

George Rickey

born 1907, South Bend, Indiana
resides in upstate New York

education / professional experience

When George Rickey was five years old, the family moved to Scotland where he attended public school, studying math, physics, and chemistry and with a passion for drawing. He graduated with honors in history from Oxford with a B.A. in 1929, an M.A. in 1941, and drawing from the Ruskin School of Art. He went to the Academie Lhote (cubism) and Academie Moderne in Paris and he then returned America to teach. In the military during World War II George Rickey's life was altered. He learned operation of hydraulic gun turrets for aircraft and became an expert — an instructor for the military. He considered himself a painter and historian until after the war when he began welding with David Smith at the University of Indiana where they both taught. He started doing sculpture at age 42

TWO OPEN TRIANGLES UP GYRATORY

kinetic sculpture, 1982
stainless steel with brushed surface
located on the right of the entry terrace — above the stone wall

description / design

Two framed and open triangles are energized into graceful movement and fluid contrasts by wind and light.

BREAKING COLUMN

kinetic sculpture, 1988
stainless steel with brushed surface
located in the grass to the left on the lower terrace

description / design

Quirky inventive motions entertain the viewer as two long rectangular boxes appear to meet, pass, and part at unpredictable angles.

subject / title

George Rickey demonstrates with each sculpture his devout belief in pure geometry. With his clever mix of mechanical calculation and a sense of innocence we are entranced by the illusion that gravity can be defied. Fencing with a subtle breeze and projecting the appearance of perpetual motion, his precisely balanced art inspires wonder.

style

George Rickey changed the concept of kinetic art with his soaring spears and sparse geometric forms. He recognized the differences of his goals from Alexander Calder; Calder's primary concern was for shape and Rickey was attracted to movement. "I embarked on endless experiments and it became clear to me that movement is equivalent to color so I eliminated color. The object was for the pieces to perform. I wanted whatever eloquence there was to come out of the performance, never out of the shape itself."

Made of gleaming stainless steel, the forms are activated and balanced by a system of meticulously engineered counter weights and bearings that respond to air currents and the pull of gravity. Gravity, literal and metaphorical, gives Rickey's pieces a powerful dignity. Precarious balance and slow motion constitute the basic attraction for all of Rickey's pieces

tour anecdotes

Time harmonizes the abstraction by requiring the viewer's extended presence before the work. Rickey treats the viewer as an active participant in his work. Believing that "all art is public" he completes the sculpture before he starts the search for a suitable site for installation.