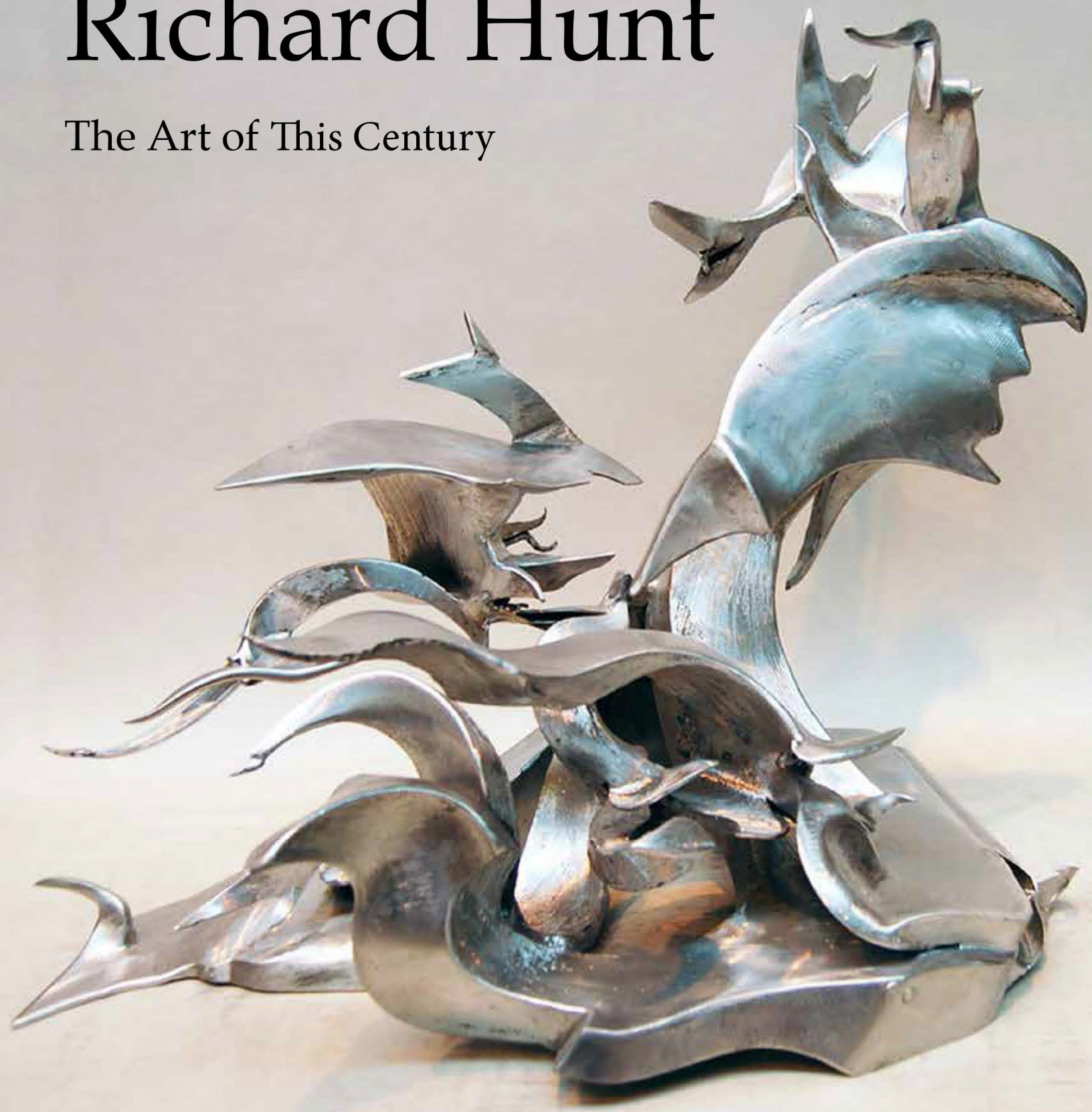


Richard Hunt

The Art of This Century







**Richard Hunt,
The Art of This Century**

October 3, 2013 - January 25, 2014

Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum
Saginaw Valley State University

INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A few weeks after I assumed the role as director of the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum seven years ago, a friend suggested that I consider having an exhibition of Richard Hunt's work at the Museum. I thanked and assured her that I would not lose sight of that suggestion.

In March 2011, I drove to Eastern Michigan University to attend a lecture of the Chicago-based artist hoping for an opportunity to meet him and present the idea of a Richard Hunt exhibition at the Museum.

Meeting Richard Hunt was memorable. I was in awe of his brilliance, knowledge, and humility. I could not help but wonder how a person of such great accomplishment in the field of public sculpture could have such a genuinely sweet nature. I introduced myself and almost immediately posed the question about an exhibition at the Museum and he answered that he would most certainly consider the request. Mission accomplished!

A year and a half later Stephanie James, Curator at the Mott-Warsh Collection in Flint, MI invited me to be the moderator of a discussion titled "Creating Public Art: A Collaborative Endeavor" at Mott Community College in Flint. Four panelists (Richard Hunt, artist, Michael Voth, metal fabricator, Thaddeus Shymanski, structural engineer, and Larry Koehler, architect and executive director of Mott Community College Physical Plant) participated in a spirited discussion about their roles in the concept, fabrication, site selection and installation of large public art work. A discussion about the collaborative nature of creating public art was particularly relevant as Hunt's three-and-a-half-ton stainless steel sculpture *Columnar Construction* had been installed a year earlier along the banks of Gilkey Creek on the grounds of Applewood Estate adjacent to Mott Community College.

4 My first visit to Hunt's Lill Street studio in Chicago earlier this year was a little daunting: A large historic brick building filled with a combination of scrap metal that might become sculptures and existing sculptures that might grace our Museum in a major exhibition. In a tiny office we talked about what the content of the exhibition might be. We agreed that we would focus on the body of work that he has created since 2000, thus *Richard Hunt, The Art of This Century*.

The 21 bronze and steel sculptures in this exhibition represent finished sculptures, models and concepts for large sculptures. A few photos in situ of some of Hunt's major public sculptures around the country are also included, since I feel strongly that it is important for visitors to see an artist's concepts, models, and finished sculpture.

A \$10,000 grant from the Saginaw Community Foundation and support from the Dow Chemical Company made it possible to bring *Richard Hunt, The Art of This Century* to the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum. I am indebted to the trustees of the Foundation and to Dow for their understanding the importance of bringing Richard Hunt and his work to the Great Lakes Bay Region. I am profoundly grateful for Mr. Hunt's willingness to work with me to make the exhibition possible, and I am most appreciative of Valerie Mercer's enlightening essay. A special thank you to Eric Stephenson, Chicago sculptor and studio assistant to Mr. Hunt, for providing many of the photographs in the catalog, and to Andrea Ondish for her design work on the catalog.

I hope this exhibition initiates a feeling in every visitor of wanting to get to know Richard Hunt's work.

Marilyn L. Wheaton

Museum Director



Columnar Construction, 2011
Mott Foundation, Applewood Estate, Flint, MI

Weighing in at three-and-a-half-tons and standing 40 feet high, *Columnar Construction* is a gift from the Mott-Warsh Collection to the Ruth Mott Foundation and Applewood, the former family estate of Charles S. Mott located in Flint, Michigan. The commissioned sculpture commemorates the 110th birthday of Mott's wife, philanthropist Ruth Rawlings Mott. Sculptor Richard Hunt invites viewers to consider how industrial forms and natural forms come together to demonstrate the beauty in the work of both human beings and Mother Nature.



Which Way, Points of Reference and Departure, 1997 - 2010
Welded stainless steel
108" h x 80" w x 96" d



Sculptural Improvisation III, 2000 - 2009
Welded bronze
101" h x 85" w x 77" d



Gaterose Hybrid, 2000
Cast and welded bronze
78" h x 10 1/2" w x 13 1/2" d



Gaterose Hybrid, detail

Richard Hunt: Recent Variations on Themes

Richard Hunt's sculptures of the past thirteen years attest to his enduring talent, energy and enthusiasm for realizing his artistic vision during the nearly sixty-year course of his prolific career. This new body of work asserts Hunt's internationally acclaimed mastery of the direct welded metal technique to develop an idiosyncratic vocabulary of abstract forms. Equally important, these sculptures emphasize his ongoing success in collaborating with others (patrons, engineers, community representatives, technicians, etc.) and working with machinery to create the metal fabrication of his monumental public art sculptures.

Hunt's synthesis of European, American, African, and African Diasporic artistic, architectural, and cultural traditions are reflected in his sculptures' forms, motifs and themes rendered in Corten steel, stainless steel, bronze, iron and aluminum. These familiar aspects of his art continue to be inspired by his interests in nature, classical myths, modernism, surrealism, industrialization, biology, zoology, history, and music. His ongoing commitment to specific techniques and abstract forms, to which he contributed innovations during his formative years as a sculptor in the 1950s and '60s, exemplifies his renowned confidence in his mature artistic vision.



Low Flight, 2001
 Welded stainless steel
 48" h x 72" w x 84" d

Throughout Hunt's career, the most recurring motif in his sculpture has been the hybrid to connect his melding of disparate elements with the theme of metamorphosis. For him, the hybrid functions as a visual metaphor for his aesthetic and conceptual processes that involve his use of fire to manipulate metal, and thereby reconcile the organic with the industrial.¹ He often presents the hybrid as a combination of abstract human, bird, fish, animal, or plant transformed into expressive fantasy creatures positioned vertically as they emerge out of a formally integrated pedestal or base.

Born in Chicago in 1935, Hunt was a prodigy during the 1950s when he was a student at the Junior School of the Art Institute of Chicago, continuing on there to earn his B.A. E. in 1957. During that time, Hunt was influenced by the Spanish modernist Julio Gonzalez (1876-1942), the first artist to use direct welding to make metal sculpture. The young artist saw Gonzalez's work when it was included in the exhibition "Sculpture of the 20th Century," organized by New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) and shown at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1953. Hunt studied Gonzalez's technique and was soon exhibiting his own metal sculpture nationally. While he was still a student, MOMA purchased one of his pieces, *Arachne* (1956),



Tower of Aspirations, 2002
 1" = 1' Scale Model
 Welded stainless steel
 50" h x 16" w x 16" d



Tower of Aspirations and
And They Went Down Both Into the Water, 2002
 Springfield Village Park, Augusta, GA

a work that reflected his fascination with classical mythology and the tenets of surrealist art through his use of the hybrid motif. As with the European artists of the previous generation originally associated with that movement, the hybrid appealed to Hunt because it had unlimited potential for formal figurative, abstract and biomorphic variations and complexities, and evoking enigmatic and ambiguous interpretations. Ultimately, his sculptures are hybrids because they convey his predilection for fusing incongruous elements --- the organic with industrial, animal with human, abstraction with representation.

Sculptures on an intimate scale in this exhibition demonstrate that the hybrid motif continues to be crucial for Hunt's art. Occasionally, a title refers directly to the motif, as in the cast and welded bronze *Gaterose Hybrid* (2000), a slim pole topped with branch-like forms that suggest a reconciliation of nature and industry. With its attenuated form and human-scale height, it is mindful of his sculptures made during the 1960s as part of the *Standing Form* series, which similarly convey associations with wrought iron Yoruba herbalist ritual staffs from Nigeria.

Hunt uses the hybrid in recent sculptures to symbolize various themes of ongoing interest; in *Sculptural Improvisation III*, (2000-2009), metamorphosis, flight, movement, danger and the

improvisation of American jazz and African American blues and spirituals are evoked by the resemblance of the sculpture's base to an undulating wave of water with precariously balanced and stacked flame-like forms reminiscent of the gestural strokes of abstract expressionist painting but rendered in three-dimensions. The seemingly spontaneously constructed sculpture also combines flat geometric forms that perilously extend horizontally and reach upward. The formal tensions inherent in this sculpture stir viewers' anxiety about the composition suddenly shifting or spilling over before their eyes. Similar themes and formal tensions are also reflected in the welded bronze *Nile Journey* (2009) and welded stainless steel *Which Way, Points of Reference and Departures* (1997-2010).

Another motif Hunt frequently uses is a wing-like form that symbolizes the theme of flight. This shape can be traced back to his more figural works of the early '50s and was initially inspired by the classical myth of Icarus and the large marble sculpture of the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* depicting the goddess Nike, which dates from about the 2nd century B.C., and is included in the collection of the Louvre Museum in Paris. Hunt has used the motif for a long-term exploration of ideas of personal and collective freedom. In addition, he is aware that wing-like forms have a universal appeal because of the wish of humans everywhere to fly once they have seen a bird take flight.

Low Flight (2001) is one among the many of Hunt's sculptures that embody the winged and hybrid motifs through a combination of organic and industrial elements. The welded stainless steel floor sculpture with a broad expanse features a heavy spiral form with polished surfaces that rises upward. The basic urge to soar for the sake of gaining freedom is obvious in the welded and cast bronze sculpture *Inside and Outside the Frame* (2006), which depicts a winged bird-like creature woefully attempting to fly above the confines and constraints of the rectangular frame to which its tail section is rooted. *Angel Tide* (2010), in welded stainless steel, consists of winged forms, upturned fish fins and tails, and flowing waves of water that together swirl upward symbolizing the dynamism of flight and water.

The small-scale maquettes and studio-sized models included in the exhibition relate to Hunt's recently completed public sculptures, depicted in situ in photographs also on view. Beginning in 1969, he has annually received commissions from civic groups, museums, corporations, educational institutions and religious organizations with approximately 100 public sculptures in place throughout his hometown of Chicago and Midwestern states, as well as other parts of the country. What began as a second career for him in the 1960s, has become a tremendously vital creative endeavor that informs his self-generated smaller sized sculpture and vice versa.

Both models for the monumental sculpture *Tower of Aspirations* (2002), are related to Hunt's process fulfilling a public art commission for a new urban park located in downtown Augusta, Georgia, next to historic Springfield Baptist Church, constructed in 1897, and home to the oldest independent African American congregation in the country. The park showcases the historic site and provides a landscaped setting for Hunt's sculpture. The completed forty-five-foot stainless steel tower was unveiled in 2002. Its construction conveys a sense of the past lives and events that shaped what was known as Springfield Village from colonial times to the present. The sculpture looms over the park, arousing emotions about the historic struggles and hopes of African American people. The tectonic forms of the tower, and its sliced angles and jagged openings, suggest both a structure built to climb to the sky and the physical and mental strivings of a human being to achieve its goals.

Below the tower, in another level of the park, a second sculpture by Hunt, *And They*



Flight Forms, 2001
Midway Airport, Chicago, IL

Richard Hunt's welded stainless steel *Flight Forms* was installed at Chicago's Midway Airport in 2001. It is 30 feet high, the height the Federal Aviation Administration allows for such works. *Flight Forms* unites a variety of forms in an upward-sweeping composition that suggests the defiance of gravity and the dynamism and wonder of flight. The sculpture's grand scale balances the scale and character of the airport's architecture. It is highly visible to passing motorists and provides an engaging experience for pedestrians. *Flight Forms* is a project of the Public Art Program of the city of Chicago.

Went Down Both into the Water (see in situ photograph included in exhibition), was unveiled in 2006. It is a twenty-foot high bronze sculpture and fountain symbolizing the baptismal in the Savannah River. According to Hunt, the title derives from the book of Acts describing St. Phillip's conversion of the first African into Christianity. The fountain reflects the significance of this event and the role Springfield Baptist Church played in the early conversion of African Americans to Christianity.ⁱⁱ This massive sculpture has sweeping forms that symbolically refer to nature's power in the rush of water and the deeper enlightenment gained through a spiritual life.

Flight Forms, a public artwork measuring thirty-five feet high in welded stainless steel (see in situ photograph), commissioned for Chicago's Midway Airport, unites a variety of forms in an upward-sweeping composition symbolizing the defiance of gravity and the dynamism of flight. Completed in 2001, the large-scale sculpture was inspired by Hunt's previous works that combined the hybrid and wing-like motifs. The forms became more abstract, expressive, and muscular to fill its location at Midway and be seen from a great distance. This maquette was made after the commissioned sculpture, possibly for another project, although like many of Hunt's other maquettes and models, it can be appreciated as an independent work of art.

The tallest public art work by Hunt is still *And You, Seas* (2002), a fifty-foot welded stainless steel sculpture (see in situ photographs) of abstract forms resembling a bird, a fish and a moving wave of water reaching upwards while poised atop a monumental column that evokes a lighthouse. It is located in Silver Beach Park, in St. Joseph, Michigan. The title refers to a poem by St. John Perse, one of Hunt's favorite French surrealist poets. Both poem and sculpture pay homage to the sea.

Hunt's virtuosic handling of his evolved vocabulary of abstract forms at the beginning of the twenty-first century, as seen in his sculptures that comprise this exhibition, highlights his accomplishments in demonstrating the viability of his artistic vision. There's no doubt that through his adroit melding of incongruous elements, Richard Hunt will continue to create sculptures that astonish us by their richness in meaning and formal possibilities.

Valerie J. Mercer

Curator of the General Motors Center
for African American Art,
The Detroit Institute of Arts

ⁱ "In some works it is my intention to develop the kind of forms Nature might create if only heat and steel were available to her," R. Hunt quoted in "Richard Hunt" exhibition flier (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Art Gallery, 1966)

ⁱⁱ Richard Hunt's explanation of the meaning of the title for sculpture *And They Went Down Both into the Water* included in an article "Parking the Sculpture," published in The Augusta Chronicle, June 1, 2006 (http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/2006/06/01/ric_83611.shtml)



We Will, 2005

The Heritage at Millennium Park building is on Randolph Street across Garland Court from the Chicago Cultural Center just west of Michigan Avenue and Millennium Park. Hunt's commissioned 38-foot high welded stainless steel sculpture *We Will* was installed on a six square foot area of the public way leased from the city by the Mesa Development Company, the builders of the Heritage at Millennium Park. The building and sculpture were completed in 2005.



And You, Seas, 2005
Silver Beach Park, St. Joseph, MI

And You, Seas is a welded steel sculpture that reaches a height of 55 feet. It is part of the Krasl Art Center's permanent collection. The title "And You, Seas" was suggested to the sculptor by the poem of that title by the French Surrealist poet St. John Perse (1887-1975). This view is facing north toward the St. Joseph River, not far from where it empties into Lake Michigan. These lines from the poem are engraved on the sculpture's base:

"And you, Seas, who once read into vaster dreams, did you leave us one evening at the
rostrums of the City,

Thus spoke the man of the sea, saying words of a man of the sea.

It's a sea song as was never sung, and it's the Sea in us who will sing it:

And it's a dream at sea as was never dreamed, and it's the Sea in us which will dream it.

17

...For so long a time I had felt the savor of this poem in me, joining with my day-words
all that alliance, in the distance, of a great shaft of sea -

And the Sea came to us on the stone steps of the drama:

With her Princes, her Regents, her Messengers clothed in pomp and metal,

Sea...without allusion and pure of all number, the tender luminous page raised against the night
of things without silvering?..."



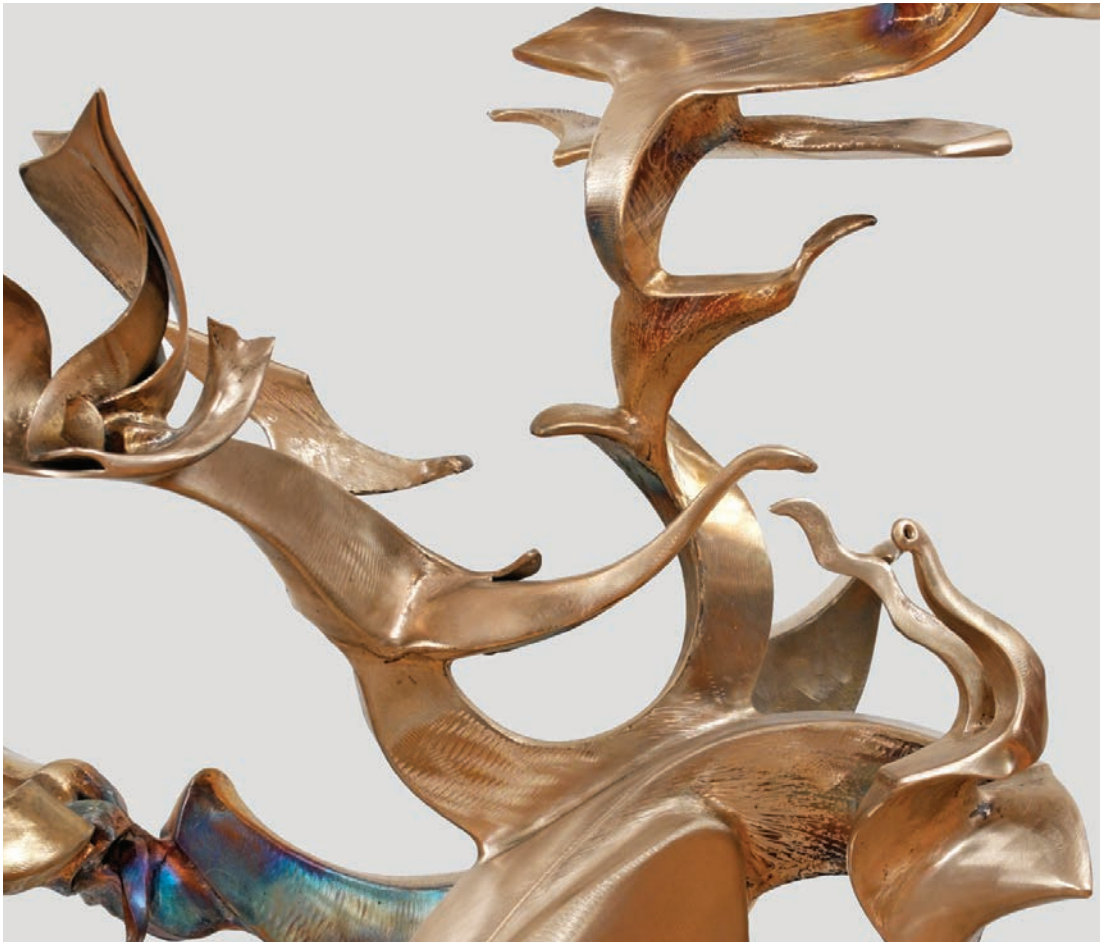
Inside and Outside the Frame, 2006
Welded and cast bronze
72" h x 30" w x 20" d



Poseidon, 2008
Welded bronze
75" h x 29" w x 27" d



Nile Journey, 2009
Welded bronze
33" h x 22" w x 34" d



Nile Journey, detail



Twisted Fiddler, 2009
Cast and welded bronze
31 ¼" h x 6" w x 5" d



Angel Tide, detail



Rampant Heraldry, 2011
Welded bronze
55" h x 28" w x 59" d



Columnar Construction, Concept III, 2010
Welded stainless steel
48" h x 14" w x 33" d

Richard Hunt Curriculum Vitae

Born	September 12, 1935 - Chicago, Illinois
Education	Public Schools, Chicago, Illinois University of Illinois, Chicago University of Chicago
1957	B.A.E., School of the Art Institute of Chicago Awarded James Nelson Raymond Foreign Travel Fellowship
1957-58	Travel and study in England, France, Spain and Italy
1958-60	U.S. Army

Fellowships, Prizes, Awards

1956	Logan Prize, The Art Institute of Chicago
1961-62	Logan Prize, The Art Institute of Chicago
1957	Palmer Prize, The Art Institute of Chicago
1962	Campana Prize, The Art Institute of Chicago
1962-63	Guggenheim Fellowship
1965	Tamarind Artists Fellowship, Ford Foundation
1970	Cassandra Foundation Fellowship
1993	Lincoln Academy of Illinois
1998	American Academy of Arts and Letters, Elected to Membership
1999	National Academy of Design, Elected to Membership
2003	Watrous Prize, National Academy of Design
2005	Hoffman Prize, National Academy of Design
2009	Dunwiddie Prize, National Academy of Design
2009	Lifetime Achievement Award, International Sculpture Center
2010	Legacy Award, United Negro College Fund

Honorary Degrees

1972	Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, Illinois
1973	Dayton Art Institute School, Dayton, Ohio
1976	University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan
1977	Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois
1979	Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, Colorado
1982	School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
1984	Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois
1986	Monmouth College, Monmouth, Illinois
1987	Roosevelt University, Chicago, Illinois
1991	Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts
1996	Columbia College, Chicago, Illinois
1997	Governors State University, Park Forest, Illinois
2004	North Carolina A & T University, Greensboro, North Carolina
2007	University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana

Professorships & Artists Residences

1960-61	School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
1960-62	University of Illinois, Chicago, Illinois
1964	Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut
1964	CalArts (formerly Chouinard Art School), Los Angeles, California
1965	Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana
1968	Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois
1968-69	Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois
1969	Wisconsin State University, Oshkosh, Wisconsin
1969	Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois
1970	Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois
1975	University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana
1977	University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia
1977-78	Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri
1980	The University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona
1982	Utah State University, Logan, Utah
1985	Cornell University, Ithaca, New York
1988	Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan
1989-90	Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
1990	Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan
1990	State University of New York, Binghamton, New York
1997	Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan

Professional & Cultural Activities

1968-74	National Council on the Arts
1970-75	Illinois Arts Council
1972-76	Board of Directors, College Art Association
1974-97	Board of Directors, American Council for the Arts
1974-81	Board of Trustees, Ravinia Festival
1975-79	Board of Trustees, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
1977-97	Visiting Committee on the Visual Arts, University of Chicago
1978-79	International Exhibitions Committee, USIA
1978-83	Yale University Council, Committee on Art
1979-84	Board of Governors, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture
1980-88	Commissioner, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution
1980-82	Board of Trustees, American Academy in Rome
1981-89	Board of Trustees, The Institute for Psychoanalysis, Chicago
1982-88	President and Founder, Chicago Sculpture Society
1983-92; 1994	Board of Trustees, Ravinia Festival
1983-87	National Chairman, Alumni Council, School of the Art Institute of Chicago
1984-88	Advisory Committee, Getty Center for Education in the Arts
1984-96	Director, International Sculpture Center
1985-91	Board of Governors, School of the Art Institute of Chicago
1994-97	National Board of Directors, Smithsonian Institute
1996-01	Board of Trustees, Ravinia Festival
1998	American Academy of Arts and Letters
2002	Life Trustee, Ravinia Festival

Works in the exhibition not illustrated in the catalog

Flight Forms (maquette for Midway Airport, Chicago, Illinois), 2002
Welded stainless steel
37" h x 30" w x 17" d

Tower of Aspirations, 2002
½" = 1' Scale Model
Cast bronze
18" h x 9 ¼" w x 10" d

Model for a project by Mesa Development Co.
The Heritage at Millennium Park, Chicago, 2003
Welded stainless steel
68" h x 38" w x 78" d

We Will, 2004
Welded stainless steel
56" h x 11" w x 11" d

Columnar Construction, Concept I, 2010
Welded stainless steel
42" h x 12" w x 24" d

Columnar Construction, Concept II, 2010
Welded stainless steel
35 ½" h x 11" w x 35" d

Jennison High School Performing Arts Center, Maquettes, 2012
Cast bronze, paper, foam board

Star Turn, 2013
Welded bronze
67" h x 20" w x 27" d

Firebird, 2013
Welded bronze
34" h x 68" w x 12" d

Credits

Writers

Valerie Mercer
Marilyn L. Wheaton

Photography

Matt Ferguson
Page 13

Ryan Garza, Pop Mod Photography
Page 5

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Inside Back Cover

Richard Hunt Studio
Pages front cover, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,
11, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25

Chuck Loving
Page 16