



# foreword

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*Lying even when the truth would suffice.* Headlining his website with this statement, Myron Helfgott reminds us of the power of the image to confound perception and the abiding role that disjunction and misinterpretation play in human experience. Helfgott revels in the duality of image and structure, structure and content, and content and subject matter. The photographic images that now cover his carefully hand-wrought plywood structures can have the emotional charge of a tragic love story, a beautiful object, or a contemplative scene. Are these works intended to exalt the image, making it hyper-real and allowing us to bathe in its subject matter and feel deeply? As we scrutinize the work, though, the beauty fades and the stark reality of the fragile paper facade compels us to question our initial perceptions. Have we been taken in by a mirage, an empty illusion? Who would do this to us?

These are the works of a provocateur and a master of intellectual play. A true believer in the object, Helfgott also values the muscle of narrative and the subversive sway of image. He takes us on a journey that moves beyond the single storyline to complex, nearly operatic assemblages of structures and sculptural components, kinetics and audio, painted images and photographs, visual lies and truthful comments.

In terms of content, subject matter, source material, and studio fabrication, nothing is safely out of bounds. Helfgott uses literature and film as a spring board, pop culture as a convenient tool, technology like a band saw, and his everyday experience as grist for stories, both real and imagined. Well versed in the history of art, he often nods to the great artists whom he considers crucial predecessors. These acknowledgments are sometimes obvious and, at other times, hidden deeply within his thinking.

Myron was a consummate teacher during his 35 years as Professor of Sculpture at VCU's School of the Arts. He encouraged his students to be fearless, think sideways, and tell their stories with abandon. Those of us who had the good fortune to work with him witnessed his brilliance in action, including his insightful critiques, often of our own work. Ever-present, now as then, is his creative determination to provoke habitual expectations and perceived limitations.