As a master's student at Penn State, Joe went frequently to New York to visit the rich collections and thematic exhibitions of the city's many museums. I remember his telling me that one of the pieces that stopped him in his tracks was Picasso's "The Goat" which he saw at the Museum of Modern Art. The sculpture of a goat had been "assembled" by Picasso from discarded fragments - metal, ceramics, even palm fronds – that to Picasso's eye suggested body parts for the nanny goat he imagined he would make: a basket for the rib cage, clay pots for the udders, palm fronds for ribs, spine and nose of metal for various structural parts. The she-goat Joe saw was a bronze version of the original assemblage but all the found pieces could still be identified. It wasn't so much that Picasso inspired Joe to make sculpture from fragments; it was that a major, internationally recognized artist also saw art in the world around him and used it, plethora of discarded bits and pieces to create new objects. After all, Joe had grown up watching his mother make Christmas presents from bars of soap, re-tailing a fur coat to turn the garbage bin into a bear, creating small sculptures from clay. He had seen his father re-use everything on the farm that might still serve some purpose, fixing and repairing horse harnesses and farm machinery, saving whatever could be used again. In a way, Picasso's goat was an extension of Joe's own experience growing up in the small farming community on the border of Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The art world that swirled around Joe as a graduate student had very definite ideas about what art was and what it wasn't. Joe found a niche in that world by pursuing one of the acceptable genres, kinetic art. Significantly enough, it allowed him to rummage around in electric shops and salvage yards and create assemblages that passed muster with his teachers. It also however signalled what was to be a major characteristic of Joe as an artist. He respects and practises craftsmanship in all his works but his imagination and his explorations are not limited by either the fashions of the art world or the dictates of what used to be called 'fine art.' Perhaps, in this exploratory characteristic, he saw in Picasso a kindred spirit. The art world that swirled around Joe as a graduate student had very definite ideas about what art was and what it wasn't. Joe found a niche in that world by pursuing one of the acceptable genres, kinetic art. Significantly enough, it allowed him to rummage around in electric shops and salvage yards and create assemblages that passed muster with his teachers. It also however signalled what was to be a major characteristic of Joe as an artist. He respects and practises craftsmanship in all his works but his imagination and his explorations are not limited by either the fashions of the art world or the dictates of what used to be called 'fine art.' Perhaps, in this exploratory characteristic, he saw in Picasso a kindred spirit. The art world that swirled around Joe as a graduate student had very definite ideas about what art was and what it wasn't. Joe found a niche in that world by pursuing one of the acceptable genres, kinetic art. Significantly enough, it allowed him to rummage around in electric shops and salvage yards and create assemblages that passed muster with his teachers. It also however signalled what was to be a major characteristic of Joe as an artist. He respects and practises craftsmanship in all his works but his imagination and his explorations are not limited by either the fashions of the art world or the dictates of what used to be called 'fine art.' Perhaps, in this exploratory characteristic, he saw in Picasso a kindred spirit.

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