

ONE

A PRIVATE ART TOUR OF LINCOLN CENTER

WELCOME TO ONE OF THE GREAT SECRETS OF THE art world: the collection of Modern masterworks at Lincoln Center. Most Lincoln Center patrons are probably so used to dashing by these sculptures and paintings on the way to an eight o'clock curtain that they are barely aware of the gems around them. But now, with the luxury of time to linger and enjoy the background stories, we have the opportunity to get to know what riches surround the almost five million visitors who cross this grand plaza every year. Many arrive just in time to rendevous at the massive

black circular fountain at the center of the plaza, where we begin our tour, before heading to one of the twenty-three theaters, or a class at Juilliard, or a listening desk inside the New York Public Library. Let's take full advantage of the glorious raking sunlight that shows off the architecture and sculpture so well and visit each of the thirty-two major pieces in turn, where they stood in 2007 prior to the redevelopment of the campus that began that year. They are an extraordinary ensemble, silently but strongly adding their aesthetic voices to the great chorus of Lincoln Center's offerings in the performing arts. It is time for the visual arts to take center stage.

Even from where we stand, two of the top artistic notes sound triumphantly across the plaza from the Metropolitan Opera House directly before us. From as far away as the other side of Broadway, all you have to do is look up and you will see, above the balcony on both sides of the building, the extravagantly colorful large-scale paintings by Marc Chagall commissioned for the opening of the new Met in 1966. Chagall was already a familiar figure at the old Metropolitan Opera House, which was downtown, on Broadway at Thirty-ninth Street. He had designed the sets for a new staging of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, one of the most popular productions in the repertoire and a highlight of the first season at Lincoln Center, when the company moved uptown. (The sets were replaced in 1991 by designs by another renowned contemporary artist, David Hockney.) During that time, the Met was the only opera house in the world that had opera sets designed by Chagall as well as two vast, permanent works on its walls. Both the stage decor and the paintings share the signature Chagall style: high-toned in palette and whimsical in their gravity-defying figures, flowing like wisps of clouds borne on pulsing colors. Chagall conceived of the two huge vertical panels as "flags" that would float behind the glass of the vast, hundred-foot-tall windows overlooking the plaza. To avoid monotony, he used two primary colors to differentiate between them. The dominant tones are a luminous ruby red for *The Triumph of Music* (1966), in which a giant female figure soars through groups of dancers and instrumentalists, including a charming reference to *The Firebird* of the artist's compatriots Igor Stravinsky and Sergei Diaghilev, and a sunny, glowing gold for *The Sources of Music* (1966), with its allusions to King David, wearing his crown, and Orpheus, with his lyre at its center surrounded by portraits of Wagner and Bach, and Wagner's Tristan and Isolde embracing. The iconography also includes Chagall's sly incorporation of New York City into the mythic pantheon in the form of a swift, sketchy rendition of the George Washington Bridge at the top right corner, a moonlit skyline at the bottom right, and an echo of the Chrysler Building on

Marc Chagall
The Triumph of Music
1966

the left side of the companion piece. The main tribute, though, is to Mozart, pictured as the dove that surmounts the scene. Chagall conceived of the two large-scale paintings as a visual epilogue to *The Magic Flute*. He also designated that the red panel should be on the north side of the building, the golden one on the south. But when Chagall arrived on site to inspect the installation, he had a shock. The red panel had already been installed, but on the wrong side! Chagall began ranting right in the plaza, and it took all the diplomatic skills of Rudolf Bing, the general manager of the opera company, to pacify the furious artist. "Perhaps destiny was behind the error, and the heralding angels should play for the people who have come to the opera house, because they do love music," Bing reasoned. Chagall relented, and they remain reversed.

Marc Chagall
The Sources of Music
1966

MARC CHAGALL

It would be impossible to argue with the choice of Marc Chagall for the massive paintings that adorn the front of the Met. From a high art standpoint and from a biographical standpoint, he was just the man for the job. Not only had he become a living master, one of the lions of winter to emerge from the School of Paris and attain international celebrity, but also, like Picasso, who was the center of that movement, he had successfully made the transition from gallery or museum to opera house. Both artists were part of the immensely influential circle of Sergei Diaghilev, whose avant-garde Ballets Russes had its impact not only on the world of performance but on art as well. Chagall took theatrical flourishes and a musical sense of composition and pushed them to their limits on canvas, in watercolors, and in stained glass. In fact, it was while he was at work on a stained glass commission for the Rockefeller family in their chapel at Pocantico Hills that the Lincoln Center project was finalized.

As his immigrant story was shared by millions of New Yorkers, his role as a public figure also was significant. Chagall was born on July 7, 1887, in the village of Vitebsk, Russia, which figures prominently in some of his most popular works. A prodigy, he moved to St. Petersburg in 1907 to spend three years at the prestigious Imperial Society for the Protection of the Arts. His early training in theater design was offered by Léon Bakst, who preceded him at the Ballets Russes. In 1910, Chagall followed the trail of so many European and American artists, such as Picasso, Miro, Modigliani, and Goncharova, to name a few, to Paris. Chagall was in the thick of the great avant-garde movements, from Cubism to Fauvism to Symbolism, and moved in the inner circle of the poet and critic Guillaume Apollinaire. Unlike some, he maintained a broad audience outside Paris, and his first solo show was held in 1914 at Der Sturm Gallery in Berlin.

One of the reasons why Chagall is so revered in the United States involves the dramatic way in which he became an exile—not once, but twice. He was caught by the outbreak of war during a visit home to Vitebsk in 1914, and he used the war years to create the Vitebsk Popular Art School. He resigned in 1920 over a disagreement with the Suprematists and headed to Moscow, where he created stage sets for the State Jewish Chamber Theater. By way of a stop in Berlin he made it back to Paris in 1923 during the height of the Jazz Age and was

taken up by the gallerist and patron Ambroise Vollard, one of many artists Vollard guided to stardom. During World War II, Chagall sought refuge in New York, and had an important MoMA retrospective in 1946, the first step toward ascending to a prominent place in the ranks of expatriate artists who made New York their home.

Asked for a few words at the unveiling of the paintings on September 8, 1966, Chagall at first demurred when it came to interpreting the messages: "All questions and their answers can be seen in the paintings themselves." Then he delivered a highly emotional confession of the motivation behind the works. Much of it had to do with his love of New York. "I lived here in America during the years of the inhuman war which made humanity desert itself," Chagall pointed out, while behind him the audience could make out images of the George Washington Bridge, a compact skyline embracing most of the island of Manhattan, and a childlike version of the Chrysler Building. The sense of completion offered by the Lincoln Center commission was in part based on the fact that the large-scale paintings would be the second major Chagall installation in New York, but the only public one. A huge stained-glass window created for the United Nations is seen only by the delegates or those on special tours.

After expressing his love for the city, he moved on to the more universal, utopian ideals he meant to capture in color, prompted by the sight of kids playing in the park next to the opera house:

> And as I speak thus, I see that the children of all the peoples while playing watch us. The trees and the flowers in the fields await us, too, in the silence of eternity. Like these children, who smile stretching out their arms, all would ask for the happiness which is their hope. . . . We want the happiness in the clear colors, free from the turmoil of the earth, so that art may enter into a paradise, as was once realized in the introduction to *The Magic Flute* of Mozart. I wished to surround myself with color and with music, with those characters whose faces retain the smile. This smile which calms, though the soul might often be covered in a nostalgic cloud.

As inviting as the Chagall paintings appear through the frames of the Opera House facade, to enjoy an uninterrupted, close-up view we should go inside, where there are a number of sculptures to appreciate as well. As we ascend the curving staircase to the Grand Tier where the murals begin, we not only enjoy our close encounter with the paintings, but also are invited out on the balcony by a pair of mysterious silhouettes. The paintings make such a spectacular statement, brimming with color and incident, that they almost overwhelm the two most subtle sculptural works at the Metropolitan Opera House—stone forms that stand vigil over the plaza with an ascetic dignity that befits the unforgettable biography of their maker, Masayuki Nagare. During World War II, Nagare was a Zero pilot who survived dogfights and antiaircraft fire during combat in the South Pacific. After the war he became a Shinto monk who hand-forged ceremonial swords before turning to art as his vocation. It is the Buddhist side of his remarkable life that emerges in his sculptures, made in 1972 and 1973. Quietly different from each other (note the dark gray granite of one and the glossier black granite of the other), they are

Masayuki Nagare
Bachi
1972

Masayuki Nagare
Bachi
1973

high Modernist interpretations of the *bachi* or plectrum (what a guitarist calls a pick) that a geisha uses to play the long, horizontal harp known as the *samisen*. Nagare reveres the traditional form of the plectrum but is unafraid to disguise it in his own riff on abstraction. The works sound a Neoclassical aesthetic chord that resonates through much of the Lincoln Center collection—a deep respect for tradition harmonized with an edgy Modern top note that approaches Minimalism.

Once you recognize this synthesis of the past and the avant-garde you begin to notice it everywhere on the Lincoln Center campus. Architecturally, it is evident in the Neoclassical echo of those soaring, arched windows facing the plaza through which we were just looking at the Chagall murals combined with the sleek, clean-edged Modernism of architect Wallace Harrison's geometry. It recurs throughout the art collection, particularly in Henry Moore's nearby Classical reclining figure, pared to its abstract essentials, or the stately but faceless twin colossi by Elie Nadelman overlooking the State Theater lobby. Over and again, we will pay tribute to Greek mythology in particular as we consider the titles of the works in the collection, which (not unexpectedly) draw on such figures associated with music and performance as Orpheus, Pegasus, Apollo, and the Muses. Even onstage, the marriage of Classical and Modern is one of the great stylistic sources for the ballets of George Balanchine at the New York State Theater, the operas and symphonies of Sergei Prokofiev and Igor Stravinsky (among so many others) at Avery Fisher Hall, the Juilliard School, the Metropolitan Opera and the New York City Opera, and the plays of Tom Stoppard or Harold Pinter at the Lincoln Center Theater.

While we are on the subject of Modernism and the art historical tradition, before we leave the Met we must pay our respects to a couple of the old masters (relatively speaking) of the Lincoln Center art collection, who along with Rodin and Bourdelle represent an earlier generation working in a more figural, less abstract idiom. Upstairs, on the Grand Tier (now known as the Mercedes T. Bass Grand Tier), we encounter a voluptuous trio of nudes in bronze by Aristide Maillol—as if the Three Graces preside over the coffee and champagne drinkers at intermission. They demonstrate Maillol's singular sense of the refinement to which the female form can lend itself when submitted to the rigor of his editorial hand, which pared information to its essentials. *Kneeling Woman: Monument to Debussy* (1930–1933) is of particular interest to Maillol fans and students of the intersection of music and the visual arts. An homage to Claude Debussy, and originally created for a monument for his home-town of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, it is the artist's only direct reference to music. Debussy's sole opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, is one of the highlights

Aristide Maillol
Kneeling Woman: Monument to Debussy
1930–1933

Aristide Maillol
Summer
1910–1911

Aristide Maillol
Venus Without Arms
1920

of the Met repertoire and a Modern masterpiece. The standing figure gesturing with her palm upraised is an allegorical representation of *Summer* (1910–1911) and is the earliest of the artist's works in the collection. Near her stands another figure by Maillol, *Venus Without Arms* (1920), a powerful Modernist take on the Classic Greek figure of Aphrodite, who inspired Botticelli, Michelangelo, and so many other artists, from the Renaissance to today. The model for all three works, incidentally, was Maillol's muse, Dina Vierney.

On our way down the stairs, we must compare Maillol's full-figured style with the attenuated limbs of the *Kneeling Woman* (1911) by his German contemporary Wilhelm Lehmbruck—it is almost as though we

Wilhelm Lehmbruck
Kneeling Woman
1911

have turned from the singers onstage to the ballet dancers (after the opera season, the Met plays host to the American Ballet Theater). This was a breakthrough work for Lehmbruck, an Expressionist who clearly emerges from the same bold vein as Rodin. The aura of sanctity and reverie of her bowed head, as though she were listening, accords well with the great German repertory, particularly the works of Wagner, heard inside onstage, but historians note that the Nazis condemned his work as an example of "degenerate" art many years after Lehmbruck's suicide at age thirty-eight, following harrowing experiences in military hospitals. The Met recently restored the original white marble wall behind the figure, which effectively makes the sculpture "pop" into view.

The New York State Theater is our next stop, and until only recently nobody knew with any degree of precision how important two of the works in the lobby might be, partly because one of the artists had lapsed into obscurity for more than a decade before roaring back into fame with a celebrated retrospective that is still one of the great comeback stories in recent art history. But first we turn to the more widely acknowledged master, who will be on our left as we ascend the east staircase from the lobby. *Numbers* (1964) is another breakthrough work in a distinguished career. Jasper Johns was still a relative unknown when Lincoln Center commissioned a work by him at the instigation of Philip Johnson, the architect who designed the building. Its quiet gray-on-gray layers build a steady, rhythmic étude on the most basic of thematic ideas: take all the integers 0 through 9 in order and render them in a stencil style using a thick impasto called Sculpmetal. As with his compositional use of the American flag, the numbers gave Johns a basic structural matrix, a grid to support the painterly experiments that give him his place in art history. Do you see the footprint in the upper right corner? It was made by Merce Cunningham, master choreographer, friend, and frequent collaborator with Johns and the artist Robert Rauschenberg. In fact, a Rauschenberg very nearly ended up hanging in this hall alongside the Johns, but the Art and Acquisitions Committee felt that with *Numbers* they were already far enough out on a limb with the avant-garde. The footprint reminds us that we are in the hall where the works of George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, and other choreographers are enjoyed during the New York City Ballet season.

Now we'll go upstairs for a private audience with four of the most memorable characters at Lincoln Center. On our way we will pass *Ancient Song* (1971), the first of two lyrical gilt reliefs created for the staircases by Yasuhide Kobashi. He was a favorite New York City Ballet set designer of Lincoln Center founder Lincoln Kirstein. The subjects for the two reliefs were suggested by George Balanchine. They were made in

(continued on page 24)

Jasper Johns
Numbers
1964

JASPER JOHNS

Uptown" and "downtown" are more than just geographical directions in New York City. In the world of the arts, the terms have long signified a deep division between the conservative, historical aesthetic of the elite and the hip, cutting-edge experiments of the avant-garde. This is the story of how a breakthrough work of a downtown artist of the 1960s, a central figure in one of the most exciting artistic coteries of the twentieth century, created a landmark for an uptown institution.

Long before his recognition as the éminence grise of the American art scene, Jasper Johns was the shy, poetic painter in a brilliant group of avant-garde rebels who reshaped contemporary aesthetics starting in the early 1950s. The band of bohemians included fellow artists Robert Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly, the Modern dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham, and the inventive composer (and many would say philosopher) John Cage. Cage and Cunningham's collaboration began when Cage, twenty-six and the accompanist for a dance class, met the eighteen-year-old Cunningham in Seattle in 1936. They met Rauschenberg, already an influential figure in contemporary art in 1952, at Black Mountain College, and Rauschenberg became the artistic adviser to Cunningham's dance company. Two years later, Rauschenberg in turn brought Johns on board—the young Georgian was painting each night in his loft down in the financial district on Pearl Street and paying his bills with a job as a night clerk in the Marboro Bookstore. Johns had just started the first of his epochal flag paintings. The flags appeared in his first solo exhibition at Leo Castelli's gallery. On the Saturday morning of January 25, 1958, Alfred Barr, the director of the Museum of Modern Art and a member of the Lincoln Center Art and Acquisitions Committee, walked in and was instantly enraptured. He called MoMA curator Dorothy Miller to rush over and meet him, and within an hour they agreed to acquire four paintings for the museum's permanent collection. (Eventually they purchased only three, and urged Philip Johnson to donate the fourth.) That coup jump-started a remarkable rise to the top of the art world. By 1988, *New York Times* art critic Michael Brenson proclaimed that Johns was "the greatest American artist since Jackson Pollock."

Reclusive and sphinxlike in his reluctance to discuss his own work or his life, Johns was born in Georgia in 1930 but grew up in South

Carolina with his maternal grandparents and an aunt after his parents divorced. His paternal grandmother, who died before he was born, was an amateur painter of landscapes, and he was encouraged to start drawing when he was three. He studied with a protégée of Hans Hofmann at the University of South Carolina starting in 1948, and she urged him to transfer to Parsons School of Design in New York. But he never received a degree. When he quit, he took a job as a messenger in New York before being drafted into the army in 1951. After his service in Japan designing posters about hygiene for the military, he moved back to New York. Soon after, Rauschenberg "discovered" him.

It was Philip Johnson who contacted Castelli to commission *Numbers* for the New York State Theater in June 1963, the same month a bronze *Flag* was presented to Jacqueline Kennedy at the White House. Johns approached the array of numbers 0 through 9 as a motif that offered the basis for a series, as he also had used targets and flags. This modus operandi has been compared to the variations on a theme Monet composed using images of haystacks, water lilies, or the facade of Rouen Cathedral. During the summer of 1963, Johns made a smaller version of *Numbers* in his Front Street studio. At Johnson's urging, based on his conception of how it would look on the wall inside the State Theater, Johns expanded the painting from the 44 by 58 inches of that first variation to 110 by 85—the largest version he would ever create. In a letter dated October 2 of that year, Johnson spurred on Johns to think big: "This is going to be the subtlest monument of our time." The piece was too big for his studio, so Johns rented a warehouse just to finish the 121 panels, each with one numeral deliberately built up on one section.

The final piece offers subtle testimony to the strong connection between Jasper Johns and the performing arts, and it harbors a secret reference to the New York City Ballet. Merce Cunningham's right foot was pressed into the Sculpmetal in the upper right corner of the painting. Johns did his first designs for a stage work by Cunningham in 1961 and succeeded Rauschenberg to become the artistic adviser to the choreographer's dance company in 1967. The trio of Johns, Cunningham, and Cage, the company's composer, supported one another's careers and made dance history during their many collaborations. For example, Cage contributed one of the most eloquent and effective essays on the work of Johns for the catalogue of a 1964 retrospective at the Jewish Museum, in which he observed the similarity between the stripes in a Johns flag painting and the

lines of a Shakespearean sonnet. Cage pointed out the sensitive reflection of nature in the ascetic works, such as *Numbers*, that are dominated by gray: "With nothing in it to grasp, the work is weather, an atmosphere that is heavy rather than light (something he knows and regrets); in oscillation with it we tend toward our ultimate place; zero, gray disinterest." In this passage, Cage beautifully put his finger on the distance Johns maintains from the materials of his art and, like Cunningham's dance, on the star system of performance.

But there is more encoded here. The incorporation of Cunningham's footprint goes beyond just a friendly nod to a collaborator; it is a wonderful bit of dance history as well as art history. Cunningham had arrived in New York as a protégé of Martha Graham. (He was the second man to join her company.) His work with Graham and his own choreography was the avant-garde side of his life. To make ends meet, he taught at the School of American Ballet, working briefly with George Balanchine, whose great works for the New York City Ballet filled evening after evening at the New York State Theater, where the Johns painting hangs today. The faraway look cultivated by Cunningham and his dancers echoes the Giacometti-style distant gaze of the dancers in Balanchine's abstract works. In 1947 Cunningham even created a piece, *The Seasons*, for the Ballet Society, the predecessor to the New York City Ballet created by Lincoln Kirstein and Balanchine. Many Johns paintings have references hidden in them, and this quiet nod to his friend's connection to the ballet company in residence in the theater where the painting was destined to hang is one of John's most delightfully sly allusions.

Yasuhide Kobashi
Ancient Song
1971

1972 for the Stravinsky Festival that many historians of dance consider the apogee of ballet in the United States. Kirstein met Kobashi, the son of a renowned ceramist (and himself a ceramist) in 1958, when the ballet was on tour in Japan. Like Isamu Noguchi, who created sets for Martha Graham, Kobashi gently melded biomorphic form and abstraction, symmetry and kinesis, in one style. They are a prelude to what we find upstairs, the monumental white figures commissioned from Italian stone carvers at Carrara by Philip Johnson for the two-hundred-foot-long promenade packed by dance and opera fans during intermission. At our end of the hall is the *Two Female Nudes* (1931), and across the way is *Circus Women* (1931), both by the Polish-born sculptor Elie Nadelman. These looming presences are

Elie Nadelman
Two Female Nudes
1931

based on much smaller figures in bronze by the same artist. It was Johnson's idea to enlarge them from four-foot-six papier-mâché maquettes to their twenty-foot-high eminence by carvers working in single blocks of the famous white marble used by masters from Michelangelo to Brancusi and by many sculptors of our time. A fascinating figure in the history of Modernism (he was introduced to Picasso in 1908 by the influential American collector Leo Stein), Nadelman was keenly aware of the vital role of folk art in American visual culture. That play of high and low, Classical and vernacular, is keenly felt in these pairings, expanded to their towering scale and rendered in a medium of such historic resonance, yet in their blank faces and maternal demeanor retaining their comic and accessible nature.

Elie Nadelman
Circus Women
1931

The giant Nadelmans stand guard over a minimuseum of sculpture. Inside the first-tier lobby at the New York State Theater is a late bronze by the Modern master Jacques Lipchitz, *Birth of the Muses* (1944–1950). The curving, rhythmic oscillation of the form represents a departure for the artist, whose earlier idiom was more Cubist, more abstract, and perhaps a bit "tougher." In this work we can quite readily make out the image of Pegasus, the winged horse, who, when his foot struck a rock on the slope of Mount Olympus, spawned the Muses. This piece was originally commissioned by Philip Johnson for one of the guesthouses of the Rockefeller family, and it was donated by them to Lincoln Center when the State Theater was built.

Nearby are other works by artists who should be better known. Francesco Somaini's *Large Bleeding Martyr* (1960) is a cruciform study in textures, contrasting the finished gleam of the concave spaces with the ruggedness recalling the clay of the original maquette. It was also in the

Jacques Lipchitz
Birth of the Muses
1944–1950

Francesco Somaini
Large Bleeding Martyr
1960

Rockefeller family collection before being donated to Lincoln Center. A similarly diagonal geometry characterizes *Sculpture* (1965) by Edward Higgins, which echoes the fascination of the painter Fernand Leger with machines and their power. The only guideline Higgins was given in his commission for this steel and epoxy work was the stipulation that it could not exceed seven feet in height. Reflecting on the tight geometry of the symmetry, it is easy to miss the artist's intended figural reference to two people lying flat on the ground, heads side by side, and feet raised in the sky as though chatting on the Great Lawn of Central Park.

We return to Classicism with Reuben Nakian's *Voyage to Crete* (1963), a virtuosic exploration of the properties of bronze that is the aesthetic counterpoint to the severity of the Higgins. A ragged arc into which gaps have been torn, it is one of many works Nakian devoted to Greek mythology. "The Greeks gave sculpture youth and love. That's why I like

Edward Higgins
Sculpture
1965

Reuben Nakian
Voyage to Crete
1963

them more than Egypt. I'm on the satyr's side, not the mummy's," he once archly commented. Just as the New York State Theater was opening, Nakian was the subject of a major retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art curated by the poet Frank O'Hara. He had his first solo show in New York in 1928, and by the 1960s Nakian was considered one of the major talents in sculpture. A protégé of the refined and yet "retro" sculptor Paul Manship (in the sense that Manship could hardly be considered a Modernist) and a studiomate of fellow Manship student Gaston Lachaise, Nakian was advanced enough in his appreciation of

abstraction to help install the first Brancusi exhibition in New York and to be a presence in Brancusi's studio in Paris. Late in life he defiantly declared to Avis Berman, an interviewer gathering oral histories for the Smithsonian Institution, that he was a bit of an anachronism: "I don't live with any of the artists of this age; I live with the great artists of the past. When I think of art, I think of Velázquez and Poussin, and Rubens and Titian. I'm talking about majesty, genius, nobility. It's scarce in this age." One of the best anecdotes about how the worlds of sculpture and opera sometimes connect is a story he related about the day the renowned tenor Enrico Caruso silently stood behind him at the Metropolitan Museum of Art as he copied a Classical Greek sculpture. His mentor, Manship, had chastised him for being a "lousy" sculptor, so he was at the museum to make a two-foot-high plaster version of the Greek original. He noticed a crowd forming around him, and turned to see what the fuss was all about. As he recalled, "There was Caruso with a grin. He saw I was nervous as hell. I got so scared, I turned back right away. And after five minutes, I turned again, and he was gone."

After crossing the promenade for a closer glimpse of the towering clouds of *Circus Women*, we circle back down the west staircase, past the other Yasuhide Kobashi gilt relief commissioned for the site, *Ancient Dance* (1972), to the lobby for one of the most inspiring and heartwarming encounters in our tour. Those may not be the adjectives that first come to mind as you catch sight of the dark, almost menacing wall relief before us—yes, that is the fiberglass turret of a World War II bomber pointing straight at us. But for those of us in the art world, and aware of the volatile way it can build and then collapse reputations, this *Untitled Relief* (1964) is testimony to a veritable resurrection in the career of its maker, Lee Bontecou. She was one of the art stars of the early 1960s, respected for her potent and highly original explorations of three-dimensional form in such unconventional materials as the old fire hoses and mechanical elements we see here. One of her peers, the sculptor and influential arbiter of taste Donald Judd, lavished unusual praise upon this piece in particular and her work in general: "The explicit power which displaces generalizations is a new and stronger form of individuality. Bontecou's work has an individuality equaled in the work of only a few artists." At about the time these words were written, Bontecou seemed to disappear from the art scene, shunning publicity, shows, and attention. When she burst again onto the radar, with a major museum retrospective that finished its tour at the MoMA in 2004, this massive work, supported by a framework she welded and the largest she ever made, was a touchstone of the scholarly catalogue accompanying the show. That certainly made visitors to the New York State Theater take notice.

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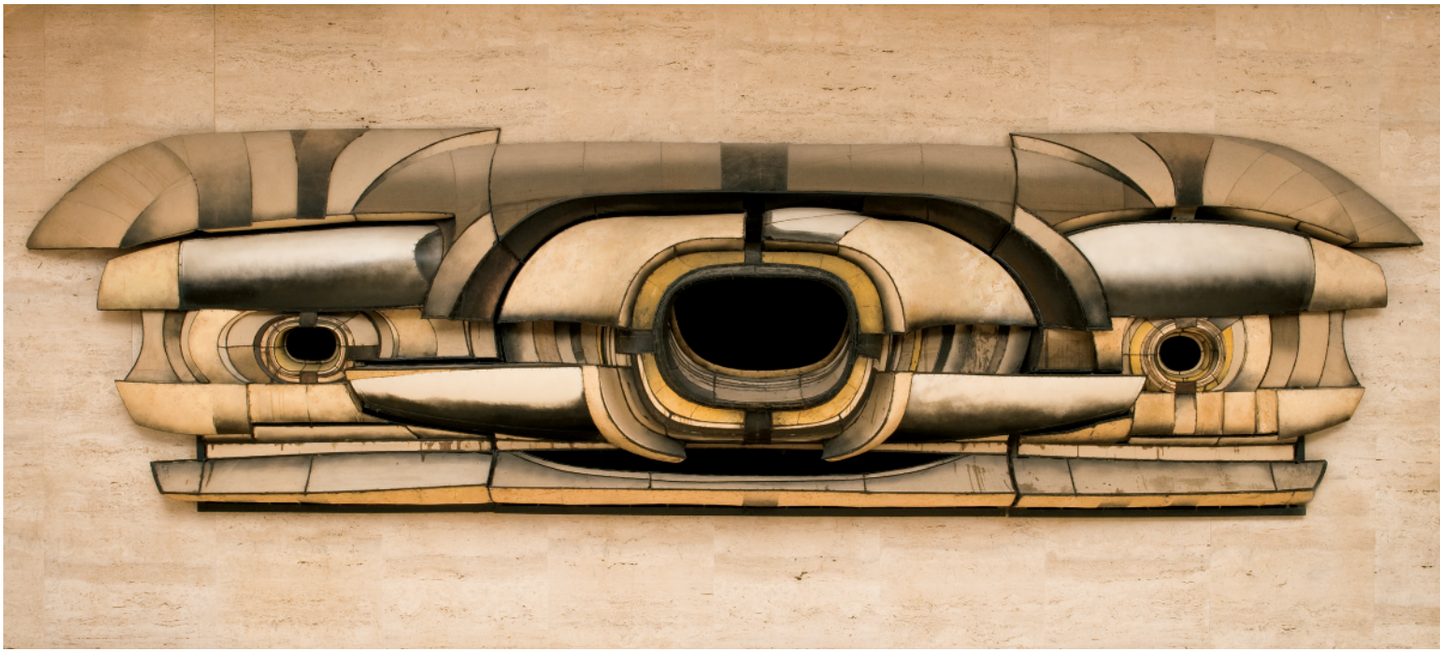
Yasuhide Kobashi
Ancient Dance
1972



Lee Bontecou
Untitled Relief
1964

LEE BONTECOU

Every work at Lincoln Center has a story—provenance alone is one of the great sources of art historical narrative—but perhaps none is more dramatic, even allegorical in its trajectory, than the personal tale of a resurgent career that attends one of the largest (and for decades the most neglected) of the sculptures in the collection. As you ascend the stairs on the right side of the New York State Theater, across the lobby from the celebrated *Numbers* of Jasper Johns, you may notice a vast wall relief that looms in the wings of the stairwell under a low ceiling. It is a twenty-two-foot-long untitled sculpture, the largest she ever made, by the American artist Lee Bontecou. Commissioned at the peak of her career in 1963 and installed in 1964, it remained literally in the shadows. So did the artist during a period of self-imposed exile from the arts scene that ended in 2003, when both Bontecou and her masterpiece made their triumphant return to the consciousness of art lovers with a major retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art. The show, which traveled nationally, unleashed a tidal surge of art criticism and overdue media attention as journalists rediscovered Bontecou. A highlight in the catalogue for the show was the Lincoln Center piece, the crowning achievement to date in a long career, still unfolding, that has mainly been carried on behind the curtain of withdrawal from the spotlight.

The fact that this seminal but forgotten landmark of contemporary sculpture had been hanging all along in the halls of the New York State Theater is a ratification of the Art and Acquisitions Committee's prescience and a reminder of the responsibility its members shouldered. Perhaps no other piece in the collection serves as a better example of the challenge of choosing work that is not only of the moment but also likely to attain the permanent meaningfulness that is one of the criteria of genuine art. Although contemporary art has its acknowledged stars, at whose crowded openings the red dots proliferate on the walls and whose press clips gush with acclaim, it remains a sobering fact of art history that only time will determine whether certain works will take their place in the canon. Choosing those masterpieces at the moment when they are executed is far from a simple matter, which is one of the great gambles of commissioning art for a public space. The Bontecou wall relief is the best example we will find of the dynamic

aspect of the Lincoln Center collection, the potential it retains to disclose, year by year, the significance of the choices made in the 1960s.

Bontecou is the ascetic antithesis of the attention-hungry artist. While her abstract sculpture is anything but autobiographical, it reflects her subtlety and essential self-effacement. Bontecou was born in 1931 in Providence, Rhode Island, and was raised in suburban Westchester County, just outside of Manhattan. Her father collaborated with her uncle to invent the first aluminum canoe, a bit of trivia that jibes nicely with the hull-like constructions that are so important to her own sculpture. Her mother was also handy—during World War II she, akin to the legendary Rosie the Riveter, wired submarine transmitters. Another aspect of her mother's influence on the vocabulary of Bontecou's work is traced to the tidal pools of the Nova Scotia coastline where her mother grew up and to which Bontecou returned each summer. In case one misses the veiled allusions to seashells and ocean forms in the finished work, the drawings of Bontecou, many of which were recently published on the occasion of the retrospective, include a number of delicate studies of crab claws, mollusks, and whorls that point quite directly to the observations she made over the years in the salt marshes at False Harbor in Yarmouth.

At least three of the most highly regarded sculptors in recent history have gone on record and cited Bontecou as a major influence. The first was Eva Hesse, the brilliant if tragic young heroine of "soft" Minimalism and a splendid example herself of an artist who has been rediscovered by later generations of critics and collectors. Another important sculptor, Kiki Smith, has remarked on the influence Bontecou has had on her own work, calling her "a model of an artist—particularly for women—who left the art world and survived." And at the moment when the Lincoln Center piece had just been unveiled, the brilliant but highly critical Minimalist sculptor Donald Judd wrote a review for *Arts Magazine* that offered a ringing endorsement of the power and originality of his colleague. The exceptionally adulatory and perspicacious review was published in the April 1965 issue. It reads in part: "Bontecou's reliefs are an assertion of herself, of what she feels and knows. Their primitive, oppressive and unmitigated individuality excludes grand interpretations. The explicit power which displaces generalizations is a new and stranger form of individuality. Bontecou's work has an individuality equaled in the work of only a few artists."

Bontecou's academic background is impeccable. She earned her arts degree at Bradford College in Massachusetts and then headed to the prestigious Art Students League in Manhattan in 1952, during what many consider its most vibrant, even thrilling period, when such master teachers as Hans Hofmann were attracting the top talent from around the world. Among the other famous former students were Franz Kline, Lee Krasner, David Smith, and others. Bontecou's mentors were John Hovannes and the Lithuanian-born American sculptor Willam Zorach, whose monumental public works include a dramatic piece at Radio City Music Hall. In the summer of 1954 Bontecou headed to Maine and the Skowhegan School, which to this day is known for its rigorous program in sculpture. During her student days, her work was primarily figural. But a breakthrough at Skowhegan was her first attempt at welding, an approach to sculpture that altered the progress of the medium in the twentieth century. As we see in the case of David Smith, and as exemplified in the prototypical work of Julio Gonzalez and Pablo Picasso, the welder's torch enables an entirely different range of possibilities from the old modeling and casting techniques of traditional sculpture. A delightful picture of Bontecou at Skowhegan that summer shows her standing in a field on a parked car that she used as a step stool to get to the top of a giant welded sculpture of a man—partly figural but edging toward the abstraction that became her signature style.

Bontecou did not have to wait long before her talent was recognized. She was honored by a Fulbright Scholarship that took her to Rome from 1956 until 1958. The development of her unique technical idiom was rapid, particularly after she tried a combination of welding the frame of a substructure and then covering it with terra-cotta. It proved to be an ingenious way of twisting the openwork method of Gonzalez and Picasso. Curators were quick to spot the promise of the innovation, and she made her debut in 1957 at the renowned Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto. Within three years she would be exhibiting at the Leo Castelli Gallery, where Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg were also on the roster. Later in her career she would recall with some bitterness how Castelli was more inclined to push forward the "boys" instead of her when a big collector showed up at the gallery.

Yet Bontecou has pointedly maintained that she does not want her work to be "read" anatomically or as a feminist manifesto. "I just wasn't

there. I had no community spirit. I haven't that many friends in the art world. And I'm not really involved with the Women's Movement; it's nothing new to me," she told journalist Mina Haleby in an *ArtJournal* article published in 1994, nine years before Bontecou "came out" of her retreat. The withdrawal from the network of the New York art scene mysteriously followed her 1971 one-woman show at the Leo Castelli Gallery. Bontecou moved her studio out to the hills of Pennsylvania, in Amish country, and began a three-decade moratorium on showing her work.

The 2003 retrospective changed all that. It traveled from the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago to the Hammer Museum at UCLA and finished triumphantly at the Museum of Modern Art in the summer of 2004. Amid all the speculation regarding the meaning of her exile, Bontecou left a few hints of its reasons. "I'd get so depressed with the horrors of the world that I'd have to stop and turn to more open work, work that I felt was more optimistic—where, for example, there might be just one single opening, and the space beyond it was like opening up into the heavens, going up into space, feeling space," she told Eleanor Munro for an essay in Munro's book *Originals* published in 1979.

The catalogue for the retrospective runs to a dense but illuminating 240 pages, but only one has the paramount importance of the very first page in the book. In her "Artist's Statement," printed on a special vellum and unpaged, Bontecou set the record straight. It is one of the most forthright and important single pages in any book about contemporary art, and it reads in part:

> In the past when I tried to express my thoughts, eyelids drooped and the agendas were doled out. As a result I stopped trying and spoke only through my work. So I am writing this now during my retrospective to put all that to rest, and to express my own voice about inaccuracies and irrelevant contextualizations.
> Since my early years until now, the natural world and its visual wonders and horrors—man-made devices with their mind-boggling engineering feats and destructive abominations, elusive human nature and its multiple ramifications from the sublime to unbelievable abhorrances—to me are all one. It is in the spirit of this feeling that the primary influences on my work have occurred.

Bontecou uses the essay to cite some of her favorite artistic source materials. When she strolls through the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for example, she lingers among the Greek vases and the African sculptures, and yokes together the ideas she gathers with others she finds across Central Park, at the American Museum of Natural History. In the continuum of her creative process, the forms rhyme along patterns of affinity that are completed in her work.

The backstage drama of how her largest sculpture found its way to Lincoln Center is another orchestration from the repertoire of Philip Johnson. He wrote an article on Bontecou that was one of the earliest and most influential appraisals of her early progress. "Lee Bontecou seems to have had an empathy (which she denies possessing) for the space and coloring of the theater. Her piece fits as well as a baroque statue in the niche of a baroque hall," he wrote in "Young Artists at the Fair and at Lincoln Center," which was published in *Art in America* in August 1964. In a way it was a left-handed compliment because it alluded to the decorative quality of the work, which to this day has pejorative connotations for any artist.

It takes time to read this sensitive and powerful work. You can find the Plexiglas turret from a military aircraft, the fire hoses and other "heavy" industrial paraphernalia within it, covered lightly in white canvas, stitched roughly, and blackened with soot. A related drawing at the Hood Museum at Dartmouth reveals some of the sources for the sculpture in natural history, including the claw of a crab and shells. The Lincoln Center relief is an exuberant, encyclopedic masterpiece that represents the very height of Bontecou's thinking and craft, the pinnacle in a streak of productivity that made her one of Castelli's stars. Whatever Mr. Johnson might have meant, it is Baroque in the best sense of that term.

When Bontecou hit her rhythm and began producing the wall pieces between 1959 and 1967 that remain the core of her oeuvre, she was blessed with that essential artist's receptivity to stimuli from all across the spectrum of source materials. Her private term for the sculpture and drawing of the period is "worldscapes." They spread their arms to embrace plants, planes, the expansiveness of astronomy, the whole treasure-house of art from ancient and primitive carving to the very latest contemporary pieces. An exuberant quotation from that period gives the flavor of her wide-ranging curiosity: "As much of life as possible—no barriers—no boundaries—all freedom in every sense."

That is the spirit in which the Lincoln Center piece, with its wings unfolded to lift us upward and the absorbing black hole of its center aperture drawing us inward, was made. It is reflected in a recent statement from the artist, writing to the curator and critic Elizabeth A. T. Smith:

> So you take from the world, but then it goes into the dream. It's like when you read a book and the author speaks to you and you feel, here's a friend. It's the same when I look at what the cave painters did and ancient African art, the building of Chartres cathedral, a Brancusi sculpture or a Van Gogh painting. They are friends.

As we head back across the plaza, let me point out that the "Minimalist" black disk of the central fountain was itself conceived by Philip Johnson, whose name has cropped up quite often on our tour. In addition to being one of the principal architects of the campus and an influential voice in the design process, he was also an advocate of avant-garde art who, it turns out four decades later, was blessed with extraordinary foresight when it came to picking the artists and works from "downtown" that would blossom into art historical significance. The island on Broadway known as Dante Park is the site of a memorial statue by Ettore Ximenes as well as the latest permanent addition to the outdoor art of Lincoln Center, Philip Johnson's *TimeSculpture* (1999), an eighteen-foot-tall bronze column, twisted or torqued, in which four huge Movado clock dials are embedded. (These are monitored by a global positioning satellite system and maintained by the Swiss watch company; they are accurate to plus or minus one millisecond.) *TimeSculpture* is the last official acquisition, commissioned by Lincoln Center, for the campus.

Philip Johnson
TimeSculpture
1999

Even from outside Avery Fisher Hall, designed by Max Abramovitz, we have our first glimpse of a major sculpture that the architect commissioned for the vast lobby, hovering there behind the glass facade as the Chagall paintings appear behind theirs. See how the sun glints from the golden lattice of Richard Lippold's *Orpheus and Apollo* (1962), stretching from one end of the building's Grand Promenade to the other. A high-art play on the conventional chandelier, it is composed of 190 Munz metal bars (similar to brass) that float at Cubist angles to one another. It is a deft allusion to the gift of music (aptly enough, for the home of the New York Philharmonic as well as the popular Mostly Mozart summer concert series) from deity to mortal, father to son. The work is geometric and abstract on the one hand, decidedly narrative and suggestively figural on the other. One of the best views of the spotlit "big bang" of gold is enjoyed by the balcony ticketholders who come out of a concert nose-to-nose with the upper echelon of the work on their way to the escalators.

In the lobby of Avery Fisher Hall is one of the most important masterpieces in the collection, *Zig IV* (1961) by David Smith. It has been loaned to major museums, including the Pompidou Centre and the Tate Modern, as it is considered indispensable to any retrospective of this American titan's career. It uses Smith's signature idiom of industrial steel parts welded by him (he was a virtuoso of the torch, having trained by welding Studebakers and tanks during World War II) into a carefully

Richard Lippold
Orpheus and Apollo
1962

choreographed unity. As with the Jasper Johns painting across the plaza, this challenging work was far from a safe choice for the members of the Art and Acquisitions Committee in the 1960s. They had little assurance that Smith would become one of the permanent fixtures of the Abstract Expressionist galaxy, dominated as it was by such painters as Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, and Franz Kline. But the years have only added luster to Smith's reputation, especially on an international level. The surface of this piece is an outstanding example of Abstract Expressionist painting, a reminder of Smith's gifts with the brush as well as the torch.

David Smith
Zig IV
1961

DAVID SMITH

Easily the most unprepossessing sculptural presence at Lincoln Center, particularly in relation to its stature as a pivotal, rare example of his late work that has increased in value over the years, is *Zig IV*, a work by the American master David Smith that has traditionally greeted visitors on the east side of the ground floor of Avery Fisher Hall. The sculpture is visible from Broadway and the plaza but too often overlooked by latecomers to New York Philharmonic concerts. Smith is a figure whose stature in art history keeps growing with each account of Abstract Expressionism, that group of New York–based artists in the 1950s that included Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, and Willem de Kooning. Many still consider this "first generation" to have been the pinnacle of American art history. An admired friend and colleague of these painters, Smith stands as the premier sculptor in the group. Recent retrospectives devoted to Smith at the Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Tate Modern in London (which included the Lincoln Center piece) bolstered yet again his singular eminence.

It would be difficult to come up with a more humorous or apt formulation of the perplexing dual image left to posterity by David Smith than Robert Motherwell's exasperated, "Oh, David! You are as delicate as Vivaldi, and as strong as a Mack truck." Smith's sculpture can be by turns all about power and relinquishing power, empty space and mass, restraint and exuberance, the figure and abstraction. His life, as well, shuttled unpredictably between attack and retreat, luxury and poverty, anger and sensitivity, spontaneity and sheer labor, the cerebral and the physical.

When Smith died in May 1965, turning his truck over on a mountain road as he chased Kenneth Noland's Lotus sports car to an art opening in Bennington, the effect on the art world of the time was akin to that of losing one of its saints. In a manner similar to the withdrawal of Lee Bontecou from the art scene, Smith was the hermit of the Abstract Expressionists, living in self-imposed exile away from New York most of the year and adhering to a strict regimen of work on the sculpture by day, on the drawings by night. "I like my solitude, black coffee, and daydreams," he wrote. He cast a cold eye on the New York crowd, which in his day was the now-mythic golden age of the Cedar Tavern and the Eighth Street "club" of Abstract Expressionists that still represents

the heyday of artistic bonhomie in Manhattan. Smith removed himself at age thirty-four to a famously austere studio and home in Bolton Landing, a tiny town in the hills that rise above Lake George in upstate New York.

Smith was born in 1906 in Decatur, Indiana. The importance of engineering to his work—as to so many other contemporary sculptors, including Mark di Suvero, George Rickey, and Alexander Calder—may have derived in part from the fact that his father was a telephone company engineer. Renowned in his school days as a cartoonist, he tried a few correspondence courses in drawing and headed to Ohio University to study art, although that lasted only one year (1924–25). His main problem with the program was its stress on art history survey courses in place of studio instruction. This is not to say that Smith was not steeped in the tradition, since his art (including the first paintings) from a very early stage shows the influences of Cubism, Surrealism, German and Austrian Expressionism, De Stijl, Russian Constructivism, even Impressionism.

Instead of university, he went to work on the assembly line, making Studebakers in South Bend, then tried his luck again at Notre Dame in the fall. It took just a few days of classes to send him back to the Studebaker plant. Eventually he was transferred by the automotive company to Washington, D.C., and then to New York. The turning point in his life was meeting Dorothy Dehner—they were married in 1927—an artist who lived in the same rooming house as Smith in New York. She dragged him to the Art Students League, where he studied painting and encountered Piet Mondrian, Hans Hofmann, and Naum Gabo. Smith gave up painting for sculpture, and then gave up on Manhattan. He and Dehner moved to Bolton Landing in 1940, and it was not long before they were pressed into service as part of the war effort. In July 1942 he started as a welder at the American Locomotive factory in Schenectady, fitting armor plates on tanks. Smith lost fifteen pounds that summer, living in the attic of an old house in Schenectady and trying to keep up with the fierce pace of the assembly line. After the swing shift on Saturday morning, if Smith had Sundays off he would drive straight up to Bolton Landing and spend the day working—at that time using marble, because all kinds of metal were in such short supply, but working the stone with power tools rather than a hammer and chisel.

While some escape to the countryside to relax, Smith in Bolton Landing was a twenty-four-hour bundle of nerves. He called his shop

the Terminal Iron Works, an homage to the original bustling (and now dormant) hive of industry on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, near where Smith and Dehner first lived and worked together. In Brooklyn he liked the all-night cacophony of the shipyards, a paradigm of the constant buzz of activity he wanted around him. So Smith turned the stars and the mountains, the night sounds and the fierce storms, into his stimulants. At eleven-thirty at night he would have a pot of coffee and start drawing with a brush, using a spray bottle, or applying his freehanded calligraphy. The next morning, with the discipline that working on a mass production line instills, he would answer the bell early, striding into the studio at ten after an hour of reading. After particularly successful bouts of productivity, Smith would descend on Manhattan to reward himself with classical music concerts at the 92nd Street Y, gallery- and museum-bashing, Chinese food, jazz, and drinking at places such as the Artists Club or the Cedar Tavern, where Pollock, de Kooning, Kline, and Motherwell fired down shots of whiskey chased by pints of Guinness. The ritual would include breakfast on Eighth Street before returning to work upstate. In Smith's own words, he would "ride it as hard and as long as I can for a few days, then back to the hills."

Smith and Dehner enjoyed greater and greater isolation at Bolton Landing as the years progressed. At first their home, with no insulation and cracks through which the wind would whistle, had only a small coal stove for heat, an outdoor hand pump for water, and no electricity (like Pollock's in Springs, Long Island). They wanted to be entirely self-sufficient, and there are amusing stories of Dehner cooking mushrooms that Smith found, and of his hunting exploits, including the famous slab of bear meat that he brought to his friend Motherwell in Greenwich Village. The cloistered existence of Smith and Dehner fed the thematic development of some of his early works.

At Bolton Landing, Smith actually maintained two studios, one of them (in the house) clean, warm, and orderly, and the other, the one he called "the shop," a cold, cluttered, semi-industrial space where he could be a "greaseball." In the clean studio, particularly at night, Smith would draw and work on prints. That is where he kept his drawing tables, etching press, and photos. One of the most charming stories told about Smith is the way he would stack up his drawing paper, the expensive handmade sheets mixed in with the cheaper stock, and simply reach for the next sheet without checking to see which it might

be, then casually let the drawings fall wet to the floor as he reached for another blank sheet.

The shop was a large forty-foot-long cinderblock structure that Smith designed and built himself, with a row of northern skylights set at a thirty-degree angle and a few floor areas that were in effect drawing spaces. It was equipped with as many gadgets and tools as he could afford, including a heliarc welder for stainless steel, oxyacetylene equipment, burning machines to cut large circles in steel plate, cutting machines for bar stock, a drill press, and a professional steelworker's table to hold forms in different positions. In the shop, it all started on the floor. Taking the base as "the law," he used chalk drawings as well as spray-painted shadows of steel and cardboard on the cement floor of his shop to set out the initial relationships that would give rise to a piece. These forms became what he called the "think pieces" or "profiles" for new configurations of elements that in themselves were always varied, as Smith disliked using standard shapes and dimensions as his compositional building blocks. For the same reasons, the next part of the process varied from piece to piece (Smith had a steadfast aversion to repeating himself), but for the most part it involved arranging cut-steel forms and found objects on the floor, using the profile partly as matrix and partly as a pushing-off point.

Upright, the pieces of Smith's work are welded into position, and a range of decisions and spontaneous combinatorial possibilities comes into play. Every connection, angle, and juxtaposition can be adjusted, reworked, and questioned. Because welding leaves a track—those lumps and seams and blobs of solder linking pieces that are nearly impossible to efface—the evolution of the work's syntax, the way it accumulated, is evident to the viewer. In its vertical phase, much of Smith's work, particularly those pieces done in a thin, linear style, was achieved by a technique of addition and fusion he called "drawing in air." Smith was a virtuoso of the open form in sculpture, an art of lightness, empty spaces, and negative space as much as it is an art of weight and measure. When he gave up painting on canvas for sculpture in 1936 (at the urging of his friends John Graham and John Xceron), Smith consciously renounced the fullness of painted mass for its opposite, the emptiness of the spaces within sculpture of these kinds. These drawings in air follow the trail of Picasso's iron wire "Constructions" of 1928–1929. In terms of the great painting of the time, they capture the movement and otherworldly sense of space that continue to hold viewers spellbound, such as the skeins of paint

dropped by Pollock from a foot away from the canvas on his studio floor.

Late in his career, with the Zig series of 1961, Smith found a way to return to painting and mass without forfeiting this lightness and grace. Lincoln Center's *Zig IV* is a paradigmatic example of the lushly painted, large-scale standing works that are the culmination of a career cut short. Although he finds a way to pull free from the referential anchors of the human body or the landscape in a more abstract geometry, the curious title is actually adapted from the term ziggurat, the form of an ancient Babylonian temple tower. The angular apex certainly confirms the allusion. Almost Baroque in its kinetic complexity, the essence of the work can be rather simply described. Four semicylinders and an L-shaped form cascade downward to a precariously tilted diamond-shaped base. It sets up a tight counterpoint between curves and right angles. All of this is perched on a small, rectangular platform with tiny, nonrolling wheels. To match the robust, upward thrust of the open forms, that alpine right angle pointing to the sky below which a planetary circle hovers, Smith has unleashed his painterly hand in Expressionist gestures covering every inch of the surface, streaking it horizontally in warm tones—orange, red, and chartreuse. According to Leon Pratt, the caretaker of Bolton Landing, the selection of colors corresponded to the "autumnal coloring of a maple leaf." Although the piece is too valuable and important to be left outside now, at Bolton Landing it stood in the field for three years. Smith used "mild" steel for its construction and sanded it down until the metal was bright, then applied the best of primers, ten to twenty coats' worth of a strong tan base, before he started the painting. The rapid flurry of the brush is reminiscent of the light-catching gestures he made in the stainless steel works with a power grinder. In the end, *Zig IV* synthesizes the two sides of Smith, the clean and messy studios of the brush and the welding torch, in one magisterial sculpture.

Because it is by Smith, and because it brings together so much that is characteristic of his work, almost anyone familiar with American art history would call it a masterpiece. That is precisely the term for the work used by the eminent critic and proponent of Abstract Expressionism Clement Greenberg: "*Zig IV* is [a masterpiece]. In it he escapes entirely from the allusions to the natural world (which includes man) that abound elsewhere in his art. Abstract form—with perhaps some reference to urban landscape—and the coordinates of the force of gravity (up and down) guide the eye exclusively here."

But—and this is not to contradict the greatest historian of the style or to diminish the singular power of this work—one of the essential tenets of Smith's aesthetic was the importance of the noble failure, the exhilarating experiment. In his own words,

> Ability may make the successful work in the eyes of the connoisseurs, but identity makes the failures, which are the most important contribution for the artist. What his critics term the failures are his best works from his own working position. These are the closest to actuality and the creative process. . . . The conflict for realization is what makes art, not its certainty, its technique, or material. I do not look for total success. If a part is successful, the rest clumsy or incomplete, I can still call it finished, if I've said anything new, by finding any relationship which I might call an origin. I will not change an error if it feels right, for the error is more human than perfection. I do not seek answers.

Some artists, such as Smith, are destined for recognition both in art history and in the auction house. Others wait in the shadows for reevaluation. Dimitri Hadzi was a Rockefeller family favorite (three of the brothers, including David, collected his work). He was also admired by Avery Fisher Hall architect Max Abramovitz, who went to the artist's studio in Rome to commission him. Hadzi, a graduate of Cooper Union in New York who is today considered one of the unsung heroes of the public art movement of the 1960s and 1970s, toured the unfinished "Philharmonic Hall" (as it was then designated) during construction. He surveyed the I-beams and pondered the place in the foyer where his piece would eventually reside. Across the lobby in Avery Fisher Hall from *Zig IV*, we see the results in *K.458. The Hunt* (1963–1964), a direct reference to Mozart's string quartet of that Ludwig Köechel number and title. (Köechel was a botanist and an amateur musicologist who in the early nineteenth century assembled the first chronological catalogue of Mozart's complete works.) One of those rare moments in art when music is visually transcribed in a static medium, the form rises from its three columnar legs into an ecstatic dance that has all the lightness and vivacity of the chamber piece to which it is dedicated. The story behind making the piece offers the typical confluence of personal taste and public mission so often encountered in situations where the architect offers a specific site in the building but leaves thematic content and other decisions to the artist. When Abramovitz paid his studio visit, Hadzi happened to be enjoying a period in his musical education when he was listening to chamber music. "Mozart was my favorite at the time—I was going through his quartets and 'The Hunt' was my favorite, so that was the point of departure for the piece." Then he incongruously added: "It's supposed to be quite gay. It's sort of a reaction to the Auschwitz experience, coming out of it."

If Hadzi gives us the sculptural version of stringed instruments, then right next to his work we experience what happens when Seymour Lipton unleashes the full power of the brass section in *Archangel* (1964). It brings to mind not only Gabriel but also the music of Archangelo Corelli as well as any number of other great trumpet or horn pieces whose solos have echoed through these halls. There is a long tradition of portrait busts in symphony spaces, and Avery Fisher Hall boasts a trio of formidable heads that greet audience members as they emerge from the auditorium at intermission. Auguste Rodin's *Gustav Mahler*

Dimitri Hadzi
K.458. The Hunt
1963–1964

Seymour Lipton
Archangel
1964

(1909–1910) brings together two of the soaring talents of their time, each in his way a bridge from high Romanticism to Modernism. The richly worked texture of the hair, where the fingers of the artist seem to have just now left their marks on the clay, is the perfect technical prelude, as well, for the Henry Moore outside the window that we will come to momentarily—in fact, when Moore's work was first shown in the United States, it was often paired with that of Rodin.

Auguste Rodin
Gustav Mahler
1909–1910

Just a few feet away as you move north along the window bays is the tempestuous and touching *Tragic Mask of Beethoven* (1901) by Rodin's Parisian rival and fellow Romantic, Émile-Antoine Bourdelle. It is one in a series of nearly two dozen versions that Bourdelle made as he vigorously explored the countenance of the quintessential genius. A second portrait of Beethoven by Bourdelle, *Beethoven à la Colonne* (1901), is located in Alice Tully Hall, just across Sixty-fifth Street. The gouged-out areas in particular look ahead to the style of Bourdelle's greatest protégé, Alberto Giacometti, who also used the removal of clay or plaster to create haunting images. The esteemed British artist Sir Jacob Epstein made the *Bust of Paul Robeson* (1928), which stands on a pedestal facing the auditorium doors on the Columbus Avenue side of the building. It perfectly catches the way the singer turned his gaze upward to God in performance.

As we meander among these works indoors, we cannot help sneaking a peek out the window to the courtyard outside, bounded by the Met, the Vivian Beaumont Theater (by architect Eero Saarinen), and Avery Fisher Hall. There in the reflecting pool, in all its splendor, is the dramatic sculptural high point of the Lincoln Center collection, Henry Moore's immense *Reclining Figure* (1962–1963). Stroll the perimeter of its reflecting pool to gain a full appreciation of his grandest work, which Moore offered to Lincoln Center in lieu of actually executing a commission, a practice he shunned. As you begin to understand the sculpture, you recognize that it is in two parts, yet it is perceived as a unified whole. As we move toward the Lincoln Center Theater side of the pool, it is much easier to see the way in which the two huge forms, bisected cleanly in their middle, compose a Classical reclining nude in the manner of Titian, Rubens, or Manet. The work also rhymes visually with other sources, such as rock formations along the Atlantic coast of Europe and the bones Moore would excavate on his farm.

Émile-Antoine Bourdelle
Beethoven à la Colonne
1901

Émile-Antoine Bourdelle
Tragic Mask of Beethoven
1901

Sir Jacob Epstein
Bust of Paul Robeson
1928

Henry Moore
Reclining Figure
1962–1963

HENRY MOORE

The craggy cliffs of a colossal bronze rise from the still water of a reflecting pool. On cold winter days, the wispy miasma that hovers over its surface enhances the dramatic effect of Henry Moore's largest, and many say greatest, sculpture, the monumental *Reclining Figure* that is the centerpiece of Lincoln Center's outdoor art collection. It was commissioned in 1962, when the name Henry Moore was just beginning to accumulate the patina of recognition it bears today. He had enjoyed wide celebrity, conferred on him by his compatriots and his queen (who honored him with a knighthood), for the stunning, and deeply moving, series of drawings he made in the London Underground during the Blitz. In World War I he had been gassed in the trenches, adding to the aura of patriotic public figure. But in the United States, he proved a controversial choice for the major project. He had three strikes against him: He was English, not American; his work was at least in part abstract; and he was still on the other side of a threshold that reputations of "major artists" cross only when the international chorus of praise essentially drowns out dissent or skepticism.

Moore's modest beginnings made him uncomfortable with the knighthood (Companion of Honor) conferred on him by Queen Elizabeth in 1955. He was the seventh of eight children born to Raymond Spencer Moore, a coal miner, and his wife, Mary Baker, in Castelford, Yorkshire. As a child he impressed teachers with his early ardor not only for drawing but also for the Gothic carvings in the local churches. His father pushed him to apply to the Teachers Training College, but heads of state in Europe had other plans. He served a three-year stint in the trenches as an infantryman during World War I. After he was demobilized he entered the Leeds School of Art and came under the tutelage of Sir Michael Sadler. (Two decades later, Sadler donated the first Moore piece to the Museum of Modern Art in New York.) Sadler's personal collection of paintings by Cézanne, Matisse, and Kandinsky, along with his African carvings, became Moore's study tools. After Leeds, he was awarded a fellowship by the Royal College of Art, which offered him six eye-opening months of travel in France and Italy, the most important formative experience of his artistic career. He joined its faculty in 1924. Two years later, a few of his sculptures were included in a group show at the St. George's Gallery in London.

He had his first one-man exhibition at the Warren Gallery at age thirty, and by the time he was forty-one was successful enough to quit teaching for full-time work in the studio.

The real breakthrough show, however, was held in 1931 at the Leicester Galleries, and comprised thirty-four sculptures and forty-one drawings that drew the attention of connoisseurs Kenneth Clark, Herbert Read, and others as well as his colleagues, including Jacob Epstein, Eric Gill, and Jacques Lipchitz. (Lipchitz would later design a pedestal for a reclining woman piece in Moore's first one-man show in New York.) Not long after, Moore's art began to make inroads across the pond, when the curator and MoMA powerhouse Alfred Barr included it in his "Cubism and Abstract Art" exhibition of 1936. A large *Recumbent Figure*, carved from Hornton stone, was shown at the New York World's Fair in 1939. It was stranded in New York throughout World War II, residing in the garden of the Museum of Modern Art.

The first American museum to acquire a major piece was not MoMA but the estimable, yet often overlooked, Albright-Knox in Buffalo, which in 1939 bought a reclining figure carved in elm. It was the start of a major trend. By the 1960s, before Asian collectors "discovered" Moore, more than two-thirds of his sculpture found a home in the United States. While British experts and collectors revered the patriotic aspect of Moore's shelter drawings and sculpture, the American audience appreciated his gift for abstraction. The 1946 exhibition at MoMA, organized by the curator James Johnson Sweeney (who quit after a battle with his colleagues days before the show opened), is important to an understanding of Moore's career trajectory. The artist was forty-seven that year. The show's success was celebrated not only by major dealers and collectors—notably Joseph Hirshhorn—but also by such artists as Alexander Calder, Georgia O'Keeffe, Arshile Gorky, Marc Chagall, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Tobey, and the architect Walter Gropius. David Rockefeller was chairman of MoMA's board of trustees and a significant voice in the selection of artists for the exhibition program and of works for the permanent collection. By 1961, when Lincoln Center settled on Moore as their choice, MoMA already owned ten works by Moore, including a major piece, his monumental *Large Torso (Arch)*, installed in the sculpture courtyard. After winning top honors at the Venice Biennale a year later, Moore was an indisputable force in the contemporary art world.

A spate of triumphant gallery and museum exhibitions followed in the next decade, leading to major commissions. His *Reclining Figure*

created for the UNESCO building in Paris was unveiled in 1958, the largest piece he had ever completed—until Lincoln Center's emissary Frank Stanton invited him to work on an even grander scale. At first, arrangements were loose and informal. They began with Gordon Bunshaft, a partner in the firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, who designed the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts Building that looks out on the reflecting pool. He was a strong advocate of Moore's work after their first meeting in 1961. Then the Art and Acquisitions Committee made its gutsy decision to offer Moore the prime site at Lincoln Center. When he saw the generous proportions of the reflecting pool he declared, "By George, it's as big as a cricket pitch!" (He had a good eye—the dimensions of the pool almost exactly match the layout of the standard cricket pitch.) Moore re-created the reflecting pool at his bucolic outdoor studio.

On December 6, 1962, a letter with the directions to Moore's home in Much Hadham, a picturesque village just thirty miles north of London, arrived at the office of Frank Stanton. Certain rural settings for sculptors' studios offer the ideal context in which the work ought to be viewed. David Smith, the great American master of the welding torch, arranged his works in a field at Bolton Landing, by the shore of Lake George; his own photographs are still used by curators for museum installations. In our own time, the open-air studio on the East River (originally a steelworks) where Mark di Suvero swings his I-beams into place against the skyline of Manhattan is one of the most unlikely (and hardly rural) yet magical places for appreciating the artist's prodigious oeuvre in process. Before both of these studios came Henry Moore's Much Hadham, now one of the world's most beloved outdoor sculpture gardens. The complex in its heyday consisted of the farmhouse, where the artist lived, three separate studios, a garden with greenhouses tended by his wife Irina, a covered hangarlike space for the plaster maquettes, and plenty of open pasture, where bronzes would be set out to weather them to the stage of patina that he chose from a palette ranging from amber to verdigris so dark it borders on black.

The rhythm of creative life at the idyllic Much Hadham was busy but carefully paced. Rising early to listen to news on the BBC and enjoy tea in his bedroom, Moore would appear for breakfast at about eight-thirty and go through his mail (although, like so many artists, most of the letters and requests for lectures or images would remain unanswered for months). His assistants, most of them arriving from

London, would open the maquette studio and pull back the tarps on works in progress by the time he strolled over to the first studio, at about nine thirty. There might be some appointments to sort through with his loyal secretary of decades, Betty Tinsley, before the customary tea at eleven ("elevenses"). After that, Moore would hop on a bicycle (in later years he would be driven in a car) and venture down to the pastures to visit another work in progress. The one on which he and his staff focused would be enclosed in a tentlike portable studio that could be set up anywhere outside the large building with its loading dock. As assistants worked, Moore would offer suggestions and occasionally make corrections of his own. At one o'clock, he and Irina had lunch. Sometimes a guest, such as Stanton, who arrived directly from his flight that Sunday morning, would join them in the sunporch facing the lawn dotted by sculptures. The routine continued with a short rest after lunch, some light reading, and a nap before he resumed work at three, using the available sunlight to study a piece on site or to take photographs. Tea was served at four, and then it was time to rejoin Betty Tinsley in the office to handle, grudgingly, the gallery and museum business of the day. A quiet hour at the end of the day was sometimes spent drawing or tweaking a maquette, and then at six-thirty it was time for drinks in the living room and a quiet dinner with Irina.

The steady round of work and thought changed only slightly when Moore repaired to the coastal town of Forte dei Marmi on the Tyrrhenian coast, where he spent two or three months each summer. His modest home there was a short drive from the Querceta marble works, the same quarry, owned by Henraux, where the renowned white marble of the Carrara mountains was cut for Michelangelo. Moore would ascend by car to the peak of Mount Altissimo several times each summer, exuberantly expressing his awe at the immense quarry operations way up the mountainside where Michelangelo, in his quest for the best stone, cut into the stone thrust up from the seabed where the highest pressure had packed it more solidly than the stone below. Below, in the Henraux yards, power tools polished large works by Moore for upcoming exhibitions around the world.

Across acres of rolling downs at Much Hadham, Moore sited his works in progress as well as a select group of major finished sculptures that, as many artists do, he retained as points of departure and reference for future creations. The essential role of Much Hadham for Moore was not only to provide a congenial *locus amoenis* where

life and work collude. He also needed the ever-changing clouds, the wide sky, and the undulating terrain to offer a context within which his sculpture, which at the time of the Lincoln Center commission was becoming substantially larger, could be perceived in an abstract and absolute way. This transcends the mere relation of the piece to the adjacent trees or architectural background in which it was eventually sited. It accounts for the visual harmony he strikes between the "eternal feminine" (as he called it) of a rolling landscape and the powerful womanhood of, for example, the *Reclining Figure*. As he told Henry Seldis, curator of many of the artist's shows and author of *Henry Moore in America* (Praeger, 1973), the best critical account of the Lincoln Center commission and other projects like it, "Only the sky, miles away, allows us to contrast infinity with reality, and so we are able to discover the sculpture's inner scale without comparison. Such viewing frees the imagination."

The Lincoln Center *Reclining Figure* is an epochal work both in terms of Moore's career and the history of Modern sculpture. It was twice the size of his largest work to date, the UNESCO commission that had ended in an unsatisfying and acrimonious compromise over siting. Although Moore had created his first reclining figures in the 1930s, his response to the Lincoln Center vote of confidence resulted in one of the most perfect urban examples of the marriage of sculpture and site anywhere. At Lincoln Center, Moore was offered the prime location for his reclining figure in a reflecting pool on the north side of the Metropolitan Opera House. A major aspect of the contextual stimulus for the piece was the quartet of Modernist architectural facades that would present a varying background to the work as you walk around the pool and take in the 360-degree view of the work.

For Moore, the commission was a chance to work on an unprecedented scale, to take the thematic basis of his current sculpture and try it on a vastly more expansive scope, echoing the sublime aspect of the colossal cliffs of Étretat, beloved as well of Claude Monet and the subject of some of his most powerful seascapes, in their dramatically rough grandeur. The source material for these forms is actually quite humble. Moore could be enchanted by a piece of driftwood, a pebble polished by the Atlantic rollers, the rock formation at Adel in Yorkshire, and, in the most frequently repeated anecdote about his origins of inspiration, the old bones exhumed on the grounds of Much Hadham, once the property of a butcher who ditched the bones, having sawed through them. Moore's cuts create level

planes and the signature intersections of curved and straight lines that are such important parts of Moore's vocabulary.

Moore was a natural stone carver of prodigious technical ability, but the richly textured surface of the Lincoln Center work is not attributable to the work of his chisel. Despite its clear inheritance from the lively undulations of a Rodin surface, neither is it the result of Moore slicing, scooping, and pinching clay. The reclining figures were originally modeled in either plaster or Styrofoam, and the working "draft" of the Lincoln Center piece was a maquette that was two-thirds scale to the final cast piece. The solidity of the two parts is characteristic of his work. Moore was fond of citing Michelangelo's thought that "a good piece of sculpture could be rolled down a hill without breaking." The two sides of the Lincoln Center reclining figure have that integrity and muscular bulk. One of the crucial aspects to perceive on the way to understanding the work is the cut or gap between the two hulking forms. "The relationship of the two pieces is to make a space between the forms as interesting as the forms themselves," Moore offered as commentary. Long after the cries of protest over the choice of an abstract, British sculptor faded from memory, the Moore remains a magisterial presence, languorously reclining in her reflecting pool by the Metropolitan Opera House. In a deliciously lyrical letter to Edgar Young, Moore wrote,

> If the poet says that the mountain skipped like rams, you don't really expect the mountain to move. But the poet is trying to make you think of an animal jumping as you look at the mountain in its jagged outline. This kind of metaphor, whether in poetry or in sculpture, rather connects the two ideas and gives a further meaning for each idea by relating to the other. Thus, in the *Reclining Figure* and in the others of mine you find not only a human outline but also references to landscapes or rocks.

This is in part a recollection of a significant moment in Moore's life, a vision of rocks jutting from the sea on the Atlantic coast of England. Moore took the human figure as the "basis of sculpture" (his words) and the foundation of our sense of form, but he rhymed on it not just with facility but also with an exquisite ear for the accords that exist among human anatomy, the natural end points of geological forces, and the intervening silhouettes of sheep out in a pasture. Once started on this path of tropes, the mind is invited to corral its own analogies—

cumulus clouds scudding against a twilit sky, waves heaving into crests on the Atlantic horizon, the silhouettes of ancient trees against a hillside.

Bringing the massive Moore sculpture from Germany and installing it in the reflecting pool beside the Metropolitan Opera House turned out to be an enterprise of nearly epic vicissitudes. The logistics of the move were every bit as monumental as the piece. After the huge maquette was fashioned at Much Hadham, it was sent to be cast in West Berlin by Moore's longtime collaborator Hermann Noack. The huge crates left Hamburg on the SS *Finnclipper* on July 13, 1965, and were swung onto the dock on the Hudson River bank of Manhattan on July 27. The riggers and masons who were charged with preparing the base were at first endangered by powerful electric shocks whenever their tools came in contact with the bronze. The current would arc and sparks would fly for reasons that even the most experienced riggers could not sort out. The tools had to be grounded in a special way to prevent the installers from being electrocuted.

On the morning of September 21, 1965, Frank Stanton delivered a witty, eloquent address for the triumphal unveiling that began with a quip about Moore's initial reaction to the big reflecting pool: "Our cricket field is today, I think, enriched by this tranquil and yet powerful work—a monumental comment on the poetry of the human figure, the poetry of proportion, written in the meter of space occupied and space unoccupied." Stanton followed with a deft bit of art criticism that smoothly wove together the work and its interdisciplinary context: "All the arts have their limitations, and in a center for the performing arts there is always a sad awareness of the necessarily ephemeral quality of the sublime performance that can never again be exactly the same. But there is delight in contrast, and in the permanence of Henry Moore's achievement, we have been well served in seeking the gain elsewhere that we can never, in the nature of things, get for ourselves."

True to the spirit of Stanton's remarks, the Moore played its part in a number of important Lincoln Center events over the years. The British Olympic gold medal figure skater John Curry choreographed an ice dance around it. For an innovative version of a Japanese Noh drama, it took the "part" traditionally played by pine trees. In 1974, floodlighting was added to enliven its effect for evening theatergoers. One of the curious stipulations Moore put in the contract with Lincoln Center displays an admirable distaste for the vulgar exploitation of high art by popular culture. The artist demanded that the work could not be used as a backdrop for a fashion shoot or advertisement.

Alexander Calder
Le Guichet
1963

Framing the Moore sculpture is a historically significant example of a public space designed as an arts campus. When the landscape architect Dan Kiley created the North Plaza of Lincoln Center, he was on the cusp of an important phase in the thinking about public spaces, parks, and the siting of Modern sculpture. A protégé of Eero Saarinen, Kiley and his firm would be involved in many of the most dynamic embodiments of this new approach, including the Henry Moore installation at the Nelson Atkins Museum in Kansas City. A recent and exciting redesign of the public space by the prestigious architectural firm of Diller Scofidio and Renfro will create a restaurant with a public roof lawn on the North Plaza, overlooking a "Street of the Arts" lined on both sides with dramatically lit new building facades.

Your gaze is so firmly held by the *Reclining Figure* that you may have missed its companion in the corner by the Library entrance, a shadowy stabile by Alexander Calder playfully titled *Le Guichet* (1963). That is French slang for "box office," and one of the pleasures afforded by the Calder (not encouraged by the Moore sculpture) is the ability to wander into and through its spiderlike apertures, looking up at the blue sky and marveling not only at the way Calder cut these graceful forms from plates of steel (as easily, it would appear, as Matisse cut out paper forms), but also at the lively way in which he assembled them. The addition of the Calder sculpture was an important strategic move for the committee that decided on the art collection for Lincoln Center. They were receiving a considerable amount of criticism from the art world press and from artists for shunning American sculptors in favor of the Europeans, and it would be hard to pick an artist more American than Alexander Calder, whose father and grandfather created several American icons (including the William Penn that graces the top of Philadelphia's City Hall).

The shadowy black silhouette of the Calder anticipates the color and drama of our next stop. Across Sixty-fifth Street is the Juilliard School, the conservatory that gave us such stars as Midori, Sarah Chang, Renée Fleming, Kevin Kline, and so many others. In the lobby of the Peter J. Sharp Theater at the Juilliard School, up a flight of stairs on its western wall, is one of the most absorbing and challenging sculptures on the campus, the heroic forty-seven-foot-long *Nightsphere-Light* (1969) by the émigré artist Louise Nevelson. It is composed of two levels of boxed forms, many of them retrieved by Nevelson and her assistants from Dumpsters and salvage yards across lower Manhattan, arranged in a matte black suite of abstract forms that can be read like a scroll, backward and forward. For those who frequently attend Juilliard student recitals and watch the dance performances in this intimate hall, it offers one of the most amazing opportunities to examine one of her works. The quantity of details is rewarding no matter how many times we revisit the work.

(continued on page 68)

ALEXANDER CALDER

When Alexander Calder was selected by Lincoln Center for a twenty-two-foot-high outdoor sculpture, it was a major victory for the home team in the big-league global competition among contemporary artists. "He is one hundred percent American," Fernand Leger had proclaimed in an effusive welcoming message for a gallery show in Paris more than three decades before. By the time Calder's *Le Guichet* was dedicated on November 15, 1963, he was rapidly ascending to his reign as the nation's most prominent, and arguably most popular, contemporary sculptor. After a string of important museum exhibitions and commissions in Europe, his monumental mobiles and stabiles (the former term coined, partly in jest, by Marcel Duchamp, the latter by Hans Arp) were suddenly the top choices of architects, museums, and collectors in the United States. Even as Lincoln Center was eyeing his latest gallery show, Alfred Barr was acquiring thirteen of Calder's sculptures for MoMA. Calder's public art was especially in vogue. Just before the Lincoln Center work was unveiled, I. M. Pei commissioned a similar stabile for his MIT campus design, and monumental works were installed at the newly renamed John F. Kennedy International Airport as well as the airport in Pittsburgh. Calder created the first public sculpture funded by the National Endowment for the Arts for Grand Rapids, Michigan. His wildly popular retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum in 1964 struck a resounding blow for abstract sculpture, making him the darling of critics who were advocates of Modernism.

There were actually three Alexander Calders, all sculptors with major civic presences. Alexander ("Sandy") Calder's grandfather, Alexander Milne Calder, the son of a stonecutter, was an immigrant from Scotland who roughed out some of the figures for the Albert Memorial in London before sailing for Philadelphia at age twenty-two. A student of the master painter Thomas Eakins, he spent more than two decades at work on the thirty-seven-foot-tall gilded figure of William Penn that tops the spire of Philadelphia's City Hall. His son Alexander Stirling Calder followed closely in his footsteps, also studying with Eakins and becoming a renowned creator of public sculpture, including the figure of George Washington on the triumphal arch in New York's Washington Square.

From an early age, Sandy, born in 1898, was encouraged to

transform the objects he found into miniature works of art. By age eleven he had fashioned little animals in brass, kinetic figures that presaged his later masterpiece *The Circus*. His father, for whom he modeled, nicknamed him "the scavenger" to honor his gift for picking up stones or objects and incorporating them in works of art. It became a lifelong habit. His first important carved piece, *The Flattest Cat*, was made in 1926 from a piece of oak fence rail. Rather than attending art school, Sandy went to Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey, and took an engineering degree. He also attended painting classes at the Art Students League in New York, where his father had taught. In 1924 he received a two-week free pass to the Ringling Brothers circus and attended every night, publishing a set of drawings in the *National Police Gazette* that launched his career.

Paris was indisputably the place to be in the 1920s if you were a Modernist in the arts. That was the international capital of the movement, and its heart was Montparnasse, where Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald sought James Joyce, where George Gershwin heard Erik Satie at the piano, and where Stuart Davis and other painters could take on Picasso or Matisse. Calder was one of the lucky Americans who arrived in Paris in the middle of the phenomenally exuberant and creative Jazz Age. On his first day in town he took the train from the boat to the center of the city, then walked from the station all the way to Montparnasse. He immediately began to infiltrate the group that became Modernism's all-star team, including not only Picasso but also Joan Miró, Fernand Léger, Man Ray, Piet Mondrian, Jean Cocteau, Kiki de Montparnasse, Robert and Sonia Delaunay, and the fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli. They would show up in the evenings at his studio at 22 rue Daguerre for the two-hour performances of his own *Circus*, a humorous puppet show that became legendary. His first shows were mainly of whimsical wire portraits, drawings in air of such figures as Léger and Josephine Baker that cast nimble shadows on the gallery walls. He made the first of his mobiles in 1931 after a visit to the studio of Mondrian. They attracted the attention not only of curators and critics but also of such architects as I. M. Pei and Wallace K. Harrison, who designed the Metropolitan Opera House. When Frank Lloyd Wright once pondered installing a mobile in the Guggenheim Museum, he told Calder to make it gold. "I'll make it of gold but I'll paint it black," Calder shot back.

The graceful arched form of Lincoln Center's magisterial black *Guichet* is a particularly apt choice for a plaza adjoining no less than

three box offices. The artist had a long and colorful relationship with theater. In addition to his own performances of the *Circus*, he created decor (including mobile panels) and costumes for Martha Graham's dance company in 1935; for Modern ballets set to the music of Satie; for *Eppur Si Muove*, a ballet by Joseph Lazzini for the Marseilles Opera; and for *La Provocation*, a play by La Comédie de Bourges. He was part of a dazzling corps of artists (including Picasso, Matisse, Braque, De Chirico, and Giacometti) enlisted by dance, opera, and theater companies of the period to collaborate on avant-garde productions. Calder's prolific and wide-ranging genius embraced many media and spanned decades. In 1976 he was on hand to open *Calder's Universe* at the Whitney Museum. Just a few weeks later, he died at age seventy-eight. Friends recall that to the end he would stroll around with a pair of pliers in his pants pocket, to fashion the playful little wire portraits and jewelry (worn by Peggy Guggenheim and Jeanne Moreau, among others) with which he had started his career. As Miró recalled, "My old crony Sandy, the strapping fellow with the soul of a nightingale who breathed forth mobiles, a nightingale that makes its nest in its mobiles."

Louise Nevelson
Nightsphere-Light (detail)
1969

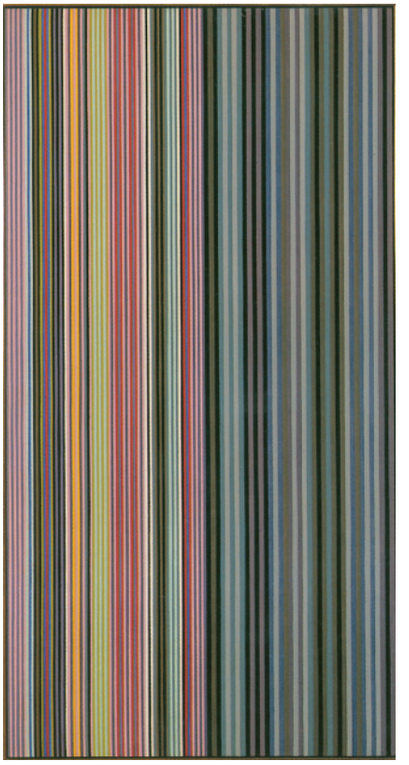
The outer lobby of Juilliard's theater is home to another stone sculpture by Masayuki Nagare, *Untitled* (1969), an evocative and beautifully carved column of black granite that ripples like a waterfall but may just as well be a fragment of a samurai's suit of armor.

Nearby, as we come to Alice Tully Hall, stands a subtly modulated painting by Gene Davis, *Black Dahlia* (1971), whose tightly structured stripes are delicately attuned to the harmonies, Classical and Modern, of the music played inside. Davis was a member of the Color Field movement of 1960s- and 1970s-era painters, whose meticulously rendered

Masayuki Nagare
Untitled
1969

abstract works relied heavily on color theory. It offers a fascinating play of tones along edges meticulously prepared with the aid of masking tape on the canvas. A similarly musical effect is achieved by Yaacov Agam's towering Three X Three Interplay (1971), whose stainless steel tubes scale the sky. A kinetic sculpture, activated by turning a crank at its base that slowly shifts the forms into a myriad of different positions through which the intervals between them alter constantly, it can perform just as a soloist might. Until construction began on the grand transformation of this part of the campus, it stood in front of Alice Tully Hall.

That is a fitting coda to a collection that achieves what Wagner called the Gesamtkunstwerk, that ideal synthesis of all the arts—architecture, sculpture, painting, design, dance, music (including opera, chamber music, and the symphony), drama, and literature—in one grand gesture of unity.



Gene Davis
Black Dahlia
1971

Yaacov Agam
Three X Three Interplay
1971