



museum of arts and design

HARRY BERTOIA'S INFLUENTIAL STUDIO JEWELRY AND SOUND SCULPTURE EXPLORED IN TWO EXHIBITIONS OPENING MAY 3 AT MAD

Atmosphere for Enjoyment: Harry Bertoia's Environment for Sound

Bent, Cast & Forged: The Jewelry of Harry Bertoia

May 3–September 25, 2016

Press Preview: Monday, May 2, 2016, 5 pm



NEW YORK, NY (April 26, 2016)—From May 3 to September 25, 2016, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) presents two exhibitions focused on prolific artist, designer, and sculptor Harry Bertoia (1915–1978) that highlight the distinct practices that bookended his illustrious career. *Atmosphere for Enjoyment: Harry Bertoia's Environment for Sound* explores the sounding sculptures collectively referred to as Sonambient, their installation in Bertoia's stone barn, and their legacy as sound art, while *Bent, Cast & Forged: The Jewelry of Harry Bertoia* introduces the lesser-known jewelry works that, in many ways, are the predecessors of his internationally acclaimed sculpture and furniture designs.

"Harry Bertoia is a perfect subject for the Museum of Arts and Design," says Shannon R. Stratton, MAD's William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator. "His prolific practice has pushed the boundaries of art, design, and craft. Whether it was kinetics in jewelry, the monotype as drawing, or the creation of a sound environment as an artwork, Bertoia worked across

disciplines and scales fluidly and with inventiveness. The impact of his work is tremendous, and transcends specific art and design fields to influence architects and sculptors as readily as sound designers and musicians.”

Atmosphere for Enjoyment: Harry Bertoi's Environment for Sound

In the 1960s, Bertoi began exploring the potential relationship between sculpture and sound, and eventually created a significant oeuvre that would crown his life's work. Upon discovering the range of tones possible when pieces of wire or metal rods strike one another, Bertoi spent two decades crafting hundreds of “sounding sculptures” in pursuit of a simple instrument. These sculptures are interactive, kinetic, and audible forms consisting of bundles of metal rods that collide and set off radiant tones when activated by wind or human touch. Beginning in 1968, Bertoi remodeled an old stone barn, which still stands on his ninety-acre property in Pennsylvania, to house the works and act as a recording studio for their sounds. There he created 360 known tapes, eventually producing eleven LPs with titles such as *Phosphorescence* and *Ocean Mysteries*.

Taking its title from an unrealized concept drawing in which Bertoi imagined a complete environment for his sculptures and furniture, MAD's *Atmosphere for Enjoyment* exhibition consists of original sounding sculptures by Bertoi, an immersive four-channel sound installation created by John Brien from Bertoi's original Sonambient recordings; interactive sounding sculptures made by Bertoi's son, Val Bertoi; a selection of monotypes that capture the artist's atmospheric vision for the Sonambient forms; and an array of ephemera, recordings, and hands-on materials, including a timeline documenting the sounding sculptures' production, exhibition, performance, and influence.

Museum visitors are invited to interact with the works on view Thursdays from 6–9 pm and Saturdays from 12–3 pm. For a guided experience that culminates with the opportunity to play the sculptures, join us for docent-led tours starting in the lobby. These tours are conducted daily at 11:30 am and 3 pm, as well as Thursdays at 6:30 pm.

To complement the exhibition, MAD commissioned two new recordings and performances by contemporary sound artists Lizzi Bougatsos and Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe at Bertoi's Sonambient barn, the environment he created for the installation and recording of the sounding sculptures on his property in Pennsylvania. These recordings are available in the exhibition and online, and a series of live performances in the galleries will explore the legacy of the barn, recordings, and sounding sculptures as important influences on sound, music, and art today. For the last Friday of each month throughout the run of the exhibition, MAD invites musicians to participate in Studio Sessions and create recordings with the installation of sounding sculptures by Val Bertoi in the gallery.

Bent, Cast & Forged: The Jewelry of Harry Bertoi

Presented in conjunction in MAD's Tiffany & Co. Jewelry Gallery is *Bent, Cast & Forged: The Jewelry of Harry Bertoi*, which displays Bertoi's jewelry and explores his investigations of form and material during his early days as an artist and designer at the Cranbrook Academy of Art. Though Bertoi is best known for his metalwork, particularly his latticed wire “Diamond” chairs for the Knoll furniture company, his Sonambient and Gong sounding sculptures, and his large-scale brass and copper screens for corporate interiors, his initial experimentations with metal began with small pieces of jewelry.

For Bertoi, jewelry making was a process of creative discovery, an exploration of material on a manageable scale, and an avenue of inquiry for his conceptual interests. Inspired by the artistic

theories emanating from Europe's avant-garde, he was particularly fascinated by the vital forces of nature and its cycle of growth and decay. These investigations of form, dimension, and structure were produced largely during the first decade of Bertoia's career and offer an early glimpse of a creative vision that would crystallize as he matured as an artist. The brooches, bracelets, and necklaces showcased in this exhibition are standing evidence of the artist-craftsman's first forays into biomorphic abstraction, and establish him as both a pioneer of the American studio jewelry movement and a master of elevating fashionable adornment to *objets d'art*.

Several early monotype prints further illustrate how Bertoia harnessed the same intuitive, experimental approach to creating his works. These early works extend from Bertoia's concept of the direct, expressive graphic line—an approach that is reflected in the artist's oeuvre, from the lines of his iconic bent-wire furniture for Knoll to his later reed-shaped Sonambient sculptures.

EXHIBITION CREDITS

Atmosphere for Enjoyment: Harry Bertoia's Environment for Sound is organized by MAD's William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator Shannon R. Stratton and Curatorial Assistant and Project Manager Sophia Merkin.

Bent, Cast & Forged: The Jewelry of Harry Bertoia is organized by the Cranbrook Art Museum in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, and curated by Shelley Selim, Jeanne and Ralph Graham Assistant Curator. It was secured for the MAD by William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator Shannon R. Stratton and Curatorial Assistant and Project Manager Sophia Merkin.

Support for *Atmosphere for Enjoyment: Harry Bertoia's Environment for Sound* and *Bent, Cast & Forged: The Jewelry of Harry Bertoia* is generously provided by Nanette L. Laitman; Kay Bucksbaum; KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, the Official Airline of MAD; Joy and Allan Nachman; Kim and Al Eiber; Siegelson, New York; The Rotasa Foundation; Wright; and Barbara Fleischman.

MAD gratefully acknowledges the in-kind support of Knoll, Inc.

RELATED PROGRAMMING

PERFORMANCES

Live performances will take place within the Sonambient installation in the galleries.

- **Lizzi Bougatsos: The Last Hope**, Friday, July 8, 7 pm

Lizzi Bougatsos' musical practice has been described as "percussive-minded." Her acclaimed band of 14 years, Gang Gang Dance, was in the 2008 Whitney Biennial, and she also has a female rhythm band, I.U.D., which performed as part of Dan Colen's solo exhibition *Help!* at The Brant Foundation. Her recent work *ENERGY CHANCE* was performed in conjunction with the exhibition *John Cage: There Will Never Be Silence* (2014) at MoMA. She is known for her unique vocal style, and her work, whether visual or musical, often reflects the troubled state of current sociopolitical events. Her discography has been released by The Social Registry, P-Vine, Warp, and 4AD.

Bougatsos is currently represented by the James Fuentes Gallery, and she exhibits and performs internationally.

- **Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe: Levitation Praxis Pt. 4**, Friday, July 15, 7 pm

Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe is a New York–based artist and composer who works with voice in the realm of spontaneous music. Most recently he has focused on creating patch pieces with a modular synthesizer and tonal vocal work. He has exhibited widely at art venues including Performa 11, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris. Lowe has worked with Ben Russell, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Tarek Atoui, Philippe Parreno, Ariel Kalma, Lucky Dragons, Alexandra Wolkowicz, Biba Bell, ADULT., Ben Rivers, Rose Lazar, and Rose Kallal, among many others.

CINEMA

Eames: The Architect and the Painter + Harry Bertoia's Sculpture

Thursday, June 16, 7 pm

Theater at MAD

Harry Bertoia's Sculpture

With a mesmerizing soundtrack by Harry Bertoia, Clifford West's film creates a setting of motion and progression rare among other educational films of the 1960s and 1970s. An abstract study, it mirrors the abstraction of Bertoia's sculptures themselves. An opening shot of a lunar landscape reveals itself to be one of Bertoia's sculptures, setting the stage for something grand in scope, yet miniature in size

The Architect and the Painter

Narrated by James Franco, this vibrant documentary traces the careers of Ray Eames and her husband, Charles, highlighting the duo's eccentric output. Primarily known as furniture makers, the Eameses also worked in film, photography, architectural design and multimedia experimentation. This documentary highlights their immeasurable contributions to American arts, culture and technology. They paved the road to public acceptance of modernism, rethought the ways in which we interact with our surroundings—and in some ways created an aesthetic template for the digital era.

The World of Buckminster Fuller

Thursday, June 23, 7 pm

Theater at MAD

Effervescent, eclectic and unpredictable, Buckminster Fuller is one of the titans of twentieth-century design. Actively making work for over half a century, Fuller became known more as a universal problem-solver than a designer. Seeking to "do more with less," Fuller used this precept as a guiding principle for innovating and creating objects and ideas that improved the day-to-day quality of human life. Largely told in his own words, this rare documentary captures Fuller at the peak of his creative influence.

Precise Poetry + The New World of Lina Bo Bardi

Thursday, June 30 at 7 pm

Theater at MAD

Precise Poetry

Italian-Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi created stunning works of architectural poetry, and in this expansive set of interviews shot on the eve of her 100th birthday, her colleagues and friends chronicle her life. Bo Bardi worked during a time in which sociopolitical constraints as well as unforeseen personal events created immediacy in her work, removing it from the limitations of time. A cinematic odyssey through some of her most important Brazilian architectural projects, this film also reflects on the enduring nature of an artist's soul after he or she has passed.

The New World of Lina Bo Bardi

The New World of Lina Bo Bardi is a hand-drawn, CGI-made short by architect and filmmaker Ouida Angelica Biddle, directed in collaboration with Nicolau Vergueiro and Joao Rosa. This four-minute video can be seen as a form of fan-fiction for one of the great architects of the twentieth century, Lina Bo Bardi, who was a significant voice in and against Brazilian modernism. The imagery of the video is recreated entirely from her sketches and buildings, and text by Bo Bardi is read by Ina Abreu—Nicolau's mother—and set to an original soundtrack arranged by DJ Total Freedom that repurposes parts of the architect's 1951 essay on *Bela Criança*.

ENCOUNTERS

Studio Sessions: Open Recordings with Bertoia Studio Sonambient Sculptures
Fridays, May 27, June 24, July 29, August 26, 6–9 pm

For the last Friday of each month throughout the run of the exhibition, MAD invites musicians to participate in Studio Sessions and create recordings with the installation of sounding sculptures by Val Bertoia in the gallery. Studio Sessions may be booked in one hour segments. Artists must provide their own recording equipment. To schedule a recording session, please e-mail: public.programs@madmuseum.org

FAMILY

MADreads: A Literacy-Based Family Program

Sunday, May 15, 10:30 am

Free with admission, MADreads is a literacy-based program for children and their adult companions. Come explore the exhibition and read *Symphony City* by Amy Martin and discuss music found in unexpected places.

Studio Sunday: A Hands-on Intergenerational Workshop

Sunday, August 7, 10 am–1 pm

This Studio Sunday is planned and facilitated by the members of MAD's Artslife program, which introduces teens to museum careers. Join this musically centered, teen-led workshop inspired by the Sonambient work of Harry Bertoia.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn

Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design.

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Image captions:

(Left) Harry Bertoia manipulating the tops of rods shaped like cattails, using individual fingers to move specific rods, to create a complex sound. 1975. Bertoia Barn. Barto, Pennsylvania. Photo by and courtesy Beverly H. Twitchell. (Right) "Gong" Pendant, circa 1960s. Forged sterling silver. 4 x 4 x 1/8 in. (10.2 x 10.2 x 0.3 cm). Courtesy Leah Gordon Antiques. Photograph by Richard Goodbody.