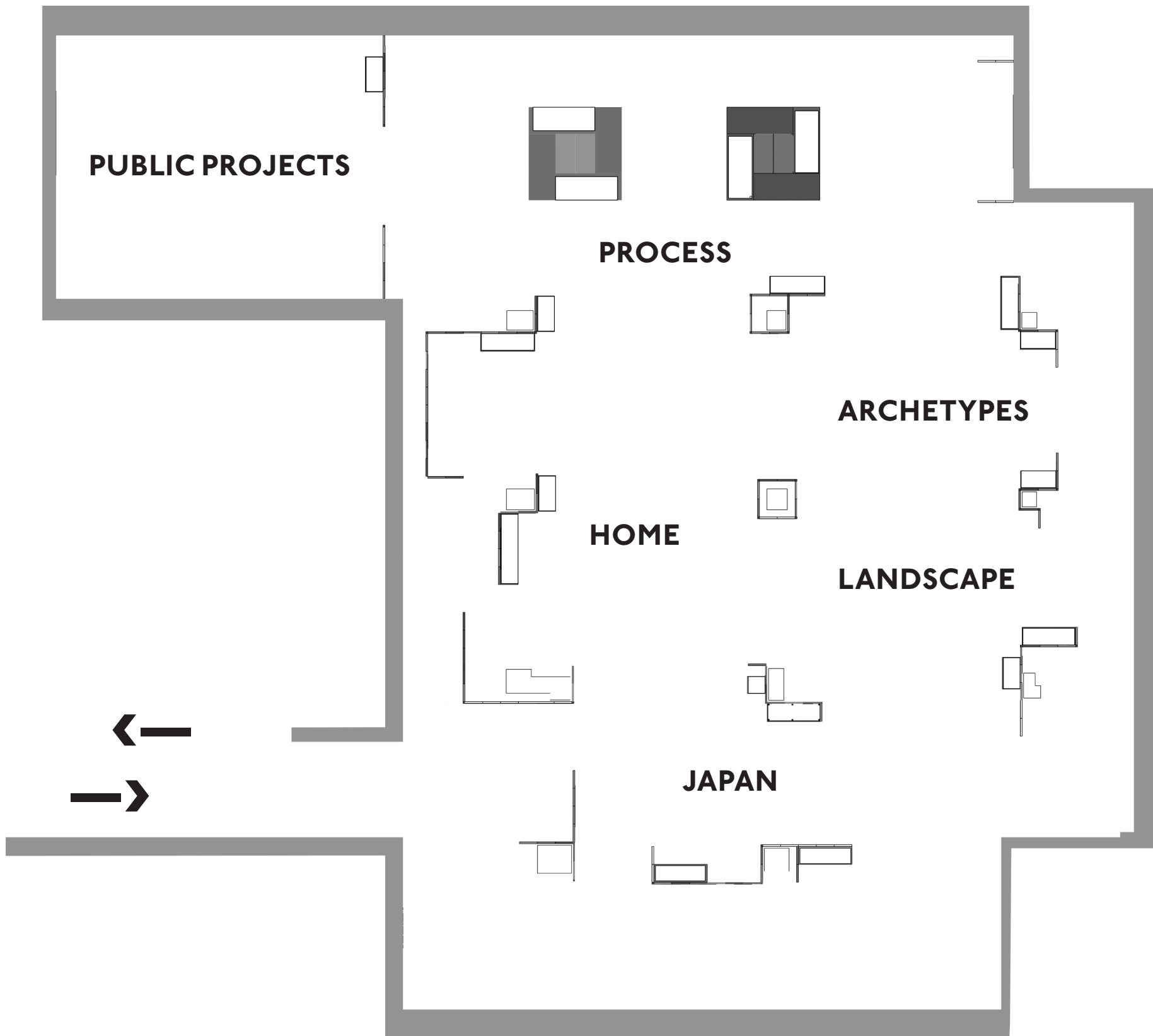


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**CONTINUUM**

**8 June–29 December** 2024

Fondation  
d'entreprise  
Martell



## CONTINUUM

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*CONTINUUM* is the first exhibition in Europe showcasing the work of American artist JB Blunk (James Blain Blunk, 1926–2002), a sculptor who combined art and craftsmanship, drawing inspiration from his deep and daily bond with nature.

Blunk began making work in the 1940s with the momentous discovery of Japanese ceramics, specifically the work of Japanese potter Shoji Hamada, while he was still a student at the University of California, Los Angeles. Drafted during the Korean War in 1951, he was determined to stay in Asia. He settled in **Japan** in 1952 and familiarized himself with Japanese ceramic techniques. In 1958, he settled in Northern California, where he built his **home** and studio, an entire work of art in itself.

Throughout his life, Blunk endeavored to establish a connection with the elements of nature and **landscape**, reviving ancestral and **archetypal** expressions. He did this with a simplicity that did not, however, exclude the monumentality of commissioned artworks for **public projects**.

His creations – carved in wood, ceramic, or stone, regularly coupled with painting, drawing, and jewelry – form a constellation of artworks combining different scales and creative **processes**. Leaving chance to do its work, with close attention to materials, Blunk went beyond all the usual dichotomies, refusing to choose between abstraction and figuration, hand and machine. Forever seeking to blend art and life, his artworks also reconcile the principles of feminine and masculine, sacred and profane.

While his Japanese aesthetics are reminiscent of artists of his generation (his elders Henry Moore, Isamu Noguchi, Constantin Brâncuși, and – more indirectly – Peter Voulkos, Lucio Fontana, and the land artists), Blunk's life was relatively far removed from the mainstream culture, without being cut off from the world and the issues of his time. Besides his recurring stays in Japan, his art was also shaped by several trips to Indonesia, Mexico, and Peru, as well as Carnac in Brittany, anchoring it in a broader universal history.

A figure of an alternative modernism rather than counterculture, Blunk was a humanist, a pioneer in his early sensitivity to ecology. His artworks are undeniably contemporary and celebrate the force of nature and life, which he invites us to treat with respect and humility, as he himself does.

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### ENTRY ARCH

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JB Blunk  
*Entry Arch*, 1977  
Redwood  
126 x 53 x 16"  
320 x 134.6 x 40.6 cm

Blunk's art establishes a real continuum between indoors and outdoors, between nature and culture. *Entry Arch*, which represents both a physical and symbolic passage, is the most iconic element of the site occupied by Blunk's house on the Inverness Ridge. He would revisit this form in several of his artworks – in different sizes and using various materials.

This portal, both sculptural and architectural, summarizes Blunk's entire approach – in terms of the material used (wood), the scale, and as a connection with the environment from which the sculpture originates (the forest) and with which it continues the dialogue. It is reminiscent of ancestral markers from sacred sites (such as megaliths or haniwas).

Embodying the typically Japanese idea of the *Ma* – the passage and interval that unites and connects two entities – *Entry Arch* avoids the purely Western binaries between functional and sculptural, or full and empty. Still intact on the premises today, it continues to evolve, covered in moss, in symbiosis with its surroundings.



## JB BLUNK 1926–2002

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<b>1926</b>	Born 28 August in Ottawa, Kansas	<b>1962</b>	Carves <i>Invisible Presence</i> , his first wood sculpture made with a chainsaw
<b>1946</b>	Moves to Santa Monica, CA Studies ceramics at UCLA under Laura Andreson	<b>1965</b>	Separates from Nancy Waite Harlow
<b>1948</b>	Sees exhibition of ceramics by Shoji Hamada	<b>1966</b>	Completes first public work, a bench in Leonard Park in Mt. Kisco, NY
<b>1949</b>	Earns B.A. from University of California, Los Angeles	<b>1967</b>	Meets the designer Gordon Ashby at Warren Callister's studio Gordon Ashby introduces JB Blunk to Paul Mills, Director of the Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA
<b>1949–50</b>	Sails and works in West Indies, including Haiti	<b>1968</b>	Lawrence Halprin commissions <i>Santa Cruz (Blunk's Hunk)</i> , for Stevenson College at University of California, Santa Cruz Meets Christine Nielson, his second partner
<b>1950</b>	Drafted into service during the Korean War Trains in Japan	<b>1969</b>	Installs <i>The Planet</i> at the Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA Installs <i>The Ark</i> at the Prairie School in Racine, WI Participates in 'Objects USA' at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC
<b>1952</b>	Meets Yoshiko (Shirley) Yamaguchi and Isamu Noguchi in Takumi, a mingei shop in Tokyo Discharged from the army	<b>1969–70</b>	Travels to Mexico, Peru, Haiti, and Guatemala
<b>1952–54</b>	Lives and works in Japan as an apprentice to two Japanese National Treasures: Kitaoji Rosanjin in Kamakura (4 months) and Kaneshige Toyo in Bizen (1 year)	<b>1971</b>	Receives Apprenticeship Grant from Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Installs <i>Lattin</i> at the Weyerhaeuser Company in Tacoma, WA Installs <i>3-scape (Threescape)</i> at Grubb & Ellis in Oakland, CA
<b>1954</b>	First solo exhibition of drawings and ceramics at Chuo-Koron, Tokyo, Japan, August 9–14	<b>1973–76</b>	Installs <i>Tassajara</i> at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, Carmel, CA
<b>1954–55</b>	Returns to the US Artist in residence at Palos Verde College in Rolling Hills, CA Meets his first partner, Nancy Waite Harlow Begins making jewelry	<b>1974</b>	Installs <i>The Muse</i> at The Experiment in International Living in Brattleboro, VT <i>Outdoor Sculpture</i> , Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA
<b>1955</b>	Moves to Plantation, Northern California Works on a sheep ranch that is also a children's summer camp Builds his first wood-fired kiln on the ranch property	<b>1977</b>	Meets his friend and assistant Rick Yoshimoto in Inverness, CA
<b>1956</b>	Moves to Inverness, CA Group show at Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA	<b>1978</b>	Receives California State Art in Public Places Program competition Award for sculpture Daughter, Mariah Nielson, born 15 November Solo show, <i>JB Blunk Sculptures, 1952–1977</i> , Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, CA
<b>1957</b>	Isamu Noguchi introduces JB Blunk to Gordon Onslow Ford First son, Bruno, born 3 November	<b>1979</b>	Receives Cultural Exchange Travel Grant to Indonesia, U.S.I.C.A Installs <i>The Magic Boat</i> at the Orientation Center for the Blind, Albany, CA Installs <i>Greens</i> , at Greens restaurant, San Francisco, CA
<b>1958</b>	Helps construct roof of Jacqueline Johnson and Gordon Onslow Ford's house in Inverness Jacqueline Johnson and Gordon Onslow Ford gift JB Blunk and Nancy Waite Harlow one acre of land on their property Group show at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA	<b>1982</b>	<i>100 Plates Plus</i> , at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND Group show at American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, NY
<b>1959</b>	<i>Contemporary Japanese Ceramic Art</i> , Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan		
<b>1959–62</b>	JB Blunk and Nancy Waite Harlow build their home and studio Second son, Rufus, born 16 February Learns to use a chainsaw		

**1983** Travels to Japan  
Installs *The Fallen Giant* at the Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley, CA

**1984** Installs *Alpha + 2* at the public library in Thousand Oaks, CA  
Installs seating sculpture at Martinelli Park in Inverness, CA

**1985** Organizes the first biennial ceramics show with Rick Yoshimoto at the Dance Palace in Point Reyes Station; continues until 1993

**1986** Receives California State Art in Public Places Program competition award for sculpture  
Solo Show *A Sculptor's Place*, San Francisco Craft and Folk Art Museum, San Francisco, CA

**1987** Installs *Station Hill* at the Menlo Park, Caltrain Station, CA  
Installs seating sculpture at the Desert Cafe Restaurant in Santa Fe, NM

**1988** Receives First Prize and Honorable Mention for Garden Design in the UC Davis Arboretum International Design Arts Competition with Land studio

**1989** Lectures at California College of Arts and Craft (now CCA), San Francisco, CA

**1990** Art Consultant to Land Studio, MW Steele Group Architects, and architect Raphael Garcia on the Kansas City Cultural Corridor proposal for the Brush Creek Waterway

**1993** Installs *Rolling Stone* in Mountain View, CA  
Installs *Six Stones (Group of Six)* at the Littlefield Center, Stanford University, CA

**2000** Solo show, *California Spirit*, Bolinas Museum, Bolinas, CA

**2002** Dies 15 June in Inverness, CA

## COLLECTIONS

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City of Menlo Park, CA

City of Mountain View, CA

City of Thousand Oaks, CA

Coyote Point Museum, San Mateo, CA

Experiment in International Living, Brattleboro, VT

Greens Restaurant, San Francisco, CA

Grubb and Ellis, Oakland, CA

JB Blunk Estate, Inverness, CA

Lawrence Hall of Science, Berkeley, CA

Leonard Park. Mt. Kisco, NY

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA

Lucid Art Foundation, Inverness, CA

M+ Museum, Hong Kong

Oakland Museum of California, CA

Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY

Orientation Center for the Blind, Albany, CA

Palms Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, CA

San Francisco Zen Center, San Francisco, CA

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA

Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA

Stevenson College, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA

Tassajara Mountain Zen Center, Carmel Valley, CA

Weyerhaeuser Company, Tacoma, WA

## JAPAN

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In 1948, Blunk discovered the work of ceramist Shoji Hamada, the master of Mingei, while studying at the University of California, Los Angeles with artist Laura Andreson. Japanese Bizen pottery – fired with a wood kiln and unenameled – marked a decisive turning point in his life and his art. He decided to pursue this passion by going back to its origins.

While serving in the army during the Korean War, in 1951, he traveled to Tokyo on leave, where by chance he met the artist Isamu Noguchi and his wife. Won over by Blunk's enthusiasm, Noguchi introduced him to master potter and Japanese National Treasure Kitaōji Rosanjin, and Blunk decided to stay in Japan.

In 1953, after spending four months in Rosanjin's workshop, he became the apprentice of another master potter and National Treasure, Toyo Kaneshige. This is when his training really began. In Imbe, the ceramic area in Bizen Province, he learned to extract his own clay from the ground, and to fire it in kilns inspired by those used in the 16th century. This experience had an effect that was both aesthetic and spiritual, influencing his work and his entire existence.

Practicing ceramics taught him to respect the elements – earth, water, air, and fire – and also to welcome the hazards that are inherent in the technique, rather than trying to have complete control over his environment. Through this teaching, albeit rigorous, he learned patience and endurance.

Blunk's early works (ikebana vases, incense holders, wash paintings, and inks on rice paper) clearly reference Japanese culture, prefiguring his later artworks, which are more directly related to nature. artworks, which are more directly related to nature.

During these few years, he also appeared in an official film presenting Japan abroad, and exhibited his first creations at the Chuo-Koron Gallery in Tokyo, before returning to Los Angeles. Only a vase and a few rare ceramics and archival photos remain from this time.

He returned to Japan several times. Shinto aesthetics and philosophy, with an animist dimension, influenced him throughout his life. The totemic sculpture *Presence* is one of its many incarnations.

## MINGEI MOVEMENT

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Mingei – derived from “minshu” (people) and “kogeï” (craftsmanship), is a philosophical movement that was created in 1925 in Japan, in response to increasing urbanization and Western industrialization. Celebrating popular craftsmanship (in ceramic, wood, lacquer, ironwork, basketry, and textile) for its simple and accessible beauty, as well as its usage value, the mingei influence is reflected in all of Blunk's artworks.

Its first three founding masters were philosopher Sōetsu Yanagi and potters Shoji Hamada and Kanjiro Kawai. Thereafter, English ceramist Bernard Leach, who helped to spread the movement in Europe, the UK and the United States, wood engraver Shikō Munakata, and fabric painter Keisuke Serizawa joined the movement.

Discovering Japanese ceramics as a student, in a show at Scripps College, Blunk's attention was particularly caught by Bizen ware (named after the city of one of the Six Ancient Kilns, along with Seto, Echizen, Shigaraki, Tokoname, and Tamba, each with a specific style). Bizen ware is known for its brown-red color, its solidity, its unglazed finish, and its external marks that are a result of its firing technique.

In his book *The Beauty of Everyday Things* (1933), Sōetsu Yanagi defines the foundations of Mingei: “It needs to be modest but not shoddy, inexpensive but not fragile. Dishonesty, perversity, luxury, these are what Mingei objects must absolutely avoid. All that is natural, sincere, safe, and simple – these are the characteristics of Mingei art.”

– Sōetsu Yanagi, *The Beauty of Everyday Things* (1933), Penguin group, 2019

## LANDSCAPE

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Whether in Bizen during his apprenticeship, or in Northern California, Blunk's aesthetics and practice were continually shaped by the environment and landscape where he found and collected his materials.

The magnificent spectacle of nature made him sensitive to the infinitely large and the infinitely small, such as the ocean and cliffs just a few kilometers from Inverness, as well as hills and forests where diverse species of trees (oaks, pine bishops and sequoias), sometimes thousands of years old, co-exist. Wood was his main raw material, first of all for the construction of his house, then for his sculptures. He salvaged thousand-year-old tree stumps and trunks that were destined for destruction by local logging companies. He also collected driftwood and sea-polished stones, which he arranged and carved in the form of small poetic sculptures, and created sawdust-based paintings. His two and three-dimensional pieces composed of natural elements allude to the surrounding landscape and the cycles of nature, through their material character or their iconography, such as the topography (topography of a garden in low relief, or the imprint of the rings of the wood depicting the passage of time and seasons).

Next to the house, Blunk and his first partner, Nancy Waite Harlow, maintained both a small Zen garden and a vegetable garden to ensure a certain amount of self-sufficiency for their family. The Blunk library contains several important works connecting nature and politics, such as *Walden* by libertarian author Thoreau or the Earthsea cycle, Ursula Le Guin's science fiction masterpiece. Blunk's references to landscape were, however, always more poetic than literal. For Blunk, art does not represent nature, but instead embodies it.

## HISTORY OF LOGGING IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

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Blunk would drive to towns like Mendocino, Point Arena, and Crescent City to buy redwood burls from the logging companies and subcontracted loggers. This industrial and commercial activity dates back to the second half of the 19th century and took off with the movements of populations driven by the gold rush. At that time, it took an entire week of work to cut down a thousand-year-old redwood that could be used to build six houses. The majority of houses in the region were made of this wood, especially houses in San Francisco. When Blunk moved there, each variety was destined for a specific market. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, only diseased trees (defective culls) were felled, and the wood was cut up by a chain of subcontractors. Parts with nodes have no value. Blunk was determined to give these complex and interconnected shapes a second life.

Referring to his wooden sculptures, Noguchi said "JB does them honor in carving them as he does, finding true art in the working, allowing their ponderous bulk, waking them from their long sleep to become part of our own life and times, sharing with us the afterglow of a land that was once here."

– Text written by Noguchi in 1978 for the exhibition *JB Blunk Sculptures, 1952–1977*, at the Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles



## HOME

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A few years after returning to the US, Blunk settled in the West Marin area, north of San Francisco. Blunk had the artist Noguchi to thank for a new decisive encounter, when Noguchi introduced him to the British surrealist painter Gordon Onslow Ford and his wife, Jacqueline Johnson. They shared a common interest in Japanese aesthetics and philosophy. In the summer of 1958, Blunk helped Onslow Ford and Johnson build the curved roof of their house above the town of Inverness. In return, Onslow Ford and Johnson invited Blunk and his first partner, Nancy Waite Harlow, to choose a piece of land on their vast property in order to settle there. The young couple seized this opportunity. Creative and determined, they spent three years salvaging all the materials they needed to build the house and the studio.

The simplicity of the house, built entirely by their hands, is reminiscent of those built by American pioneers, yet also reflects Japanese aesthetics, blending perfectly into the landscape. The orientation and location of each window emphasizes and frames the beauty of the mountain ridge in the distance and the valley below. The dim light expresses a kind of praise for the shadows, and its ambiance is both rustic and warm.<sup>1</sup>

This all-encompassing work of art, changing and evolving, in return inspired his work and is still the home of his family today. Blunk also furnished the interior, sculpting niches and sinks, and creating tableware and furniture. He also made jewelry for his loved ones, as well as many functional sculptures.

Blunk had a tendency to say “I just do it, that's all”<sup>2</sup>, even before the trend emerged for alternative houses (sometimes referred to as “woodbutcher's art”) endorsed by his friend and architect Sim van der Ryn. Forever focusing on quality over quantity, the “do-it-yourself” attitude was obvious to him, an implicit criticism of the race towards consumerism that began at the same time.

### TOKONOMA AND INTERIORS

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The design of the house gradually involved the entire interior decor, including its structural elements. Blunk made most of the furniture, such as the many bookcases, beds, benches, and stools that he produced throughout his career. And he made all the objects that are necessary for everyday life – ceramic and wooden tableware (cups, mezcal glasses, plates, dishes, carafes, salad servers, chopping board, vases, candle holders, soap dishes, incense holders, coat hooks, etc.). He also created the entire lighting system in the house, as small suspended sculptures, and he even went so far as to sculpt an impressive sink out of wood.

The niches located around the house are freely inspired by the traditional Japanese tokonoma reception room for welcoming guests. Designed from an assembly of scrap wood, the *Scrap Wall* contains recesses housing artworks and objects.

On the walls, Blunk also liked to hang works of art created by his family and friends (like the paintings by artist Gordon Onslow Ford or the small mirror created by his second partner, Christine Nielson), alongside artefacts from his travels, reflecting and honoring different traditions and crafts.

1. Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, (Leete's Island Books, First Edition, 1977)

2. JB Blunk quoted by Olivia H. Emery in *Craftsman Lifestyle: Gentle Revolution* (California Design Publications, 1977), p. 177)



## ARCHETYPES

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Whether made of clay, wood, stone or bone, Blunk's artworks convey a timeless power. In Inverness, he lived surrounded by dense forests and ancient streams for which he had immense respect. He collected stones and small mammal bones. By paying attention to their intrinsic qualities, through subtle assemblies, he was able to create sculptures and objects that are full of meaning.

The abstract and suggestive simplicity of a tree trunk or the archaic roughness of clay blend together with non-Western arts and cultures that worship fertility and the spirits of nature. His works include many references both to time and space: from prehistoric Japanese Jōmon pottery to European dolmens or Indian lingams, from the rock paintings of the Chumash American Indians to those on sand by Australian Aborigines, from the stylized figurines of the Cyclades to North American prehistoric birdstones, or animist totems from American Indian art to African statuary and furniture. Blunk's works create a dialogue with each beholder by stimulating our tendency to recognize figures, bodies, and landscapes. Blunk saw art as part of a bigger, "magical" process. For him, magic was "the mystery and process of life."

Besides being sensitive to the vitalist and holistic approach of Jungian psychoanalysis, and although he did not take part in the new age or hippie movements as such, for many years Blunk kept a record of his dreams in notebooks, in search of his own truth in the world.

## COSMOGONY

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A fan of psychoanalysis and an avid reader of universal cosmogonic mythologies, Blunk believed in ancestral symbolic forces. He produced many "self-piercing" creations reminiscent of Surrealism, a movement also inspired by psychoanalysis. One example is *Self-Piercing Element (Hummingbird #4 Arch)* a sculpture which is both organic and sharp-pointed like a flint.

His work reflects this recurring intersection of sexual and spiritual elements. Many of his sculptures (torsos, stools, candlesticks, cups, etc.) represent phallic fertility symbols, while other creations feature protruding breasts or female vulvas, in a primitive style.

"My way of working, the core of all my sculpture, is a theme, the soul of the piece. Sometimes it is evoked by the material, sometimes it is an idea or concept in my own mind. It is always present, regardless of the material, size or scale of what will be the finished piece. On occasions, when I work with found objects, the object itself, evokes a theme. In these cases, I do very little to change it. One could say the theme is recognized."

— Statement by JB Blunk dated November 5, 1998 and reproduced in *Woodwork Magazine*, October 30, 1999

## PROCESS

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Blunk built his studio just a few meters from his house. He was intensely disciplined in maintaining his daily practice, working all day long, stopping only for a brief lunch and his afternoon tea.

He began to carve wood in 1962. "I knew how to use a chainsaw and it was one of those things. One day you just start", he recalls.<sup>3</sup>

Between working on commissions and exhibitions, he attached great importance to play and experimentation, appreciating chance discoveries and accidents, somewhat pragmatically. In this way, Blunk built a wood-fired kiln made of earth. However, the kiln did not function properly so he ended up firing his ceramics using an electric kiln in his studio.

Whether he shaped clay with his hands, cut wood with a chainsaw, tried his hand at weaving, or made jewelry, Blunk's practice used a vocabulary of diverse forms.

Although his best-known works of art are monumental – such as his home in Inverness and his public sculptures and seating installations – Blunk often worked on a smaller scale, using objects and materials that he collected from nature. He often modeled sketches or sculptures out of redwood for special commissions, and their shapes inspired him to create large sculptures as well as household objects. The treatment of his sculptures varies between a raw rendering (*Scrap Chair*) and a perfectly executed finish (*Continuum*).

Working on a small scale could also be a means of returning to a particularly interesting shape, such as a keyhole pattern, an irregular and dynamic circle, or self-piercing shapes.

To create his large sculptures, Blunk did not work alone. His assistant and friend Rick Yoshimoto helped him with the complex implementation of his ideas. Together, they also regularly organized ceramic "biennial" exhibitions at the Dance Palace Community Center in Point Reyes Station. In addition, Blunk organized "Family Shows," where his children and his partner, Christine Nielson, displayed their creations. Blunk participated in major professional group shows such as *Objects USA* in 1969.

Blunk was able to say, "I enter into a relationship with the material I am using, and as in all relationships, there are opportunities for surprise".<sup>4</sup>

3. JB Blunk quoted by Olivia H. Emery, *Craftsman Lifestyle: Gentle Revolution* (California Design Publications, 1977), p. 176

4. Statement by JB Blunk dated November 5, 1998, reproduced in *Woodwork Magazine*, October 30, 1999

## JEWELRY

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Blunk began to make jewelry in the mid-1950s at Palos Verdes College in Los Angeles, where he taught ceramics for a short period of time. While his monumental artworks tended to honor and amplify the qualities of a single material, his minimalist and elegant jewelry was often created using several materials, such as gold and walnut or bone and brass. He continued to apply this principle to some of his sculptures, combining stone and wood, or bronze in the 1980s.

The few jewelry pieces he made (bracelet, necklace, earrings...) are sculptural and wearable, unique and intended for his loved ones.

Blunk's process in general, and that of his jewelry in particular, demonstrates what anthropologist Tim Ingold called "morphogenesis," the equal commitment of the producer and the material, co-creating shapes together.

These pieces illustrate Blunk's ability to create artworks on extremely diverse scales – from a model, to an intimate object, to the monumentality of a work of art in the public space.

## PUBLIC PROJECTS

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Blunk regularly created pieces commissioned for public spaces. These practical sculptures were intended as both collective seating and relational installations, often sculpted from a single piece of redwood, one of Northern California's main wood species. Examples include *The Planet* (1969), his best-known work of art, created for the Oakland Museum of California, and *Santa Cruz, (Blunk's Hunk)* (1968), which he made for University of California, Santa Cruz, as well as *The Magic Boat* (1979) produced for the Orientation Center for the Blind. He also created *Greens* (1978), the large sculptural table at one of the first vegetarian restaurants in San Francisco, and *Six Stones* (1993–94) for Stanford University. There are at least seventeen public commission projects in total, scattered across different regions of the United States, although most of them are located in Northern California.

As always, Blunk allowed the natural characteristics of each tree trunk – its rings, knots, folds, curves, and roots – to guide his movements and determine his cuts.

Often designed for urban contexts, Blunk's public sculptures, which are more widely accessible and engaging than industrial designs from the same period, are aimed at an intergenerational audience – adults, students, teenagers, and children – offering everyone the chance to enjoy a sensory experience. Blunk invites us to take part in the tactile and physical encounter of sitting within his sculptures, or even climbing on them. The artist Charles Ray describes the users of Blunk's sculptures as "monkeys in the trees," and adds, "when I sit on a stump [...], I'm in two places simultaneously", here, and down there, in nature.<sup>5</sup>

With his artworks, we can converse, we can rest, but we can also observe the world around us, with which we form an inseparable whole.

## LIST OF PUBLIC COMMISSIONS

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Embodying an effort to democratize art for the attention of diverse and often urban users, these living sculptures carved out of solid wood and located in outdoor public spaces or within businesses, are today the subject of complex conservation and restoration challenges.

Public commissions in chronological order, according to the JB Blunk Estate's latest research:

*Mt Kisco*, 1966, cypress, Leonard Park, Mt Kisco, New York

*Santa Cruz (Blunk's Hunk)*, 1968, redwood, Stevenson College, University of California, Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, California

*The Planet (Ring)*, 1968–69, redwood, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, California

*The ARK*, 1969, redwood and steel, The Prairie School Racine, Wisconsin (commissioned by SC Johnson)

*The LATTIN (Birds in Flight/The Burt)*, 1971, redwood, Weyerhaeuser Company, Tacoma, Washington

*3-scape (Threescape)*, 1971, redwood, Grubb & Ellis, Oakland, California

*The Muse*, 1973–74, redwood, The Experiment in International Living, Brattleboro, Vermont

*Tassajara*, 1973–76, redwood, Tassajara Mountain Zen Center, Carmel Valley, California

*Greens*, 1978–79, redwood, Greens restaurant, Fort Mason, San Francisco, California

*The Magic Boat*, 1979, redwood and stone, Orientation Center for the Blind, Albany, California

*The Fallen Giant*, 1983, redwood, Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Berkeley, California

*Alpha + 2*, 1984, redwood, Thousand Oaks Library, California

*Martinelli Park*, 1984, redwood, Inverness, California

*Santa Fe*, 1986–87, redwood, Desert Café restaurant, Santa Fe, New Mexico

*Station Hill*, 1987, redwood, Menlo Park Caltrain Station, Menlo Park, California

*Rolling Stone*, 1993, river stone, Mountain View, California

*Six Stones (Group of Six)*, 1993–94, river stone, Littlefield Center at Stanford University, Stanford, California

5. Charles Ray in the exhibition catalog *JB Blunk*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, March 12–May 15, 2010

## LIST OF WORKS

- 1** JB Blunk  
*Shield - Bizen Vase*, 1953  
Ceramic  
10 1/4 x 3 1/4 x 4 1/2"  
26 x 8.3 x 11.4 cm
- 2** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1948  
Ceramic  
7 x 1 1/2"  
17.8 x 3.8 cm
- 3** JB Blunk  
*Platter*, 1953  
Ceramic  
14 x 12 x 12"  
35.6 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm
- 4** JB Blunk  
Untitled, 1954  
Ceramic  
1 x 7 1/2"  
2.5 x 19.1 cm
- 5** JB Blunk  
*Incense Burner with Pierced Top and Front*, 1953  
Ceramic  
6 1/2 x 5"  
16.5 x 12.7 cm
- 6** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1953  
Ink on rice paper  
24 x 13"  
61 x 33 cm
- 7** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1953  
Ink on Japanese rice paper  
15 1/2 x 10 1/2"  
39.4 x 26.7 cm
- 8** Artist Unknown  
Untitled, c. 1952  
Black and white photograph  
11 x 14 x 1"  
27.9 x 35.6 x 2.5 cm
- I was very directly influenced by Zen because I lived with traditionally classic-minded people [in Japan]. The potter that I lived with [Toyo Kaneshige] was not a Buddhist. He practiced Shinto, the indigenous religion of Japan. The traditional Shinto religion was his way of relating to the world. Shinto has to do with reverence for what came before, not only in the animate and human form, but also in all of nature in a very complete way.*
- JB Blunk in an interview with Mimi Jacobs, *Pacific Sun*, June 21, 1973
- 9** Artist Unknown  
Untitled, c. 1952  
Black and white photograph  
11 x 14 x 1"  
27.9 x 35.6 x 2.5 cm
- 10** JB Blunk  
*Water Garden*, c. 1972  
Ceramic  
21 x 21 x 4"  
53.3 x 53.3 x 10.2 cm
- To build, to plant, whatever you intend, To rear the column, or the arch to bend, To swell the terras, or to sink the grot; In all, let nature never be forgot. Consult the Genius of the Place in all That tells the waters or to rise, or fall Or helps th' ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale, Or scoops in circling theatres the vale; Calls in the country, catches opening glades, Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending lines; Paints as you plant, and as you work, designs.*
- Alexander Pope, 'Epistles to Several Persons: Epistle IV, To Richard Boyle,' 1731
- 11** JB Blunk  
*Garden*, 1975  
Ceramic  
11 1/2 x 2"  
29.2 x 5.1 cm
- 12** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1975  
Clay and rock  
3 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 1"  
8.9 x 3.8 x 2.5 cm
- 13** JB Blunk  
Untitled, 1991  
Acrylic on Redwood  
23 3/4 x 17 x 1"  
60.3 x 43.2 x 2.5 cm
- In his meditation the painter explores the jungles, the deserts and the spaces of the mind. He goes through chaos, danger and delight. But it is in the clear place, the open place that something appears that was not there before.*
- Gordon Onslow Ford, 'The Function of Art', *Painting in the Instant*, 1964, p.18
- 14** JB Blunk  
*Black Rising Moon*, 1970  
Acrylic on paper  
17 1/2 x 13 1/4"  
44.4 x 33.7 cm
- 15** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Acrylic on redwood bark  
11 x 23"  
27.9 x 58.4 cm
- 16** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1990  
Acrylic on redwood scrap  
14 1/2 x 13 1/4 x 1 1/2"  
36.8 x 33.7 x 3.8 cm
- 17** JB Blunk  
Untitled, 1970  
Ink on paper  
24 x 19 1/2"  
61 x 49.5 cm
- 18** JB Blunk  
Untitled, 1990  
Acrylic and sawdust on paper  
38 x 24 1/2"  
96.5 x 62.2 cm
- 19** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1990  
River stone and redwood  
12 1/2 x 14"  
31.8 x 35.6 cm
- 20** JB Blunk  
Untitled, 1987  
River stone  
10 x 9 1/2 x 4"  
25.4 x 24.1 x 10.2 cm
- 21** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Redwood  
18 x 10"  
45.7 x 25.4 cm
- 22** JB Blunk  
*Self-Piercing Element (Hummingbird/#4 Arch)*, 1976  
Redwood  
58 x 41 x 24"  
147.3 x 104.1 x 61 cm
- To Blunk, who lived and worked with Isamu Noguchi as a young man in Japan, as well as with the master potters Rosanjin and Kaneshige, the essence of the wood must be found in somewhat the way that Michelangelo found forms within stone. But the spiritual premise is radically different. It is not to separate art from nature, but as in a well-ordered tea ceremony, to make them inseparable.*
- Allan Temko, *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 9th, 1981
- 23** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1975  
Ceramic  
7 1/2 x 3 1/4"  
19.1 x 8.3 cm
- 24** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1975  
Ceramic  
5 x 3 1/2 x 4"  
12.7 x 8.9 x 10.2 cm



- 25** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Ceramic  
8 1/2 x 3 3/4"  
21.6 x 1.9 cm
- 26** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1980  
Ceramic  
11 x 8 1/4"  
27.9 x 21 cm
- 27** JB Blunk  
Untitled, 1995  
Ceramic  
12 x 9 1/2 x 2"  
30.5 x 24.1 x 5.1 cm
- 28** JB Blunk  
*Mariab's Plate*, 1980  
Ceramic  
10 x 10"  
25.4 x 25.4 cm
- 29** JB Blunk  
*JB's Plate*, c. 1985  
Ceramic  
10 3/4 x 10"  
27.3 x 25.4 cm
- 30** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1952  
Ceramic  
4 1/2 x 3"  
11.4 x 7.6 cm
- 31** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Ceramic  
3 1/2 x 2 3/4"  
8.9 x 7 cm
- 32** JB Blunk  
*Christine's Coffee Cup*, c. 1970  
Ceramic  
3 1/2 x 3 1/2"  
8.9 x 8.9 cm
- 33** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Ceramic  
4 x 4"  
10.2 x 10.2 cm
- 34** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1975  
Ceramic  
4 x 3 1/2"  
10.2 x 8.9 cm
- 35** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1985  
Ceramic  
1 x 7 1/2 x 7 1/2"  
2.5 x 19.1 x 19.1 cm
- 36** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1980  
Ceramic  
7 1/2 x 12 1/4"  
17.78 x 31.1 cm
- 37** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1985  
Ceramic  
1/2 x 8 3/4"  
1.3 x 22.2 cm
- 38** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1990  
Ceramic  
9 x 1 3/4"  
22.9 x 4.4 cm
- 39** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Ceramic  
4 1/2 x 4 1/4 x 3/4"  
11.4 x 10.8 x 1.9 cm
- 40** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1980  
Ceramic  
1 1/2 x 1 1/2"  
3.8 x 3.8 cm
- 41** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1980  
Ceramic  
1 1/2 x 1 1/2"  
3.8 x 3.8 cm
- 42** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1980  
Ceramic  
1 1/2 x 1 1/2"  
3.8 x 3.8 cm
- 43** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1980  
Ceramic  
1 1/2 x 1 1/2"  
3.8 x 3.8 cm
- 44** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1980  
Ceramic  
1 1/2 x 1 1/2"  
3.8 x 3.8 cm
- 45** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1980  
Ceramic  
1 1/2 x 1 1/2"  
3.8 x 3.8 cm
- 46** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1969-70  
Ceramic  
7 x 7 1/4 x 7"  
17.8 x 18.4 x 17.8 cm
- 47** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1968  
Ceramic  
4 3/4 x 3 1/4"  
12.1 x 8.3 cm
- 48** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1990  
Ceramic  
6 3/4 x 7 1/4 x 1"  
17.1 x 18.4 x 2.5 cm
- 49** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Ceramic  
5 1/4 x 4 1/2 x 3"  
13.3 x 11.4 x 7.6 cm
- 50** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1990  
Ceramic  
4 x 3 1/4"  
10.2 x 8.3 cm
- 51** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1990  
Ceramic  
3 1/2 x 3 1/4"  
8.9 x 8.3 cm
- 52** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1980  
Black Walnut and gold  
3 3/4 x 3 1/4"  
9.5 x 8.3 cm
- 53** JB Blunk  
*Christine*, c. 1990  
Stone  
7 1/2 x 8 x 3"  
19.1 x 20.3 x 7.6 cm
- 54** JB Blunk  
Untitled  
– serving spoon set, c. 1970  
Redwood, eucalyptus  
11 1/2 x 3 1/2"  
29.2 x 8.9 cm
- 55** JB Blunk  
Untitled  
– serving spoon set, 1970  
Eucalyptus  
11 x 4"  
27.9 x 10.2 cm
- 56** JB Blunk  
*Stool #7*, 1971  
Redwood  
17 x 13 3/4 x 11 1/2"  
43.2 x 34.9 x 29.2 cm
- 57** JB Blunk  
*Stool #2*, 1971  
Redwood  
14 1/2 x 16 x 12"  
36.8 x 40.6 x 30.5 cm

**58** JB Blunk  
*Stool #1*, c. 1965  
Redwood  
28 x 12 x 21"  
71.1 x 30.5 x 53.3 cm

**59** JB Blunk  
*Mariah's Chair*, 1978  
Redwood  
42 x 36 x 30"  
106.7 x 91.4 x 76.2 cm

*I see forms that are stylized representation. A perched bird. I see an alien in the negative space of the arch, I see a stable arch-like form that is held in place by the kinesthetic of the wood. When I look at the sculptures, my expectations of what wood can do are met in the room in front of me. I feel that the furniture is very powerful in the surprising way it enters our space. When I sit on a Blunk stool, I sit on a stump in the forest—I'm in two places simultaneously.*

– Charles Ray, from the exhibition catalog for *JB Blunk*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, 2010

**60** Christine Nielson  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Ceramic, wood, and mirror  
17 x 14 x 3"  
43.2 x 35.6 x 7.6 cm

**61** Art Rogers  
Untitled, 1985  
Black and white photograph  
18 1/4 x 1 1/4"  
46.4 x 3.2 cm

*I consider this whole place—house, studio, fruit trees, vegetables, garden and chickens—one big sculpture.*

– JB Blunk, 1977

**62** Artist Unknown  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Black and white photograph  
18 x 24 x 2"  
45.7 x 61 x 5.1 cm

*The way I think and relate to the place around me and the environment, ecology, had its inception [in Japan] and was important in forming an idea of a way of life. But I had no plan. The building of the house, and all that came after, was the result of other experiences after I returned. I moved to Inverness to build a kiln and to make ceramics. I was afforded the opportunity of a place to live and work and, with all of my being, I was hoping to do that.*

– JB Blunk, interview with Rita Lawrence, for the exhibition *JB Blunk Sculptures, 1952–1977*, at the Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, 1978

**63** Artist Unknown  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Black and white photograph  
18 x 24 x 2"  
45.7 x 61 x 5.1 cm

**64** Artist Unknown  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Black and white photograph  
18 x 24 x 2"  
45.7 x 61 x 5.1 cm

*I met JB through Isamu Noguchi. They had met at a mingei shop in Tokyo, where JB was seeking out the master potters he'd studied at UCLA. After some time in Japan, JB said to Isamu, "I want to go back to the states. What do I do," and Isamu told him to go see Gordon Onslow Ford, who owned this mountain in Inverness. Gordon was always very generous and gave him a piece of the mountain when he arrived. JB knew immediately he had found his home. When you visited JB in Inverness and walked through the groves of bay and redwood trees, you couldn't help but respond to the smell, the texture—it was pure magic. He had logs piled up along the side of the house destined for use. To listen to him describe his dreams for future projects was an experience like walking through wonderland; his excitement was captivating. The house itself was a living artwork. He built everything. You went into the house that he built, sat on a bench he carved, at a table he created, drinking from a cup JB made. His paintings hung on walls he assembled. There was a sense of great unity, yet each work is imbued with its own unique spirit.*

– Luchita Hurtado, from the exhibition catalog *JB Blunk: painting, drawing, sculpture* at The Landing, Los Angeles, 2015

**65** Artist Unknown  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Black and white photograph  
18 x 24 x 2"  
45.7 x 61 x 5.1 cm

**66** JB Blunk  
*Standing Figure*, 1974  
Bronze  
12 x 6 x 4"  
30.5 x 15.2 x 10.2 cm

**67** JB Blunk  
*Torso Mask*, 1979  
Bronze  
13 x 11 3/4"  
33 x 29.8 cm

**68** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1980  
Ceramic  
8 x 9"  
20.32 x 22.86 cm

**69** JB Blunk  
*Muse 4*, 1975  
Ceramic  
10 x 6"  
25.4 x 15.2 cm

**70** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Ceramic  
8 x 5 1/2"  
20.3 x 14 cm

*Reflecting on his "wrestling around with the word artist" over the past years, JB draws on his experiences in other cultures. "In our culture, art is usually a profane as opposed to a spiritual act. Indigenous art had to do with ceremony and ritual. It was for everyone. It was not separate. There weren't narrow parameters. Even now, the debate goes on about my work: 'Is it art or is it craft?' People ask me if my sculpture is furniture. I don't make any distinctions. We are trying as an infant culture to create new rituals—the object contains the rituals between me and the other."*

– Interview with Elizabeth Whitney for the *Marin Review*, 1986

**71** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1990  
Ceramic  
12 x 12 x 1"  
30.5 x 30.5 x 2.5 cm

**72** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1975  
Acrylic on redwood scrap  
28 x 17.75 x 1"  
71.1 x 45.1 x 2.54 cm

**73** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1990  
River stone  
6 x 2"  
15.2 x 5.1 cm

**74** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1990  
River stone  
5 1/4 x 4"  
13.3 x 10.2 cm

**75** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1990  
River stone  
6 1/4 x 2"  
15.9 x 5.1 cm

**76** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Stone and wood  
14 1/2 x 16 x 17"  
36.8 x 40.6 x 43.2 cm

**77** JB Blunk  
*Presence*, c. 1968–72  
Eucalyptus  
85 x 22 x 20"  
215.9 x 55.9 x 50.8 cm

“...the largest and most compelling, dating from 1969–1972, and properly entitled *Presence*, dominates the center of the space. It’s a piece of eucalyptus seven feet tall, which Blunk carved and shaped a fresh yellowish wood with a chainsaw, chisels and other tools, and then allowed to weather beside the exquisite home on the Inverness Ridge he built of weathered boards and other “found” and seasoned materials. Sanded and sealed, then sanded again, exposed to the air in fine weather, covered during the winter rains, the wood gradually darkened to a hard iron-red that has almost the quality of stone.”

– Allan Temko, *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 9, 1981

- 78** JB Blunk  
*Penis Stool #1*, c. 1975  
Redwood  
16 x 14 x 12 1/2"  
40.6 x 35.6 x 31.8 cm

*If ever there was an artist who fit the description of a singular visionary, after all, it was he. Not that he would have described himself in these terms – he always seemed humbled and slightly amazed by the scale of his own achievements (modesty was one of his many charming traits). But here was a man who literally lived on a mountaintop, like a Chinese literatus, or a character in Kerouac’s *Dharma Bums*. And although Blunk did train as a potter in*

*Japan – he was probably the first American to do so after World War II – when it came to sculpture and furniture he was self-taught, and his work breathes the free air of the truly self-sufficient. The raw materials of his sculpture were just that: raw, ripped from the earth with his own hands, or when necessary with a backhoe. He transformed these chunks of inchoate matter into willful forms that could be portentous or witty, sexual or spiritual.*

– Glenn Adamson, *Genius Loci: JB Blunk and the Poetics of Place* from the exhibition catalog for *JB Blunk*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, 2010

- 79** JB Blunk  
*Piercing Form*, 1981  
Bronze  
9 1/2 x 3 1/2 x 4"  
24.1 x 8.9 x 10.2 cm
- 80** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1990  
Bronze  
7 x 4"  
17.8 x 10.2 cm
- 81** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Ceramic  
7 1/2 x 4"  
19.1 x 10.2 cm
- 82** JB Blunk  
Untitled, 1982  
Ceramic  
15 x 15 x 2 1/2"  
38.1 x 38.1 x 6.3 cm

*Rita Lawrence: If you had your choice, would you prefer to do utilitarian objects over making more abstract statements in your sculpture?*

*JB Blunk: I think you can answer that question by seeing the total output of my work. They’re both there. They happen, they occur, they are both part of my work interchangeably, back and forth all the time. It’s not something you can separate. In fact, I’m determined that they should not be separated.*

– JB Blunk, interview with Rita Lawrence, for the exhibition *JB Blunk Sculptures, 1952–1977*, at the Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, 1978

- 83** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Ceramic  
5 x 4 1/2"  
12.7 x 11.4 cm
- 84** JB Blunk  
*100 Plates Plus* exhibition poster, 1981  
Print  
23 1/2 x 16 1/2 x 2"  
59.7 x 41.9 x 5.1 cm
- 85** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Acrylic and sawdust on handmade rice paper  
35 x 24"  
88.9 x 61 cm
- 86** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1975  
Acrylic on rice paper  
25 x 26"  
63.5 x 66 cm
- 87** JB Blunk  
Untitled, 1992  
Acrylic on wood  
14 3/4 x 17 1/2"  
37.5 x 44.5 cm

*Some of us are doers. Some of us are dreamers. And some of us get mixed up in both. There are people who don’t do much physically but they bring people together, and ideas together, and make things happen. And sometimes there are frustrated doers. There is no one way.*

– JB Blunk, interview with Rita Lawrence, for the exhibition *JB Blunk Sculptures, 1952–1977*, at the Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, 1978

- 88** JB Blunk  
Untitled, 1987  
River stone  
10 1/2 x 6 1/2"  
26.7 x 16.5 cm
- 89** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1990  
Stone  
8 1/2 x 5 1/4"  
21.6 x 13.3 cm

- 90** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1990  
Stone  
8 x 6 x 2 3/4"  
20.3 x 15.2 x 7 cm

- 91** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1976  
Redwood  
8.5 x 5.5"  
21.6 x 14 cm

- 92** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1965  
Redwood  
8 x 1 1/2"  
20.3 x 3.8 cm

- 93** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1968  
Redwood root  
7 x 4 x 1"  
17.8 x 10.2 x 2.5 cm

- 94** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Bay Laurel  
3 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 1"  
8.9 x 3.8 x 2.5 cm

- 95** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Redwood  
5 x 3 x 3"  
12.7 x 7.6 x 7.6 cm

- 96** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Redwood  
7 1/2 x 1"  
19.1 x 2.5 cm

- 97** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1980  
Redwood  
6 x 2 3/4"  
15.2 x 7 cm

*Everything happens through a process such as working, such as meditating, such as running, such as being extremely exhausted or in an extreme state of ecstasy. It’s during that time that true creativity occurs. And then it seems to come from nowhere or from everywhere, and it is a surprise. I mean it seems to happen; not just in terms of artists or objects or whatever. It can be in terms of falling in love. People have numerous experiences, it would seem to me, not necessarily when they are seeking them but when they are in an open state.*

– JB Blunk, interview with Rita Lawrence, for the exhibition *JB Blunk Sculptures, 1952–1977*, at the Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, 1978

- 98** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1985  
Balsa wood  
2 1/8 x 1 3/4 x 1/4"  
5.4 x 4.4 x 0.6 cm



**99** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Redwood  
3 1/2 x 3 x 1 3/4"  
8.9 x 7.6 x 4.4 cm

**100** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Apple wood  
12 1/2 x 3 1/8 x 1 1/4"  
31.8 x 7.9 x 3.2 cm

**101** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1956  
Weaving  
8 1/2 x 11 1/2"  
21.6 x 29.2 cm

*That's what creativity is...it's the firsttimeness. I feel the most creative as far as my work is concerned when I surprise myself. If there is no surprise, then you haven't revealed or found out or done anything. There are a lot of things to which you can devote your life. We only should do what we have to do. There is really no time in life to do anything else. There are two very well known figures in the field of modern art who made very good statements in regard to this. One was Picasso. Someone once asked him "How do you possibly have time to do all the works that you have accomplished?" He replied, "It's very simple. I just don't do the things that other people do." That's what he lived for. Marcel Duchamp once told a friend of mine that he should only do the sculptures that he felt he had to do. "Don't waste your time doing all the things that you think you should do or you want to do, but only do the things that you have to do."*

–JB Blunk interview with  
Mimi Jacobs, *Pacific Sun*, June 21, 1973

**102** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1956  
Weaving  
8 1/2 x 11 1/2"  
21.6 x 29.2 cm

**103** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1956  
Weaving  
9 x 11 1/2"  
22.9 x 29.2 cm

**104** Geoffrey Fulton  
Untitled, 1968  
Black and white  
photograph  
11 x 14 x 1"  
27.9 x 35.6 x 2.5 cm

*Magic is what it's all about; magic is the mystery and process of life.*

– JB Blunk, 1977

**105** Geoffrey Fulton  
Untitled, c. 1968  
Black and white  
photograph  
11 x 14 x 1"  
27.9 x 35.6 x 2.5 cm

*My way of working, the core of all my sculpture, is a theme, the soul of the piece. Sometimes it is evoked by the material, sometimes it is an idea or concept in my own mind. It is always present, regardless of the material, size or scale of what will be the finished piece. On occasions, when I work with found objects, the object itself evokes the theme. In these cases, I do very little to change it. One could say the theme is recognized. In carving wood, it is a matter of revealing the theme and is achieved by removing material. Since I principally use a chainsaw to do this, it is a process that moves quickly. At times cutting away and forming happen so fast it is almost unconscious. The fact of working with a tool that is dangerous affects the manner of shaping the piece. The esthetic process is balanced with extreme awareness and attention to safety. Often, as I uncover more of the form, I encounter unexpected qualities, faults or voids in the wood that may change my intention, and sometimes the theme itself. This is a satisfying and exciting aspect of working on large pieces.... the fact that both my idea of what I want the piece to be, its own intrinsic theme, and the dictates of the finished object, be it chair, table, bench or sculpture, need to be accommodated. Sculpting stone is very different. It is deliberate, much slower, and not as likely to offer the unexpected as wood. Overall, it is difficult to explain a way of working that even for me, the person doing it is inexplicable. I suppose one could say I enter into a relationship with the material I am using, and as in all relationships there opportunities for surprise.*

– JB Blunk, November 5, 1998

**106** JB Blunk  
Wood model for  
*Magic Boat*, c. 1979  
Redwood  
3 1/2 x 1 1/2"  
8.9 x 3.8 cm

**107** JB Blunk  
Untitled  
Maquette of *Santa Cruz*, (Blunk's Hunk),  
1968  
Redwood  
7 7/8 x 5 1/4 x 2"  
20 x 13.3 x 5.1 cm

**108** Isamu Noguchi  
*Akari 33N*, c. 2000  
18 1/2 x 62 x 18 1/2 "  
47 x 158 x 47 cm

**109** Isamu Noguchi,  
*Akari 45D*, c. 2000  
17 x 18 1/5"  
43 x 45 cm

**110** Isamu Noguchi  
*Akari 26A*, c. 2000  
18 x 10"  
45 cm x 25 cm

**111** Artist unknown  
Black and white photograph, c. 1970  
18 x 24 "  
45.7 x 61 cm

**112** JB Blunk  
*Sketch*, c. 1970  
Courtesy JB Blunk Estate.  
10 x 11"  
25,4 x 27,94cm

**113** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Redwood  
3 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 1/2"  
8.9 x 3.8 x 1.3 cm

**114** Seating installation for Anna and  
Lawrence Halprin, Kentfield, CA,  
1966. Photographer unknown.  
Courtesy JB Blunk Estate  
9 x 13.5"  
22.86 x 34.29 cm

**115** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1980  
Ceramic  
1 1/2 x 1 1/2"  
3.8 x 3.8 cm

**116** JB Blunk  
Untitled, c. 1970  
Bay Laurel  
3 1/2 x 3 x 3/4"  
8.9 x 7.6 x 1.9 cm



## EPHEMERA

- E1** Ceramic Ikebana vase, made by JB Blunk in Japan, c. 1953. Photo by JB Blunk. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate
- E2** Ceramic Ikebana vase made by JB Blunk in Japan, c. 1953. Photo by JB Blunk. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate
- E3** JB Blunk and his master, Kaneshige Tōyō, Bizen, Japan, c. 1953. "Kaneshige and me sitting in front of my pots from the first firing in the shop" – JB Blunk's writing on the back. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate
- E4** JB Blunk's exhibition at Chuo-Koron Gallery in Tokyo, Japan, 1954. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate
- E5** JB Blunk's exhibition at Chuo-Koron Gallery in Tokyo, Japan, 1954. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate
- E6** JB Blunk with Kaneshige Tōyō and several of Kaneshige's children outside of the Kaneshige home in Bizen, Japan, c. 1953. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate
- E7** Ceramic vase made by JB Blunk in Japan, c. 1954. Photo by JB Blunk. Courtesy JB Blunk Estate
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Copyright Darryl Ward and Michael T Workman  
Courtesy JB Blunk Estate
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Front cover:	JB Blunk <i>Shield, 1953</i> 10 x 3 x 4 1/2" 26 x 8.3 x 11.4 cm Photo Daniel Dent Courtesy JB Blunk Estate
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Back cover:	JB Blunk, Northern California, c. 1968
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