

n o r m a n c a r l b e r g

Exhibition at the
The Maryland Institute College of Art
The Brown Center
September 27, 2019 – October 20, 2019
Reception: October 5, 2019 from 5pm – 7pm
Gallery Hours: Monday-Sunday, All day

Front Cover
Positive Negative #1 - Vatican Art Stone
Photo by Norman Carlberg

Foreword

Shortly after Eugene Leake became president of MICA in 1961, he contacted Josef Albers to suggest someone to be the director of the Rinehart School of Sculpture. Albers suggested Norman Carlberg, a recent Yale MFA who was teaching on a Fullbright in Santiago, Chile.

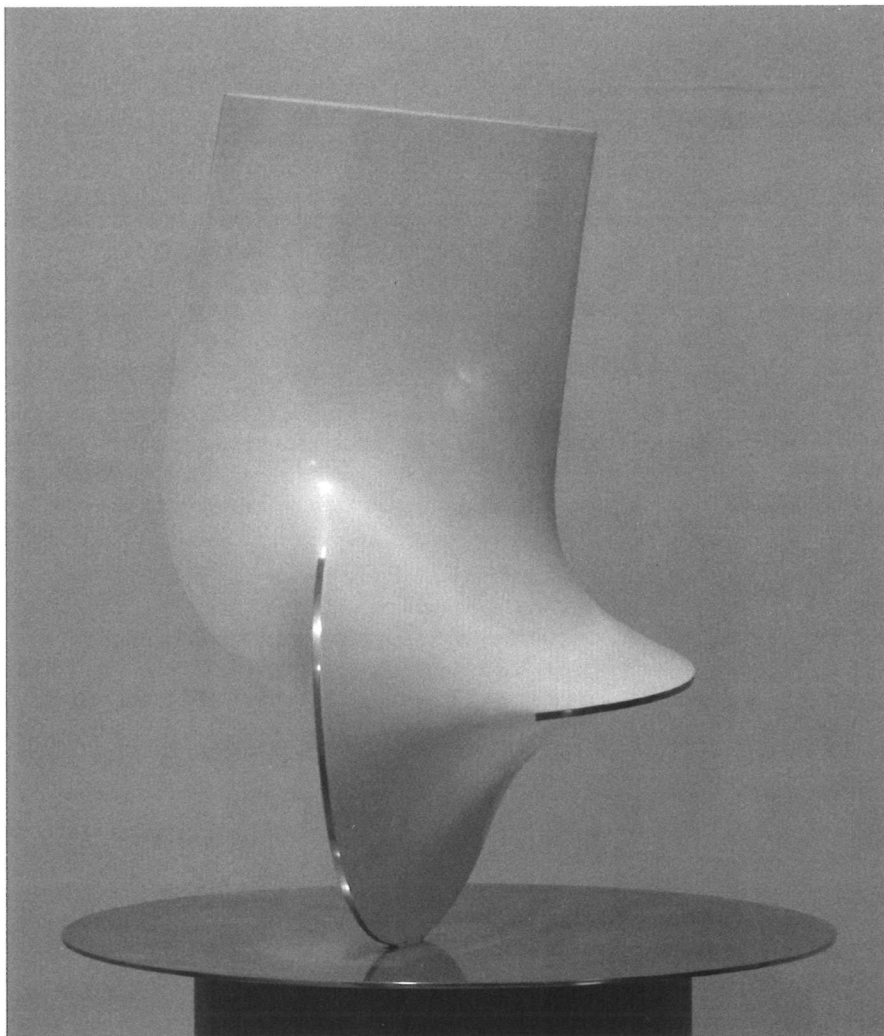
The Rinehart School was one of the oldest schools of sculpture in the country and had a long and established reputation as a figurative school. It was located in the two row houses behind MICA's Main Building – a perfect place for clay modeling. When Norman arrived with little teaching experience, he was charged by Leake to remake Rinehart into a nationally recognized contemporary sculpture school. Over the next 36 years, he did just that; and when he retired, it was ranked in the top 5 in the country.

When MICA acquired the Mt. Royal Station building in 1964, Norman was asked to oversee the design of the Rinehart studios. His design reflected his vision of what a contemporary sculpture program should be, with its large well-lit open fabrication space and facilities and equipment to accommodate all the processes the students might wish to use.

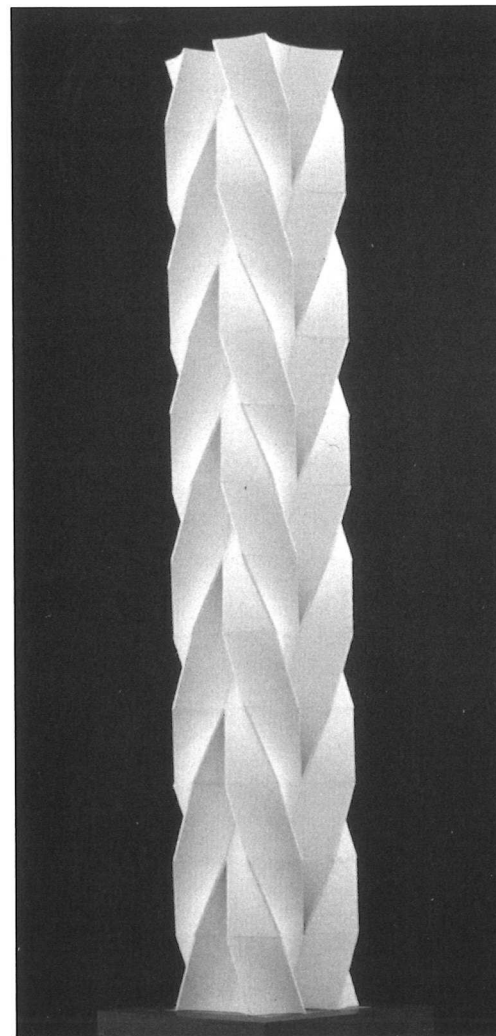
As an educator, Norman would get to know all of his ten students, help them shape and express their vision, and instill in them a commitment to craftsmanship. He believed that the students should not adopt his aesthetic or anyone else's. As an individual and a persona, Norman was as elegant and thoughtful as his work was. He was soft spoken, caring and sensitive, but behind this was an individual of strong values and convictions. A piece that Norman created for a faculty exhibit as a Viet Nam memorial reflected these qualities. It was simple, powerful, elegant and by far the most moving piece in the exhibit.

Norman's humility and self-effacing nature, plus his commitment to his students most likely kept his career as an artist from receiving the recognition it deserved. However, his legacy is more than his elegant and beautiful work. It is augmented by the influence he has had on his students and the powerful force he played in transforming MICA into the national contemporary art college it has become.

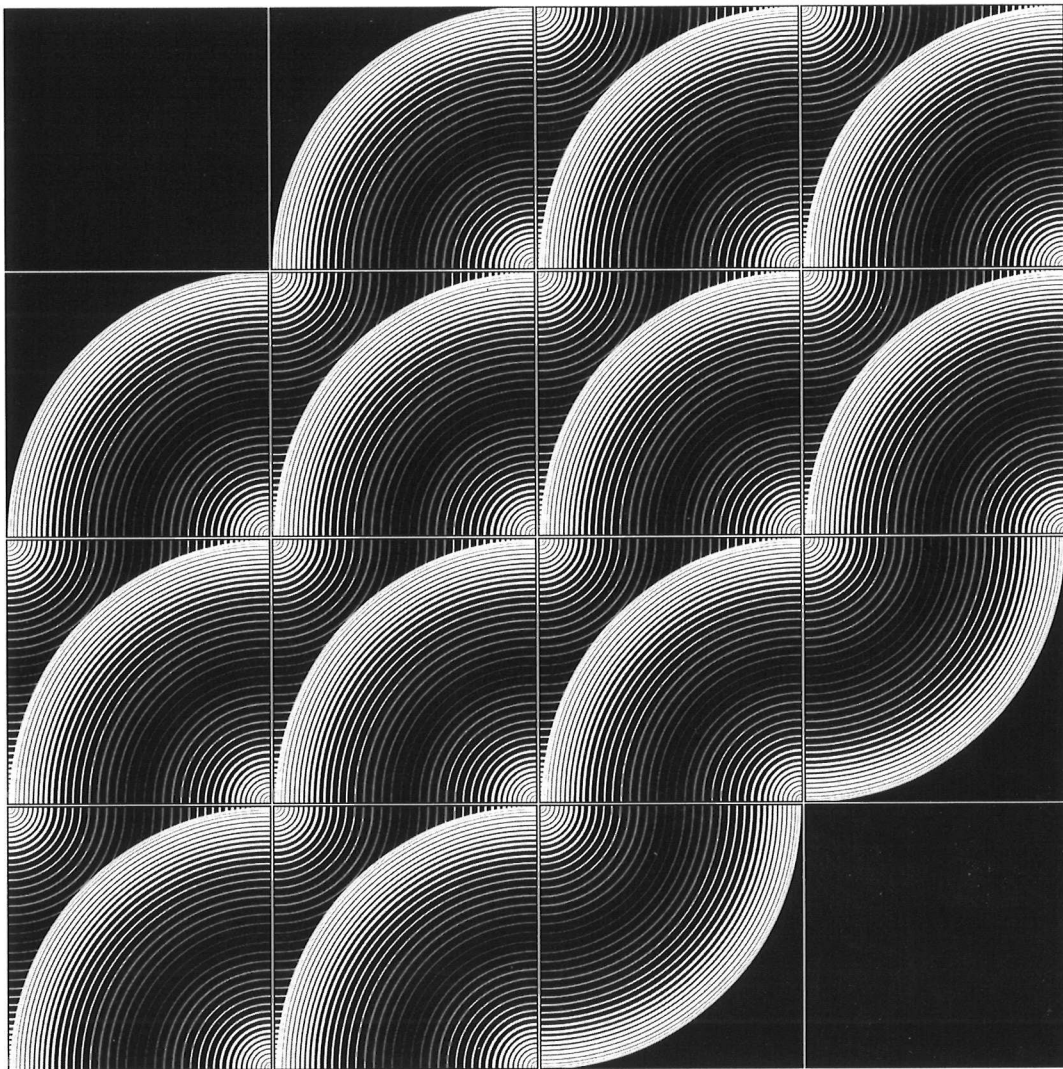
Fred Lazarus
President Emeritus
Maryland Institute College of Art



Summer Wind - Painted Epoxy with Brass
Photo by Norman Carlberg



Twist Column - Hydrocal
Photo by Norman Carlberg



Westwind
Photo by Norman Carlberg

Interviews

Excerpts from a partial interview with Vladimir Belogolovsky author of the book “Harry Seidler Lifework”

Carlberg’s sculpture and prints explore his obsessive preoccupation with the idea of modularity, the direction in sculpture known as modular constructivism. These constructions are formed by a set of rules. Yet the most intriguing and successful are the ones where intuition and creativity are explored to its fullest potential. During our interview, Carlberg contemplated the fact that most of his work remains unbuilt. Still, Carlberg’s sculptures caught the attention of Josef Albers, who once noticed that no one knows about positive and negative more than Carlberg. Albers passed his fascination with Carlberg’s work to Harry Seidler, who integrated its intriguing geometry into his architecture.

VB: What are the inspirations and metaphors that you return to again and again?

NC: Human figure, a cross, a flame and for my prints I would say snow, clouds, smog, smokes stacks... But I like to leave space for as many meanings as possible so people find meanings that I could never have thought of myself. I think the strongest pieces are the ones that don’t have any particular image attached to them.

VB: You hardly ever use any color– why is that?

NC: I predominantly use curves and I think that curves are better expressed in white. Color has a very dominating presence and, in my opinion, overpowers the form, which is primary in sculpture. If a sculpture has, let’s say red color, that’s how you tend to remember it - as a sculpture. I always liked using curves, especially double curves that form hyperbolic paraboloid. I used these forms from the time I even knew what hyperbolic paraboloid was. I was very happy when Engman pointed to me that my forms had a name- hyperbolic paraboloid. It gave my work a whole new level of satisfaction, because it had a scientific justification and I didn’t copy anyone. I really discovered these forms myself.

VB: Your prints are based on the same idea of modularity and can be assembled into smaller or bigger numbers of panels, right?

NC: That's right. In 1972 we went to Chile. There I only had a tiny room to work in and that's why I decided to go from 3D to 2D. Most of these prints are based on quarter rounds or quadrants and each print is conceived as a module. Similar to my sculptures they can be grouped in a variety of configurations.



Highway Overpass - Gelatin Silver Print
Photo by Norman Carlberg

VB: You headed the Rinehart School of Sculpture here in Baltimore. Could you talk about your own methods of teaching?

NC: Well, I agree with what Josef Albers was preaching. He did not believe that a person could be taught to be an artist. That is up to the person. You can analyze work in a variety of ways and you can talk about what you see and not what you think might be or should be there. This was my model which is very common now.

As told to to MAP in 1996:

"Most of the things I take pictures of are very sculptural. They are like big pieces of sculpture that I could not make, somebody already made them. They are beautiful pieces of sculpture that are around the city performing other tasks. The concrete columns, and the drain pipes... these ribbons of freeways that float are just brilliant! ...texture with just the dirt and the rocks on the ground and the raw concrete and the well poured column, that is meant to, well, it is poured that way to make it strong, because it's tall, not because you are trying to get a pretty surface. They're just beautiful..."

Norman Carlberg

Born in Roseau, Minnesota
United States Air Force 1951-55
BFA, Yale 1958, MFA, Yale 1961

Selected Solo Exhibitions

Universidad Catolica, Santiago, Chile	1960
Penn State University Gallery	1966
Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD	1966
Trinity College, Hartford, CN	1975
Gallery 10, Washington, DC	1976
Montpelier Center, Laurel, MD	1984
Proposal Gallery, Baltimore, MD	1976
Maryland Art Place, Baltimore, MD	1996

Selected Group Exhibitions

Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY	1959
Essex County Museum	1959
Denver Art Museum. Dever, CO	1959
Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles, CA	1960
City Art Museum, St. Louis, MO	1960
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA	1960
Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile	1960
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY	1962
Art and Architecture Gallery, Yale	1965
Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD	1966, 67, 69, 74
Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts	1968, 86
Carpenter Center, Harvard	1983
Traveling Exhibition, Italy	1986

Selected Collections

Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD
Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC
Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts
Schenectady Museum
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
Art and Architecture Gallery, Yale
Harry Seidler, Sydney, Australia

Commisions

Modular Screen	City Hospital, Baltimore, MD
Modular Column	Northern Parkway School, Baltimore, MD
Modular Wall	Northern Parkway School, Baltimore, MD
Modular Screen	Northern Parkway School, Baltimore, MD
Modular Column	Trade Group Offices, Canberra, Australia
Black Widow	Trade Group Offices, Canberra, Australia
Night Forms	Baltimore School 39, Baltimore, MD
Warm Front	Gas and Electric Co., Baltimore, MD
Winter Wind	Riverside Center, Brisbane, Australia
Uno y Dos	Milford Mills Station, Baltimore, MD

Norman's Notes

My aesthetic had been partly formed before I began studying at Yale and having it set by Albers and Engman. Erwin Hauer was obviously a major influence on my work. He introduced the concept of modules to me in the sculpture department. He also reinforced the importance of discipline and good craftsmanship which was already a part of the philosophy in the department. But it was Robert Engman who would define place in context, explain a form's fundamental description, gave it a meaning beyond knowing in a sensory way that was interesting, desirable, pleasing to the eye. The example that comes to mind first is when I carved out a square block of plaster, a double saddle form- because it made sense and it looked exciting. In talking about the work later, Bob explains the concept of the hyperbolic paraboloid which defined the form in a more precise way and gave it a greater significance or meaning.

*A title for my work in
General - "NOT ARBITRARY"*



Photo by Kenneth Carlberg