



Harry Bertoia, American (1915 - 1978)

A sculptor of kinetic objects, many of them with mazes of thin rods that appear brush like, Harry Bertoia was born in San Lorenzo, Italy, and came to America in 1930. In 1936, he studied at the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts and then attended Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield, Michigan, where he later taught and established the metalworking department. During this time, he began experimenting with jewelry forms and explored ideas that would later emerge into his sculpture.

In 1943, he moved to Venice, California and worked with designer Charles Eames in war efforts until 1946. That first year, he attended a welding class at Santa Monica City College. In 1947, he moved to La Jolla to work in the Point Loma Naval Electronics Laboratory in the publications department creating training manuals for equipment operators. During this time, he continued making jewelry and monoprints and began his first experiments with metal sculpture.

In 1949, he moved to Barto, Pennsylvania where he joined Hans Knoll in Knoll Associates. He became a prolific architectural sculptor. His first commission was a screen for the General Motors Technical Center in Warren, Michigan. His first sculpture exhibition was in 1951 at the Knoll Showroom in New York.

His later artwork incorporated sound into steel sculptures. Bertoia experimented greatly with patinas and methods of casting to gain different surface textures. He also experimented with steel alloys to gain more control over the sound his work would produce. In addition to the alloy, Bertoia manipulated the shape, length and density of the forms to achieve the sound he desired. Movement caused by wind and touch create musical sounds with Bertoia's sculptures. He continued to make these sculptures until his death. He even produced a limited edition of small Sounding Sculpture and a record, Sonambient. He also held concerts with these pieces.