



I had just read an article by James Adams on Dylan and Burroughs¹ when our paths crossed on another matter via e-mail. A nice coincidence for me as not only have I made a new friend but he has sent an e-mail re Dylan's 'casino' ironwork sculpture that I am now going to share with you. So, what you have here is the first ever "guest blog" here, consisting of James's e-mail and photos

James Adams:

"I went to look at Dylan's 'Portal' ironwork sculpture a few nights ago. It's large - monumental, even - and quite attractive. It's difficult to photograph, but I took a number pictures, so many in fact that security came over to chat. Apparently they found it odd that someone would actually spend time looking at the expensive piece of art they put on display. The guard had no idea who Bob Dylan was, of course.

I was inclined to like it anyway but left much more impressed than I would have predicted.



My main complaint is that it's impossible to divorce the work from its landscape: the ramp leading to a shiny new casino on the banks of the river that flows out of Washington, D.C. Thousands of gamblers are forced to walk under the impressive gate but, from what I could tell, none of them noticed it. Those walking into the casino were already looking at the blinking neon slot machines. Those leaving were talking about winning and losing or trying to remember where they parked the car.

From what I've read the casino commissioned the piece from Dylan. So, presumably, he was okay with where it would be displayed. Or maybe he doesn't care. I didn't notice any explicit acknowledgement in the piece - no welded dollar signs or pieces of antique cash registers.

Then again, maybe Dylan has said all he cares to say about gambling, casinos, and betting on the wrong horse in his lyrics.

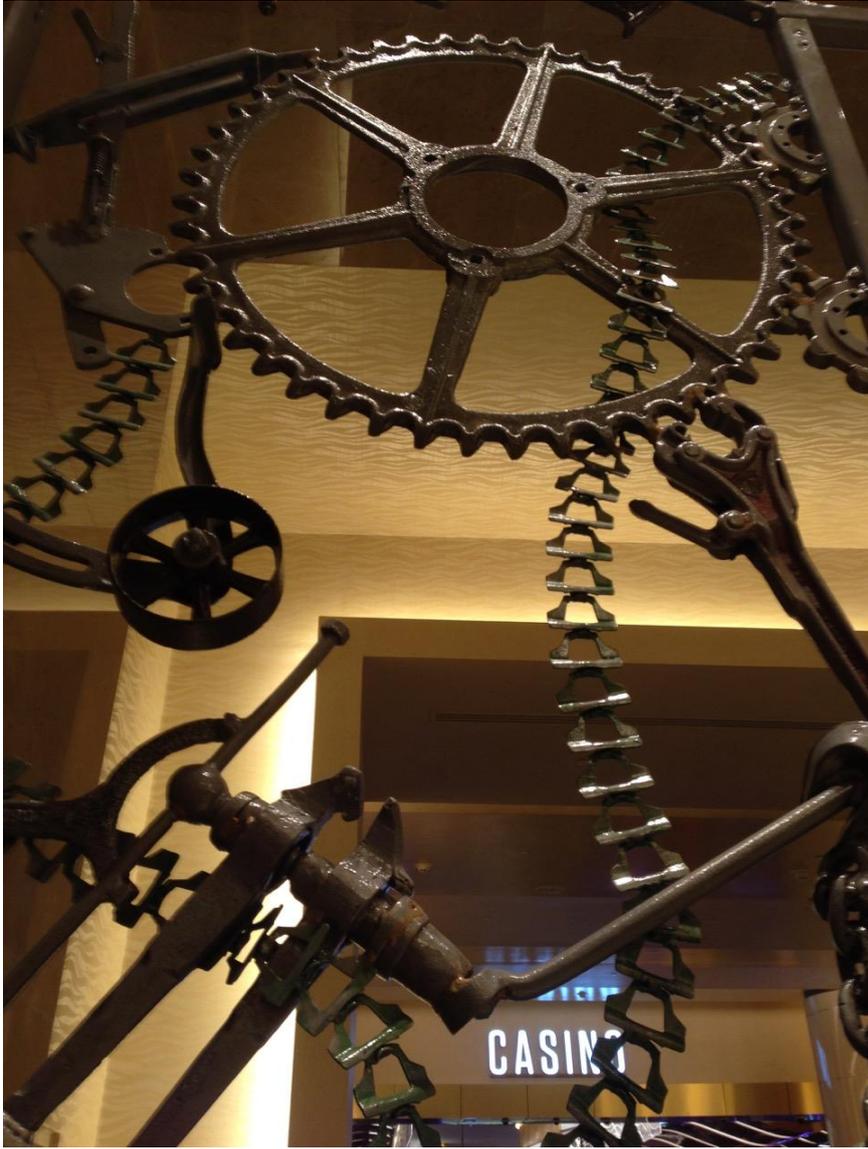


Here's the relevant section from the Washington Post architecture critic (thankfully we still have such a thing) review of the casino:

"The plebes who come through the opposite casino entrance encounter an equally bracing sculpture, by Bob Dylan, who has welded together the detritus of machinery, metal chains and hand tools to make a hellish portal of America's lost industrial greatness. Abandon all hope, ye who enter here, of reopened coal mines or new auto plants, and connect your electronic cash vein to the digital wheel of fortune, and dream a while as you get poorer and poorer and poorer."

Quite funny, if not so sad and true."

Thanks for letting me share that James and for the extra photos appended below:





ⁱ <http://realitystudio.org/scholarship/brother-bill-how-william-s-burroughs-influenced-bob-dylan/>