



Harry Bertoia: Sculptor

June Kompass Nelson

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Harry Bertoia, Sculptor is a long-overdue first book devoted to the life and work of a contemporary Italian-born American artist whose important commissions are located in twenty-five American cities from New York to Seattle and from Minneapolis to Miami. It traces the development of Bertoia's versatile career from his youth in Detroit, beginning with drawings, paintings, and monoprints, then jewelry and furniture designs, to his present-day abstract sculptures in metals, many of architectural proportions.

The book includes a biography of the man and detailed descriptions of his methods of working. Many major sculptures and some minor ones are described in detail. They are critically analyzed for their aesthetic components and with regard to the ideas they were intended to express. A large number of photographs supplements the descriptions and analyses. Two appendices give chronologies of the artist's life and of his architectural commissions, the latter being virtually a catalog of Bertoia's major works.

Based on several extensive interviews with the artist, as well as on research into his earlier writings, the book includes a presentation of Bertoia's thoughts on aesthetics and on various phases of the art processes he uses. His work is categorized into four major groups representing the four major aesthetic explorations that have interested him most of his life.

Reactions to Bertoia's sculptures by his clients, art critics, and the public are presented. Pains were taken to include a sampling of both laudatory and adverse critical reviews, culled from the art press over a twenty-five year period. The author's own critical analyses of individual pieces are based on direct observations made during trips to the various cities in which Bertoia's sculptures are located.

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