

# ARTIST PROFILE

## State of the Art Gallery

### Jeff Elings: *Gooto*

By **ANDRIA WATSON** / CASA

**TAPPING INTO INSTINCTS AND MINDS** in Santa Barbara, a sculpture called *Gooto* by Jeff Elings on display in State of the Art Gallery Exhibit on State Street through November 15th, invites passers-by to envision a different world.



Jeff Elings

“This exhibit is about freedom. Freedom to think, to create, and to show the public my work,” Elings shared. “How viewers interpret it is completely up to them. What’s fascinating is seeing their diverse

reactions, and knowing it’s because of a piece of art – my art.”

Resting across the street from the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, at eight feet tall and six feet wide, the stainless steel-skinned circular sculpture looks like something out of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*; that it may have fallen from the stars. Even the name, *Gooto*, sounds exotic.. Elings’ idea for *Gooto* evolved from a piece Elings completed for SOAG two years ago.

“With the first piece I realized I was satisfied with the top portion, but I wanted to take off the bottom half,” he explained. “So with the new sculpture, that’s exactly what I did... cut corners and trimmed edges.”

Sounds simple enough, but the process is much more complicated than Elings initially let on, not to mention time-consuming. It took the Santa Barbara native roughly 300 hours to complete the sculpture.

Elings begins first with a wire frame, the skeleton of the structure. Then, he layers the foundation with paper to form a template. Next, he adds sheet metal, and plasma cut stainless steel. Finally, band saws and belt sanders are used to smooth edges and polish as Elings clamps down sections and welds the materials together.

“The entire sculpture was made at Santa Barbara City College in their art department. So I’m here to say anyone can do this if they have the desire to make something,” shared Elings.

Ed Inks, also a participant in this year’s State of the Art Gallery, and sculpture

professor at SBCC, became a major inspiration and mentor to Elings. After taking Ink’s class, Elings learned how to explain, critic, and defend his work. English artist Richard Deacon has also influenced Elings’ art.

Unlike some artists who will tell you art is something they’ve done their entire life, Elings is a bit of a late bloomer. After earning a Bachelors degree in Mechanical Engineering from UC San Diego in 1993, Elings worked for Digital Instruments. It wasn’t until 2001 that he decided to try his hand at sculpture.

“My interests up until that point had included woodworking, engineering, fixing cars, robotics, and organic farming,” explained Elings. “I’ve always liked working with metal. After taking Ed’s class though, I knew I had to pursue this art form. He encouraged me to enter this year’s SOAG exhibit. I think my piece mirrors my background in mechanics, but I tried to



Photos by Kimberly Kovish

*Gooto* by **Jeff Elings**. On display at State of the Art Gallery exhibit on State Street through November 15th.

also give it an organic quality because of my appreciation for green living.”

According to Elings, the title *Gooto* is completely fabricated. His reason is simple: No preconceived ideas.

“I wanted people to make their own connections and draw their own conclusions from their feelings about the work,” explained Elings. “I wanted to dig into people’s instincts and create something that could stand on its own.”

For the fifth annual State of the Art Gallery exhibit, eight artists were selected from a call for entries by Dean Anes, Director of the Acme Gallery in Los Angeles, to present their sculptures in a public forum. Other State of the Art Gallery sculptors include: Richard Aber, Jeff Elings, Edward Inks, Bill Malis, Rafael Perea de la Cabada and Matthew Woodford, Jeff Sanders, Helle Scharling-Todd, and Jeff Kaiser. For information, call the Arts Commission at 965-9663.