

Steven Careau's sculptures are fields of vision

His new show 'in the lining of fields,' at TurnPark Art Space in West Stockbridge, hints at tools and icons

By **Cate McQuaid** Globe Correspondent, Updated August 2, 2023, 5:11 p.m.



Installation view from Steven Careau's "in the lining of fields" at TurnPark Art Space. Lacewood, steel, brass, copper. LISA VOLLMER

WEST STOCKBRIDGE — What if a tool were a work of art? Steven Careau grew up haying fields on a dairy farm in West Braintree. His father turned to patternmaking after selling the farm, doing precision woodworking at a pump factory. Careau's wall-mounted sculptures at TurnPark Art Space are the size of handheld tools that might belong to a farmer or a patternmaker.

The exhibition's title "in the lining of the fields" might refer to the fields of Careau's youth, or the space within which an artist designs a world. Each wall of the gallery is his field; the sculptures delineate it. They gesture one to the next like ballet dancers, erect and formal on stage. Their shadows add to the choreography.

Careau draws on century-old ideas that birthed abstraction: Kazimir Malevich's [Suprematism](#) and Vladimir Tatlin's [Constructivism](#). Malevich theorized an idealized, pure abstraction — a field of the mind — which gave his works the cast of religious icons. Tatlin saw himself as an engineer inspired by the nuts and bolts of reality, such as how modern industry was reshaping the visual lexicon.

The works here are precise and geometric. Many, tethered by metal rods, seem to float just off the wall. Nothing pulls or droops; it's as if they exist outside of gravity. They hold their space like objects of worship. The materials are finished beautifully, the forms are crisp.



Steven Careau, "W21," painted steel and aluminum. ANDY WAINWRIGHT

In "W21," a blue-painted steel plate hovers away from the wall against a length of aluminum. A short rod at the top of the aluminum pins the piece in place. There's a serenity, a stillness to this work. Blue was once [a rare, costly pigment](#), often used to depict the Virgin Mary's cloak, and is often associated with sacred themes.

But unlike icons, Careau's sculptures have a utilitarian knack for changing on a whim. The courtly "W4" features a left-leaning stretch of wood held from the wall by a right-leaning metal rod. Small holes lined with sparkling copper speckle the wood. The piece would be easy to reorient — rotate the rod, thread it through another hole.



Steven Careau, "W4," ebony wood, copper tubing, blued steel rod. ANDY WAINWRIGHT

Despite their seeming austerity and intellectual heft — mathematical exactitude, strict forms, iconographic echoes — Careau's sculptures are as approachable and adaptable as scissors, a compass, or a trowel, and as filled with potential.

STEVEN CAREAU in the lining of fields

At TurnPark Art Space, 2 Moscow Road, West Stockbridge, through Aug. 14. www.turnpark.com/program/exhibitions_projects/steven-careau--in-the-lining-of-fields

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