

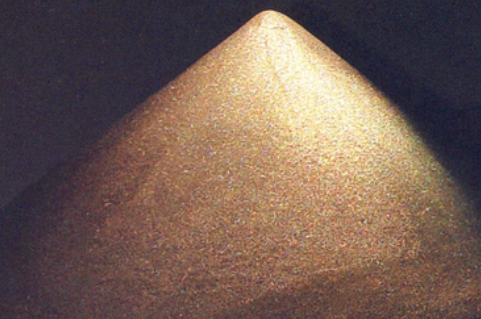
# sculpture

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**Embodied Light and  
Generative Form**



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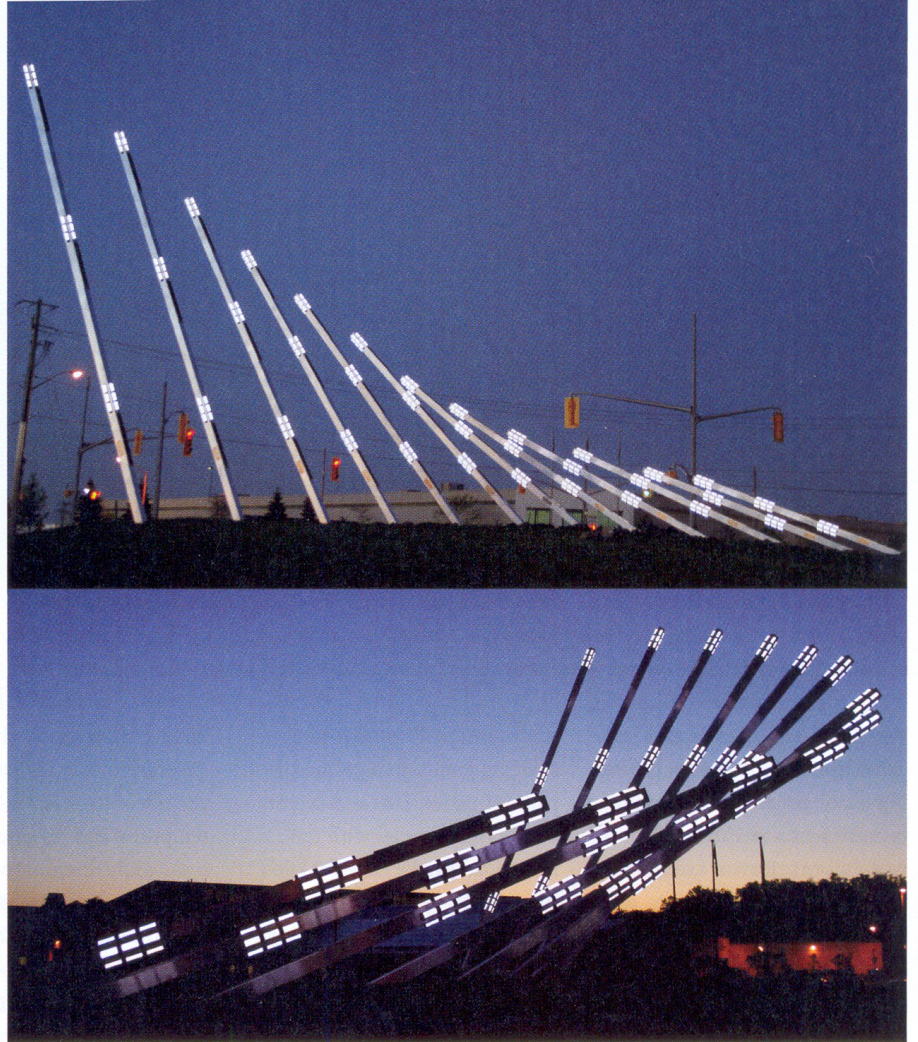


## JAMES HETHERINGTON

### *Elements*

San Antonio, TX

James Hetherington's *Elements*, a kinetic sculpture incorporating a functional wind turbine, generates hydraulic energy to help power San Antonio's John Igo Branch Library. Commissioned by the city's Design Enhancement Program, the work was selected for its ability to respond to the building's educational and environmental concerns. "The environmental, energy-generating aspect was integral to the sculptural form," Hetherington says. "*Elements* was conceived as both an energy demonstration and a work of public art...incorporating a contemporary windmill



Left: James Hetherington, *Elements*, 2007. Submersible pump, galvanized steel, oxidized and powder-coated steel, powder-coated aluminum, wind turbine, and water, 50 ft. high. Above and top: Matt Gorbet, Rob Gorbet, and Susan L.K. Gorbet, *Solar Collector*, 2008. Aluminum, glass prisms, solar panels, LEDs, software, and electronics, approximately 65 x 35 x 20 ft.

turbine, as well as a working abstracted interpretation of a historical windmill."

*Elements* was "created to be functional, to harness wind energy to power the windmill's pump, and to demonstrate 'resources for research.'" The turbine "harvests power from intermittent wind sources to produce electric power." That electricity powers a water pump circulating water through a channel flowing into the library's entrance area and back to a reservoir. The waterway ties the tall sculptural forms to the building (which incorporates recycled building materials and solar elements) and its grounds: "*Elements* has synergistically combined energy concerns, animal habitat preservation, and other ecological issues without altering the library's theme [of conservation]. The windmill serves as a welcoming anchor."

Hetherington is fascinated "with creating the illusion of heavy metal that teeters

between falling and remaining erect," but his concept for *Elements* also comes from the dualistic nature of windmills: "The windmill is both past and present, a bygone technology and a progressive alternative technology. The project as a whole pays homage to a historical time that cannot be re-created, but has been preserved and reinvented in a modern way."

## MATT GORBET, ROB GORBET, AND SUSAN L.K. GORBET

### *Solar Collector*

Cambridge, Ontario, Canada

*Solar Collector*, by Matt Gorbet, Rob Gorbet, and Susan L.K. Gorbet, responds to "the intersection between manmade artifacts and nature." Every evening at dusk, an interactive network of aluminum shafts—designed to mirror the sun's motion and powered by solar energy—lights up in a series of patterns created by individuals across the

John Körmeling, *Rotating House*, 2008. Steel, brick, tile, laminated glass, artificial turf, wheels, solar panels, and battery system, 5 x 8.5 x 10 meters.

world through the Internet. Matt Gorbet describes the “two mantras” behind the work: “The form of the piece should reflect the forms of solar energy, and public art should be accessible to the public.” *Solar Collector* is installed near the “first gold-LEED-rated public facility in Ontario, for the Emergency Medical Services,” a site that encouraged alternative energy but challenged the goal of interactivity since the location is not frequented by casual visitors.

The 12 shafts are embedded in the ground in an arc “to prevent shade from falling on the solar panels.” Pitched at successively sharper angles, their arrangement corresponds to changes in the direction of the sun’s rays: the shaft at one end makes a right angle with the sun’s rays during the summer solstice, and another, at the other end, does the same during the winter solstice. Each shaft supports a series of LED lights and solar panels. Matt Gorbet says, “It was while we were researching solar energy that the form started to take shape...It was important to have the solar panels integrated with the sculpture...[the form] highlights our connection to the sun as a giver of life and vitality.”

Because interactivity plays a vital role in *Solar Collector*, visitors to the Web site (<[www.solarcollector.ca](http://www.solarcollector.ca)>) can design their own patterns for the sequence of lights. The feature encourages people to vary the speed, direction, and appearance of the lights and to submit their patterns to “become part of the next performance.” Each evening, the patterns uploaded that day are displayed first, then the sculpture replays other submitted patterns. Performances continue until the day’s collected solar energy is expended, and then the shafts “fade out one by one.” Matt Gorbet emphasizes, “We wanted the piece’s behavior to reflect the mood or spirit of the community. *Solar Collector* offers a means for people to express themselves, and the identity of the sculpture is shaped by the public’s input.”



### JOHN KÖRMELING

#### *Rotating House*

Tilburg, the Netherlands

John Körmeling’s *Rotating House*, located at the Hasselt traffic circle leading into Tilburg from the north, enlivens the surrounding area and sets a humorous and daring public art tone for the city. As the title implies, this is not a stationary house, rooted to a foundation; instead, the structure trundles around the circle on four tracked wheels, in the same direction as surrounding traffic, at a rate of one complete rotation over 20 hours. The speed is slow enough to escape the notice of drivers when they pass for the first time, but fast enough to disorient them on a second pass—later that day, or at the same time the next day, the house will be in a different place. Unlike the passing cars, the house relies on solar power to propel its journey.

Körmeling, who originally trained as an architect, first submitted his plan in 1999; he

went through several long approval processes before construction could begin. *Rotating House* appears as a full-scale, two-story house with an “open and friendly look and feel.” As a safety precaution, “a mechanism will ensure that the house automatically stops as soon as something bumps into it,” but since there is no pedestrian area inside the circle, ideally that will rarely or never occur.

Everything about *Rotating House* projects familiarity, from its everyday construction materials such as brick, glass, and tile to its architectural vocabulary, which blends into the surrounding neighborhood. The juxtaposition of quotidian domesticity, complete with an artificial turf garden, and eerie motion results in a memorable, and truly disconcerting, sight for drivers waiting at the circle. As Körmeling explains, “normally the driver moves while the construction stands still.”

—Elizabeth Lynch

Juries are convened each month to select works for Commissions. Information on recently completed commissions, along with quality 35mm slides/transparencies or high-resolution digital images (300 dpi at 4 x 5 in. minimum) and an SASE for return of slides, should be sent to: Commissions, Sculpture, 1633 Connecticut Avenue NW, 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20009.