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Richard Lippold: Space As a Metaphor For the Spiritual in Art

Curtis L. Carter

During the twentieth century our knowledge of space has grown. Scientists such as Albert Einstein have provided models of space in the language of physics and mathematics. Artists such as Richard Lippold have developed their own sculptural languages to articulate a new sense of space. It is worth considering that the investigation of space on the part of both scientists and artists has been tied to a profound interest in the spiritual. While introducing theories that required a revision of previous cosmological and scientific reflections about time-space, Einstein maintained his belief in the spiritual. Lippold, whose artistic constructions occupy many of the major American public architectural spaces of the second half of the twentieth century, retains a strong interest in the spiritual. His *Baldacchino*, 1970 (No. 43-46) in Saint Mary's Cathedral with its dematerialized structure reflects this concern. Neither chose to affiliate their concerns formally with organized religion, as is typical of the twentieth century. Lippold's sculptures unite space and the spiritual by allowing space to serve as a metaphor. During the 1950s and 1960s, when space explorations were at their height, Lippold found this a central theme for his work. This theme is reflected in two categories of his work, those that represent the spiritual in a context of universal cosmology and works designed for use in a particular religious tradition.

Space and the spiritual is the dominant theme, but not the only concern found in Lippold's sculpture. His early experiments in sculpture began with loosely figurative wire structures. Later themes in his abstract sculptures included nature, human figures, and classical subjects. These other themes will not be discussed here, except as they bear on the main topic.

The various modes of sculpture in the twentieth century range from figurative to abstract, from those primarily expressive of personal or societal themes such as Rodin's *Burghers of Calais* to works concerned mainly with abstraction and art world issues. Lippold's early experiments with wire sculpture such as *Self Portrait with Louise*, 1942 (No. 1) depict personal themes. In his major sculptures beginning with *Full Moon* in 1950

(No. 8), Lippold fabricates shapes that symbolize the spiritual or universal consciousness. He is keenly aware of the new context that the mid-twentieth century space age provides. Space-time and its elements thus become principal elements in both the construction and the interpretation of his sculpture.

The sculpture of Lippold is a paradox in its effort to embrace two opposing trends. On the one hand, it embraces the materialist concepts and means of the mid-twentieth century space age technology; on the other hand, its intentions are essentially spiritual in an age where spiritual concerns are not fashionable. The problem here is to show how these two apparently opposite tendencies provide a basis for appreciating Lippold's work.

Lippold's elegant sculptures have elicited opposing responses from his viewers. At times his works have been dismissed as mere decoration. Contributing to this assessment are his highly polished gold, silver, and other metal surfaces. At the same time, these radiant qualities evoke a sense of ethereal transcendence that is essentially spiritual in nature. It is this latter aspect of Lippold's sculpture that gives it special meaning for our age.

The concept of the spiritual is a key element in twentieth-century arts. In part this comes as a reaction to the materialism built into several hundred years of Western art tradition. In the broadest sense, 'spiritual' refers to those vital, life-enhancing forces that emerge in human consciousness. They may be linked to particular notions such as the soul or God, associated with institutionalized religions, or perhaps emerge as intense states of individual consciousness attuned to the ordering forces of the universe.

Writing in the early twentieth century, the philosopher Samuel Alexander attempted to redefine the context for thinking about the spiritual.¹ Abandoning the idea of God as a distant transcendent being, he explains God as the whole universe engaged in a process towards the emergence of new qualities that extend beyond material existence. Spirit or mind, whether in the form of religious feeling or through artistic expression, puts human beings

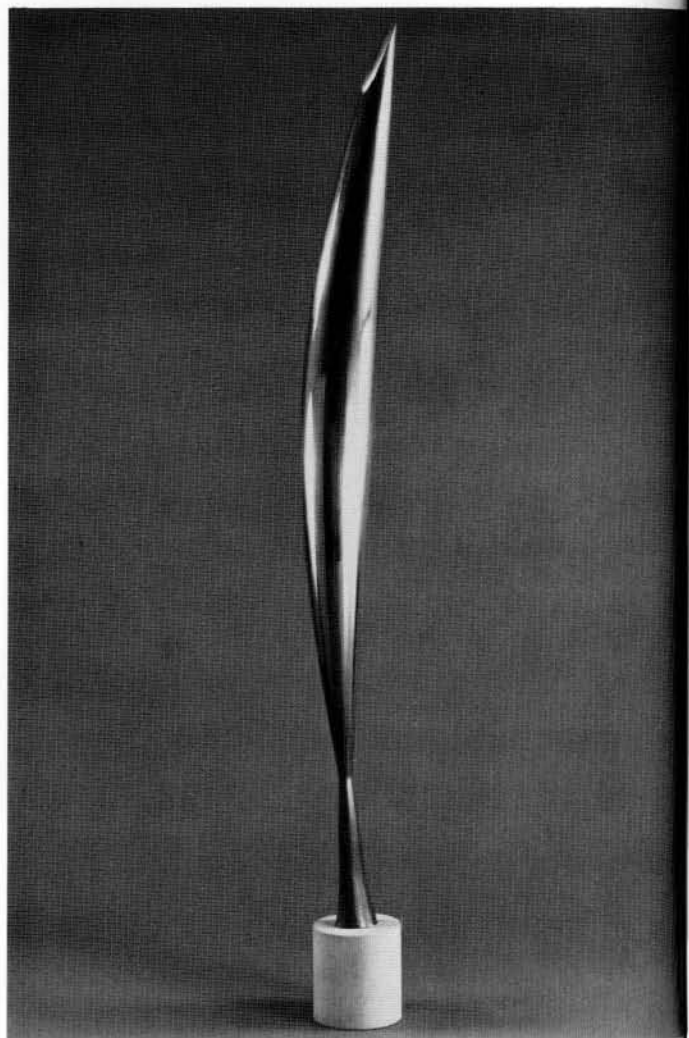
in touch with emerging patterns of growth and meaning in the universe. The artists discussed here would agree with the "spirit" of Alexander's attempt to formulate a new conceptual foundation for exploring the spiritual. They create new symbols to express the spiritual in their age, using the techniques of modern art concepts.

Lippold is one of many artists of the twentieth century to aspire to the spiritual in his art.² Wassily Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art*, first published in 1912, expressed the artist's concern for an art that could serve as a counter to cultural materialism.³ Other modern artists followed Kandinsky in his quest for the spiritual, including the sculptors Naum Gabo, Constantin Brancusi, and Isamu Noguchi. Gabo explored the spiritual through his art in a search for "hidden forces of nature" and the "real laws of life." His program for a new art appropriate to reflect the spiritual forces of a new age was set forth in "The Realist Manifesto," 1920, a joint statement with Antoine Pevsner.⁴

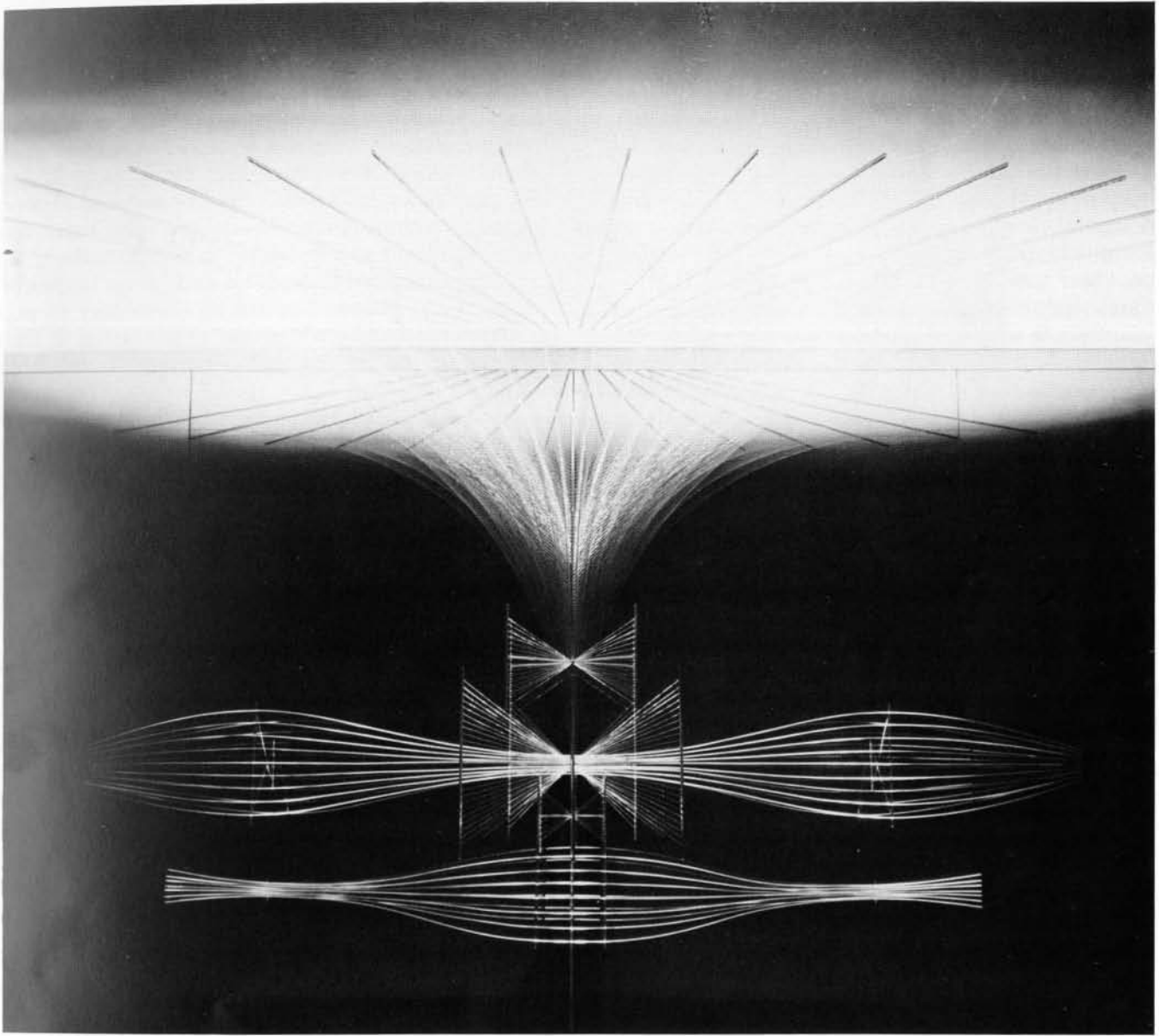
Brancusi regarded sculptures as "occasions for meditation." He once referred to his *Tables of Silence*, 1937 (public Park, Tiggujiu, Romania) as "a new Last Supper." Brancusi's *Bird In Space*, 1928 (collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York) is a symbol of spiritual transcendence, possibly related to the artist's concern with Tibetan Buddhism.⁵ Noguchi, whose sculptures embrace Eastern and Western aesthetic currents, draws upon Zen Buddhism to articulate the relationship of art to spiritual forces. For him art comes from the "awakening person" who is attuned to the "main flow," or to the deeper truths of nature's structures. These elements are not reducible to any particular religious formulation, but they nevertheless pay homage to God.⁶ Among these artists Lippold has acknowledged his deep admiration for Brancusi, as well as the constructivism of Gabo.

Historically, space and time are understood in reference to the prevailing cosmology. Cosmology provides a framework for comprehending the universe as an ordered system using principally concepts of space and time. In ancient Egypt the path of the sun god Ra across the sky from east to west was an important ordering device in their cosmology. Similarly, in Babylonian cosmology, the movement of the sun and moon across the firmament provided a sense of order in the universe. Psalm 89 of the Hebrew scriptures refers to the sun as enduring forever and the moon as "that faithful witness in the sky . . ." Greek cosmology, based on the prevailing theories of physical science, developed intricate geometric models. From the time of Thales to Copernicus, the center of the universe shifted from the earth to the

sun, and it became clear that the motions of the heavenly bodies were more complex than fixed rotations around an immobile center such as the earth or sun. Isaac Newton's attempt to bring order to the cosmos resulted in further changes including the relegation of the sun to a minor star and the enlargement of the universe to include many previously unknown star systems. The contributions to cosmology by twentieth century theorists from Einstein to the present have led to further expansion of our knowledge of the universe. Space and time, for instance, are now generally thought to be space-time, and the different initial frames of reference employed by observers are believed to operate under the same laws of physics. Alexander's account of the spiritual-metaphysical nature of the world similarly considers space and time as interdependent aspects of a single space-reality.⁷



Bird in Space, 1927
Constantin Brancusi, Romania



Homage to Our Age, 1958-1961
J. Walter Thompson Building, New York

Changes in the views of space and time held by scientists and philosophers parallel those reflected in two distinct approaches to sculpture. For Newton and earlier thinkers, space had been a fixed entity in which things are placed; it was considered immovable, fixed, and incapable of action. The corresponding approach to sculpture was sculpture as a free-standing object surrounded by or placed in space. Later, Einstein and others concluded that time and space were interdependent, thus clearing the way for new developments in twentieth-century technology, and also leading to new possibilities for sculpture in the "space-age." Again, although not necessarily informed by or directly influenced by the changing cosmological views of philosophers and scientists, modern sculptors introduced important changes in their views of space and time. The Futurists reflected the spirit of the times when they proposed abandoning static figurative elements in sculpture for geometric forms emphasizing dynamic force or motion.⁸ Gabo renounced volume, mass, and static rhythms in sculpture in favor of planes and kinetic rhythms, thus introducing a process in abstract art consistent with the new theories of space-time.⁹ His (and Pevsner's) Manifesto of 1920 called for a "constructive" approach to art that redefined its elements, making space and time the principal components in future art. For Gabo, and subsequently Lippold, space-time became the main constructive element for composing sculptures. Thus sculpture no longer was thought of as merely surrounded by space in the Newtonian sense, but it had become a construction of space-time, shaping these fundamental elements of the universe into its distinctive forms.

Lippold embraces the idea of space-time as the key to his art. "Infinite space," and "endless time" join together in his sculptures. A succinct statement of his interest in relating to modern scientific theories of space is contained in a proposal statement for his sculpture, *Homage to Our Age*, 1960.

*Since Einstein's famous formula has made it necessary to reconsider completely the nature of nature, this sculpture seeks to describe the forms of water, earth, and air by means of various theories of matter and space. . . . The most exciting of all recent theories is that matter may be composed entirely of minute whirling particles of space. . . . So the great silver cloud of this work is like a large vortex whose lower apex becomes the source of energy as represented in the golden forms. . . .*¹⁰

Lippold wrote a few years later, "My subject is space . . . I use hair-thin metals to sculpt space into itself and its

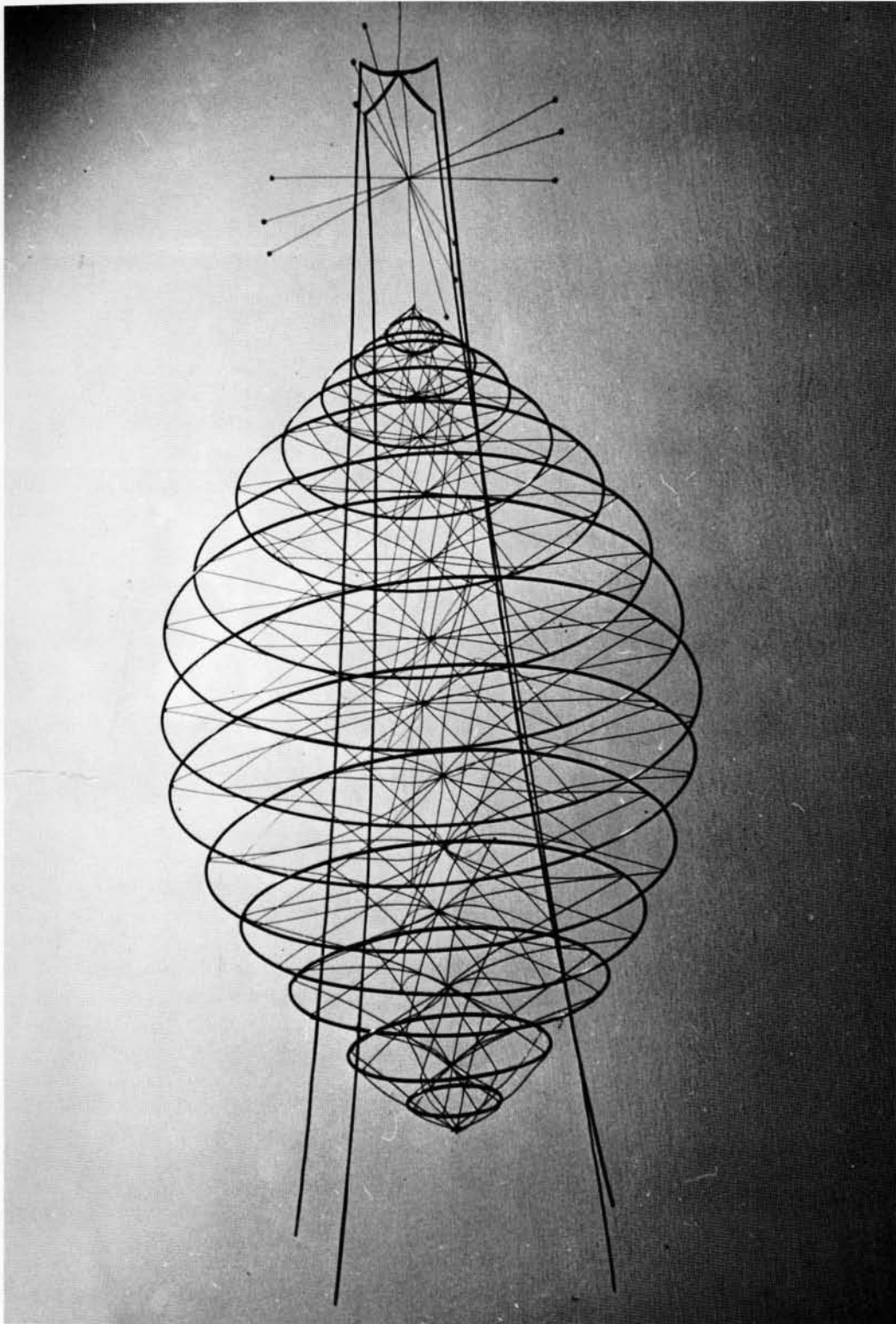
surroundings and to seduce the viewer to look into the space. The material for me becomes minimal, and the space becomes maximal. Space is the essential material for me."¹¹ Lippold's sculptures are often constructions of pure geometry employing metal wires and rods to outline the edges of triangles, cubes, pyramids, cones, circles, and ellipses, as in *Full Moon*, 1949-50 (No. 8), located in the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Their thin, stretched wire structures, held in tension in a delicately balanced equilibrium, convey a sense of "weightless transparency" and the mystery of limitless space.

Space-time thus serves two purposes in Lippold's approach to sculpture. It is the key material element of his constructions, which involve no solid mass. Space-time also serves as a metaphor to designate the spiritual concerns expressed through his sculptures. Lippold's use of space and images inspired by cosmology to express the spiritual recalls Whitehead's conclusion at the end of *Process and Reality* that cosmology is the basis of religion.¹²

Lippold's initial exploration of the spiritual aspects of the cosmos began with a dramatic and moving experience in 1944. "During a lone walk through a cool night in Vermont . . . I was struck by the almost breathable light given to the air by a radiant, partial moon; even the mountains seemed to float in it. I remember thinking how impossible it would be to express this tranquil, luminous loneliness in such finite materials as my materials."¹³ This experience led to *New Moonlight*, 1946 (No. 2, second version, 1948), a work which combined his interests in relating space-time and cosmology to the spiritual. This work also heightened his awareness of the formal mathematical relationships inherent in his developing approach to sculpture.

Following this, Lippold produced a series of ten variations on a sphere. (Variations 6, 7, and 10 are represented in the exhibition). Initially this series began as an experiment to test the limits of symmetry as applied to a sphere. The first five variations, made in 1947, were a gift to composer John Cage, and partially illustrated the basic Indian formal discipline: the four bright emotions (the Mirthful, the Wondrous, the Erotic, and the Heroic) and the four dark emotions (the Odious, the Pathetic, the Wrathful, and the Fearful). Only five of the Indian series were completed; they are currently located in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art.

Given Lippold's profound curiosity about cosmology, and the fact that his major turning point as an artist was initiated by an encounter with the moon, it is not surprising to find that his most famous sculptures, Var-



iation No. 7: *Full Moon*, 1950, (No. 8) located in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, and Variation No. 10; *The Sun*, 1956, commissioned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, are based on these important natural symbols used in ancient cosmology. Both works consist of elaborately constructed three-dimensional geometric shapes suggestive of the cosmos. Both the moon and sun were also important symbols in the mythical religions of Egypt and other earlier cultures, where they served as centers of worship. Twentieth-century man has largely abandoned the worship of the heavenly bodies, and, instead, pursues the mysteries of outer space, as Lippold has observed. Lippold's uses of the symbols are intended to evoke spiritual contemplation. The spiritual in this context begins with an appreciation of the unique insights awakened in the viewer's experience of such works as *Full Moon* and *The Sun*. Lippold describes this experience as follows:

*From my point of view, the adequate work of art is one in which are combined socially objective and personally subjective qualities, producing a believable totality of expression at once sensuously seductive, intellectually intriguing and emotionally moving. I believe that the combination of these qualities produces an insight into the world of the spirit. . . .*¹⁴

He believes that, while the artist cannot consciously set out to present "the world of spirit," it is nevertheless a fruit of his labors. Cosmology appears frequently throughout Lippold's other works, for example, *Meteor*, 1955, *Fountain of the Expanding Universe*, 1959, *Homage to Our Age*, 1958-1961, *Flight*, 1962, *Gemini II*, 1965-1966, and *Ad Astra*, 1976, a soaring tribute to space explorations located outside the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

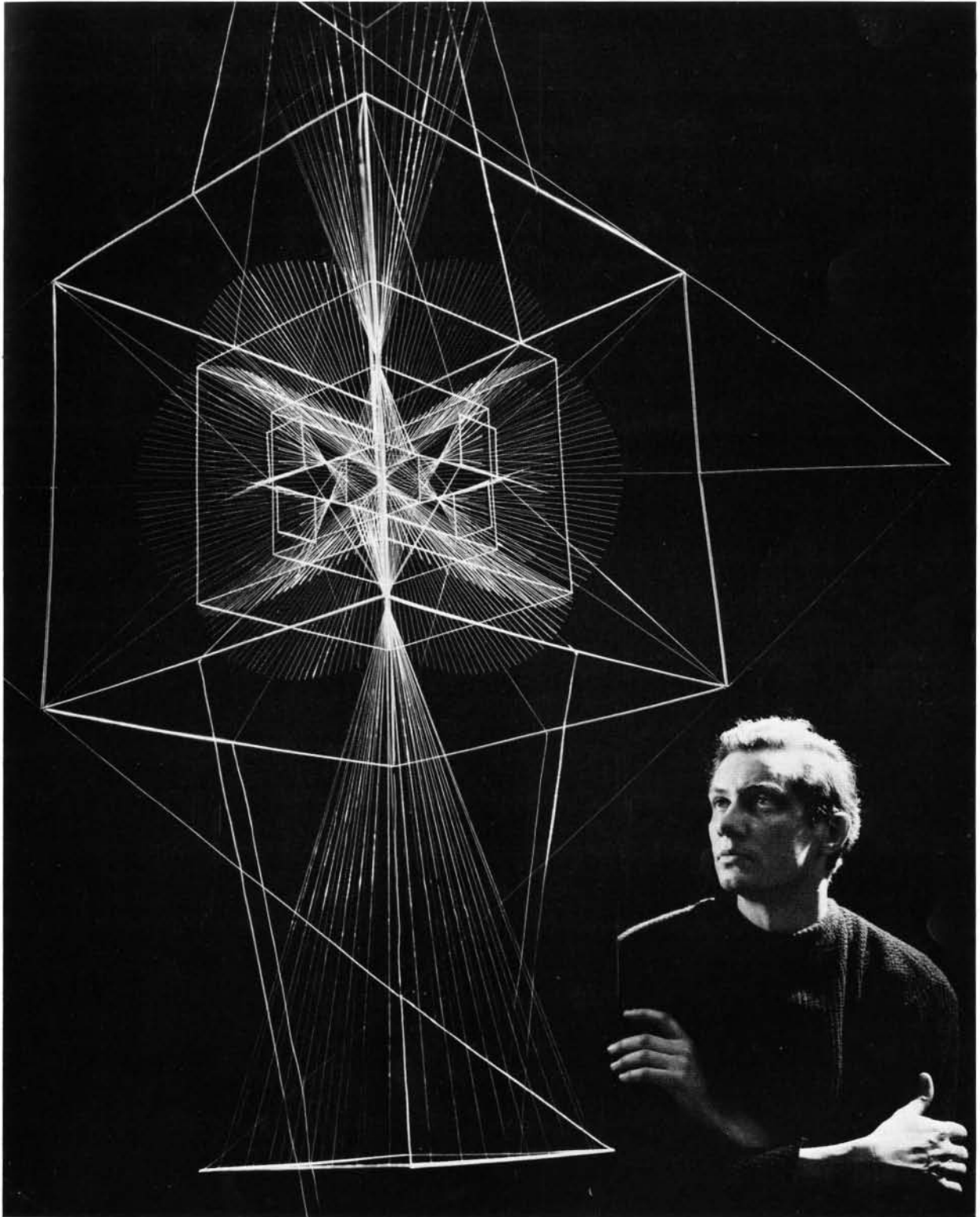
Of these, *Flight*, located in the commercial setting of the Pan Am Building near Grand Central Station in New York, is of special interest in reference to Lippold's focus. *Flight*, initially titled *Globe*, consists of a central sphere representing the world, and seven star-like radiations into space, suggesting the seven continents, with long conical arms originating in great circles of the globe. Surrounding this world sphere are silver-like elements, describing ascending and descending motions or possibly arcs of flight through space. Two materials are used: a high carat gold over bronze for the globe and star, and stainless steel for the silver-colored elements.¹⁵ This work is normally associated with the movements of airplanes in space-time, which is a plausible reading given its sponsorship. It is also a metaphor of the spiritual quest for meaning in our age. A viewer's eye and mind

are led by its abstract forms to contemplate those vital forces of spirit that underlie the operations of the expanding universe.

Because of their spiritual qualities it would seem that Lippold's sculptures would lend themselves to particular religious contexts. This indeed has been the case. Some of Lippold's best works such as the *Baldacchino*, 1970, (No. 43-46) in St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco, after Gianlorenzo Bernini's *Baldacchino* for St. Peter's in Rome, were created for churches. The *Baldacchino* is suspended as the centerpiece over the altar of the dome-like structure designed by architect Pietro Belluschi in 1970. Lippold's sculpture complements the curved surfaces of the dome. Its initial impact on the viewer is one of quietude and awe evoked by the massive, slightly vibrating cascade of thousands of delicately polished

aluminum triangular prisms spanning 150 feet upward and about 30 feet across. Its form is in harmony with the architecture. Although the piece offers no figurative references, the artist suggests that its tent-like form emphasizes the all-embracing benevolent spirit of the Virgin. Within the context of Christian iconography, the piece can be read as a symbol of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ Above all, the sculpture faithfully represents the guiding aesthetic principles of the Cathedral, borrowed from St. Thomas Aquinas: integrity, proportion, and clarity.¹⁷

The San Francisco Cathedral is a particularly fitting setting for a modern sculpture, because its structure and theological concept are both products of the twentieth century. Reflecting the architect's conviction that a cathedral for today, if it were to endure as a symbol of faith, required a strong structural concept, he devised a form that could only have been designed in this century. Its "warped surface" is based on geometric theories conceived in the twentieth century.¹⁸ Concurrent with its innovative design, the Cathedral reflects the new theological perspective of the Second Vatican Council which provided that the people and priest should be united with the altar as their focus. In this instance, Lippold's sculpture, which hangs above the altar, is totally integrated into the process that brings architecture, sculpture, and the people together in an expression of faith. Lippold's comparison with Bernini's in the crossing of Saint Peter's. The two *Baldacchino's* are strategically located, one over the high altar of the cathedral, the other over the tomb of Saint Peter. While both physically interact with their locations, each does so in a different way. Whereas Bernini's *Baldacchino* brings the expanding space down to a physically and psychologically manage-



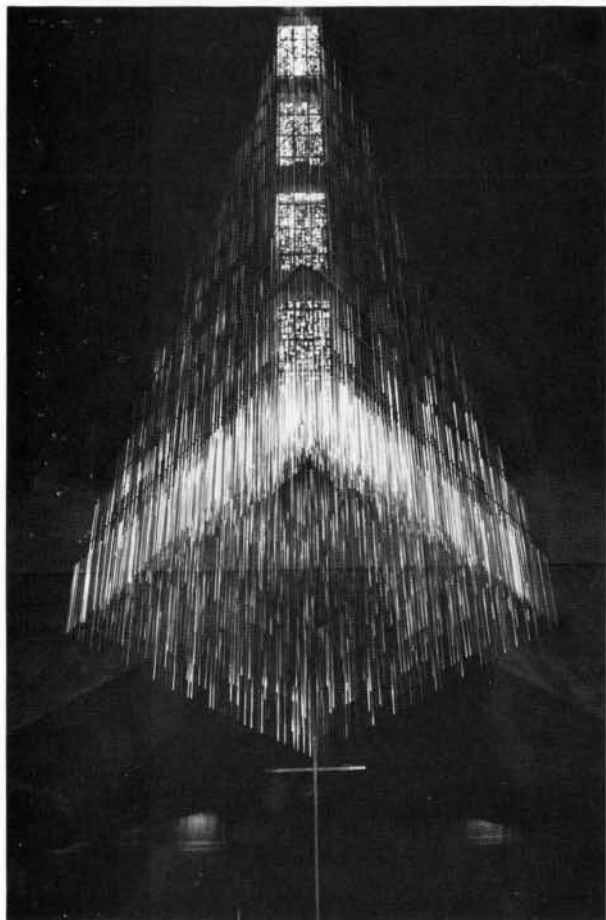
Richard Lippold with, *Full Moon, Variation Within a Sphere No. 7, 1949-1950* (No. 8)

able scale, Lippold's sculpture, suspended as it is in the air, defies the laws of gravity and submits to the space above. While Bernini was himself a practicing Catholic who produced sculpture in the service of the counter-reformation church, Lippold does not identify with organized religion. Like many artists of the twentieth century, he produced works dedicated to the spiritual without any connection with organized religion. He is nonetheless highly sensitive to the spiritual aspects of existence. His sensitivity is rooted in part in his German Protestant heritage and perhaps in his exposure to oriental philosophies.

Lippold has also produced other successful works for specific settings including *Trinity*, 1957-60, created for a Benedictine Abbey in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, also in collaboration with Belluschi; *Crucifixus et Resurrexit*, 1981 (unrealized project for the Duomo, Viterbo, Italy), and *Sun Wing*, (interior) 1982, (No. 60-61) and *Sun Tree*, (exterior) 1982 (No. 60-61) for Shiga Sacred Garden shrine near Kyoto, Japan. *Trinity* consists of a silvery descending

triangle over the altar enclosing the crucifix from which gold elements radiate into two areas of the church. This work is intended to symbolize the Christian idea of the Holy Trinity. *Sun Tree*, a tree-like shape, resides on the top of a small octagonal house of God, near the temple designed by Minoru Yamasaki for Shingi Schumei Kai, a relatively recent religion combining elements of Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity. *Sun Wing*, a radiating sculpture of twelve gold-plated panels, surrounds a sacred scroll of the religion, and is located in a sacred space accessible only to the priests.¹⁹

From a philosophical perspective, Hegel's insight into the function of sculpture as a mode for expressing spirit provides a conceptual precedent for understanding Lippold's presentation of the spiritual.²⁰ Writing in the mid-nineteenth century in Germany, Hegel viewed the world from an idealist's perspective, and maintained that reality constantly changes from matter into spirit. For Hegel, the arts are judged in relation to their comparative ability to represent the spiritual through art. Sculpture



Baldacchino, 1967-1970
Saint Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco



Baldacchino, 1624-1633
Gianlorenzo Bernini, St. Peters, Rome

is near the bottom in his hierarchy of the arts, one step above architecture. Lippold's sculpture might have appealed to Hegel, more than did the traditional sculpture of his time, precisely because in Lippold's sculpture space invades and dematerializes mass. The result is sculpture that is more suited to convey the essence of spirit. In rejecting mass, which constituted the basis of sculpture dominated by matter, Lippold is participating in a broader based modern departure from sculpture as it had been up to Hegel's time and beyond. He is indeed moving against the essential nature of sculpture as it had been understood prior to the twentieth century. Bernini's sculptures allowed mass to invade and give shape to space. Lippold actually reverses the relationship between the two by using space to invade and dematerialize any element of mass that might be implicit in his materials.

Hegel's ideas are applicable to Lippold's despite the fact that Hegel probably had in mind "figurative" sculptures of the sort used in Classical or later times to represent the gods or God rather than abstract sculptures in the modern sense. According to Hegel, a sculpture's capability to present spirit does not depend upon its material properties of mass or volume, or its imitation of forms in the organic world, such as the human form or other natural forms. Rather, it is a result of the artist's bringing to a sculpture ideal forms that originate in the subjective individuality of a creative mind. It is of particular interest to note that Hegel uses the term 'abstract spatiality' to refer to that one most essential feature of sculpture necessary to convey the essence of spirit. As has been noted previously, Lippold uses abstract spatial constructions to transmit the spiritual. It would appear that both Hegel and Lippold have in mind a similar notion in their respective concepts of abstract spatiality and abstract spatial construction. Hegel thus concludes that the spiritual or "inner life" of mankind is concentrated and given corporal shape in the sensuous forms of sculpture, thus transforming their mechanical and material means. Lippold is aware of such notions when he refers to the twentieth century as a time of abstraction and introspection, and when he remarks, "As I look back upon my work, it seems that almost all of it has sprung from private experience, emotional, intellectual, or purely sensory. . . ." ²¹

Hegel's discussion of the connections between architecture and sculpture also bear on Lippold's views. Both presume that architecture provides a proper environment for sculpture to function. For instance, a medieval cathedral housed figurative sculptures that served a spiritual end, paralleling in certain respects the intended function

of Lippold's *Baldacchino* in Saint Mary's Cathedral. They would understand as well that spirit manifests itself in many different forms of conscious and pre-conscious states in the universe, extending beyond such specifically religious settings.

Finally, Hegel and Lippold share the view that sculpture is most successful in communicating the spiritual to the people when it arises from a collaboration involving architecture, which provides the large-scale setting, sculpture which individualizes and personalizes, and a community which confronts the spiritual and reflects into itself its meaning. This meaning as apprehended and particularized by the artist through his work is thus dispersed into the inner lives of individuals who comprise the community. In practice this means that the sculptor collaborates with the architect and the people in a common effort to bring about a greater consciousness of the spiritual in human affairs.

A comparison of Lippold's sculpture with that of Tadashi Kawamata, a contemporary post-modernist sculptor, will lend further insight into the artist's work. ²² Kawamata is selected because he is an important representative of post-modernist sculpture whose work also addresses the relation of sculpture to architecture. Lippold's penchant for instilling formal harmony and order through symmetry in his sculpture would appear to place him at odds with present day sculpture as practiced by Kawamata. Kawamata's asymmetrical, disruptive constructions also draw attention to the problems of public sculptures and architecture that Lippold has attempted to resolve by harmonizing his works with their surrounding architecture. In contrast to Lippold's finely polished delicate metals, Kawamata often uses rough cut lumber and scrap wood. On the surface, his abstract wood constructions appear to be more like found sculptures, or loosely constructed temporary shacks for a settlement, than the elegant, abstract space sculptures of Lippold. Again, Lippold's rigorously calculated mathematical structures differ from Kawamata's forms, which appear to be molded after organic shapes.

Beneath their apparent differences, however, there are notable common features. Despite the appearance of their anti-formalist structure, Kawamata's wood constructions exhibit a strong affinity with the formalist metal wire, rod, and plate constructions of Lippold. More importantly, both artists confront the materiality and functions of their architectural settings and infuse them with spiritual energy. Lippold's *Orpheus and Apollo*, 1961, (No. 29-33) located in Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York, consists of large bronze plates

strung together with delicate cables, and suspended in the interior of Lincoln Center high above the lobby space outside Avery Fisher Hall. This sculpture energizes the surrounding architecture by engaging the eye with its forms and inviting contemplation. Similarly, Kawamata's lumber construction, *Destroyed Church*, 1987, an installation at Documenta 8, Kassel, West Germany, energizes the spaces of an old church site in Kassel that had been bombed during the air raids of World War II. The work "reconstructs" the interior of the former church with a seemingly chaotic, but actually highly ordered, intricate, wooden lattice structure that extends to the walls and facade, bringing new life through its own rearrangement of space. Lippold's construction is intended to attach permanently to its setting; Kawamata's construction is a temporary installation. Both successfully employ their respective "sculptures" for the purposes of creating a deeper awareness of spiritual energy in their architectural environments.

Irrespective of the rationale for expressing the spiritual through sculpture offered by Hegel, and its intended realization in Lippold's sculpture, questions remain about the relationship of sculpture and architecture,

and their relationship to the community in which they function. Lippold's reputation for collaboration with architects has won him high praise from major architects of his time such as Walter Gropius and Phillip Johnson.²³ Lippold collaborated with Gropius on *Flight* for the Pan Am Building and with Philip Johnson and Mies Van der Rohe on *The Four Seasons*, 1959, (No. 23-24) for the Seagram Building in New York. Nevertheless, successful collaboration between architects and sculptors appears to be rare. More often sculptors work independently, juxtaposing their independently conceived and produced works against the architecture, and with little or no involvement of users. The results frequently lead to fragmentation and alienation rather than to spiritual enlightenment of the community, as in the recent controversy over the unwelcome placement of a work by Richard Serra outside a public building in New York.

Then too there is the question of whether, or how, in a late twentieth-century urban setting, it is possible to identify a community of users for a particular sculpture in the senses that Hegel and Lippold imply. Who would comprise "the community" for *Orpheus and Apollo* or for *Flight*? Would it be those who attend concerts at Lincoln Center, visiting tourists, or perhaps the people who live and work in the neighborhood that are the intended recipients of spiritual enlightenment from *Orpheus and Apollo*? And which group comprises the community served by *Flight* where perhaps a quarter of a million people pass through the space every day: those who work in the building, commuters entering or leaving Grand Central Terminal, the homeless from the streets of New York? Or, is it humankind in a universal sense that is the intended "community" for sculpture as for any other art? Such questions are difficult to answer. Perhaps the failure of planners to give sufficient attention to such questions is a contributing factor to the growing fragmentation of culture in modern society. In any event, the problem of defining and responding to a community remains a major challenge to sculptors such as Lippold who aim to communicate the spiritual through their work.

The comparison above of Lippold's and Kawamata's sculptures, representing Western and Asian cultures, reaffirms a continuing and multicultural interest on the part of artists to address the spiritual in the context of the late twentieth century. Yet there are problems inherent in both of their approaches. Despite his intentions to portray the spiritual, Lippold's sculptures have been understood by some to convey just the opposite: materialist glitter and empty decoration. However unwarranted



Glass Art Akasaka, 1984
Wood installation
Kowa Building, Akasaka, Tokyo
Tadashi Kawamata

that interpretation may be, it is symptomatic of a culture divided and lacking any common spiritual foundations. Lippold has chosen to affirm what he believes to be universal spiritual values adapted to the cultural environment of the space age.

By contrast, Kawamata's sculptures are temporary aberrations tenuously attached to existing buildings or sites. They too are signs of cultural fragmentation, or at least of culture in a state of transition. Perhaps these sculptures signify the negation of a common spiritual link of the immediate past, as represented in Lippold's sculptures, with the present. Kawamata's sculptures are thus, at once, compelling in their own spiritual energy, and, at the same time, profoundly disturbing in their lack of any reassurance of hope for positive collaboration among architecture, sculpture, and a community of users at the present time.

This contrast of Lippold's and Kawamata's sculptures, respectively, recalls the current clash of Modernist and Post-Modernist visions of art and culture that is central to the critical debates of the current age. Lippold's work represents a Modernist's faith in individual creativity, the inexhaustible capability of each age to renew again and again its spiritual vitality, and the perseverance of universal spiritual values through time. Kawamata's art, while significantly energized, reflects skepticism about the possibility of continuous cultural renewal through individual creativity. His sculptures, when attached to an existing architectural site, constitute an assault on what exists. They point to the darker side of existence and invite a "deconstructive" approach to existing cultural structures and values, including the spiritual, which requires reexamination of their meaning and significance.

In conclusion, Lippold derives his images for conveying the spiritual in art largely from issues surrounding the conquest of space-time, a conquest which he says has replaced faith in the conquest of the devil as a motivational force for the cultural edifices of our time.²⁴ His works considered here demonstrate that Lippold is able to apply his talents as a sculptor to using space-time as a metaphor of the spiritual in a wide variety of institutional and non-institutional settings. His dialogue with the spiritual is not limited to a particular creed. On the contrary, he shares with great minds of the past and present, such as Hegel, Einstein, and many other leading twentieth-century minds, a more encompassing religious feeling, which allows him to explore the spiritual in many different contexts, explicitly religious and otherwise. This feeling expressed itself at times in a certain "raptur-

ous amazement" at the infinite range of the opportunities and perspectives available through art, as well as philosophy, science, and religion, for exploring the spiritual forces of the universe. For the most part he chooses harmony and symmetry over their opposites as the guiding principles of his art. But he is aware that the whirling bits of space-time can be structured in as many forms as the human mind can imagine, and possibly more. It is true that harmony and symmetry, which Lippold expounds, may be mere accidents of disorder, but then again they are perfectly viable approaches to structure in art and in life.²⁵

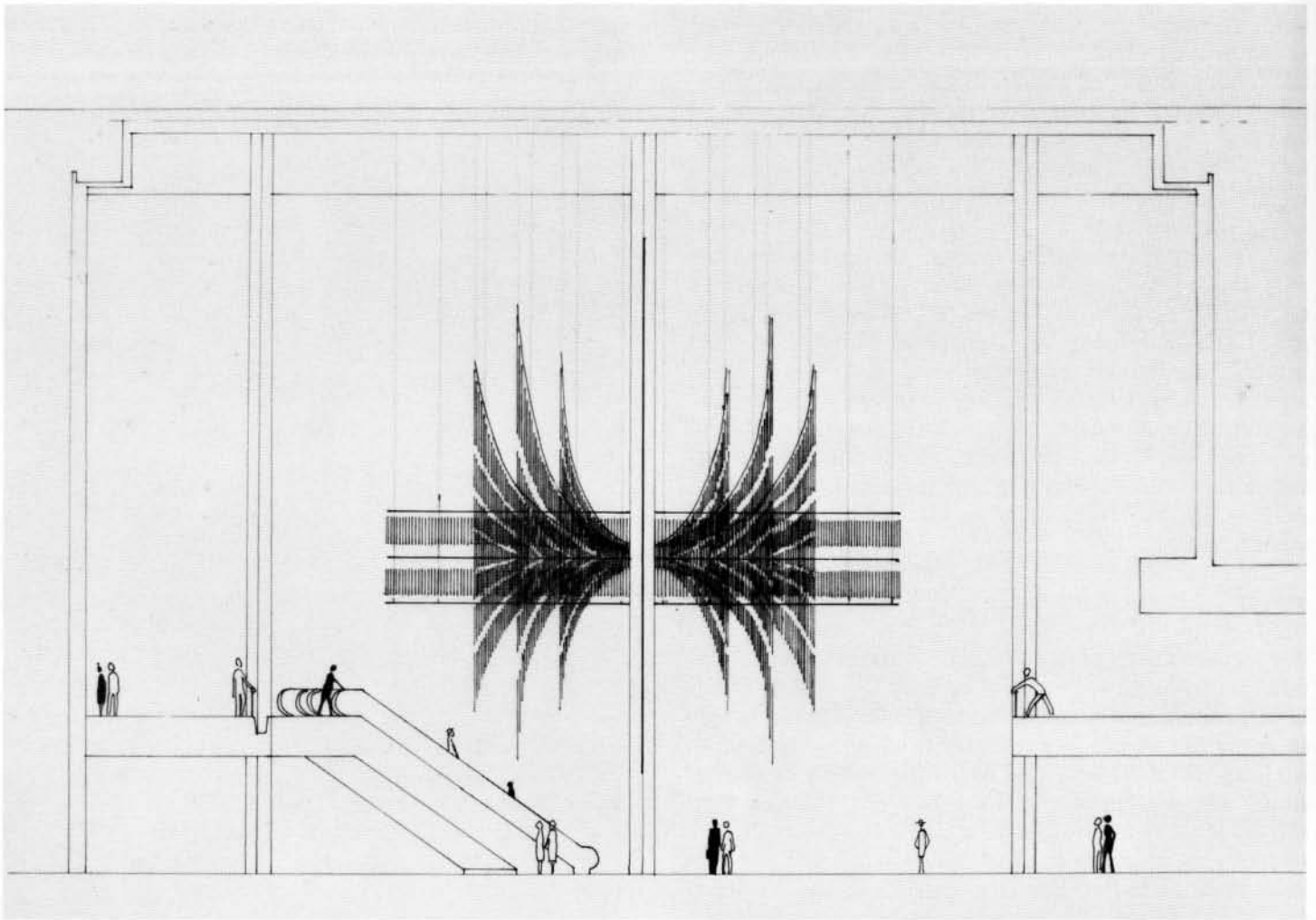
In many ways the position that Lippold has taken with respect to his sculptures places him at risk. He has chosen to place his faith in order and affirmed life's spiritual dimensions when many other artists of his time express chaos and the dark side of human existence. He



Richard Lippold with, *Orpheus and Apollo under construction*, 1962
Lincoln Center, New York

remains faithful to modernist abstraction, without concern for being out of favor when critical opinion has moved on to other issues. For instance, contemporary post-modern theories call into question the very foundation of Lippold's art, which is based on individual artistic creativity, originality, formalism, and the spiritual dimensions of art and life so central to his work. In a century where new scientific discoveries about the expanding universe have produced a crisis of faith for many, Lippold sees such discoveries simply as an invitation to reexamine faith in the light of the present age.

Lippold is an artist and not a scientist or a philosopher. He nevertheless sensitively reflects the issue of cosmology in the space age. His sculptures express in the materials and vocabulary of modern abstraction an artist's attempt to comprehend and interpret the spiritual dimensions of the cosmos for the present age. Artists such as Lippold are capable of providing spiritual and intellectual insights as well as aesthetic. Lippold contributes to all of these by encouraging his generation to imagine in twentieth-century sculptural forms the order of the universe.²⁶



Drawing for *Untitled*, 1984
One Financial Center, Boston (No. 76)

NOTES

1. Samuel Alexander, *Space, Time, and Deity*, The Gifford Lectures at Glasgow, 1916-1918. (New York: The Humanities Press, reprinted 1950).

2. For an overview of the spiritual in twentieth-century art see Roger Lipsey, *An Art of Our Own: The Spiritual in Twentieth-Century Art* (Boston: Shambhala, 1988). This theme is also the occasion of a major exhibition, at the Los Angeles County Museum, "The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting, 1890-1985" (Los Angeles, 1986).

3. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art, and Painting in Particular*, (New York, 1947, Revision of the first English translation by Michael Sadleir, published as *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*, London and Boston, 1914).

4. Teresa Newman, *Naum Gabo: The Constructive Process* (London: The Tate Gallery, 1976).

5. Lipsey, *An Art of Our Own*, 234-238. See also Athena T. Spear, *Brancusi's Birds*, New York, 1969 and Constantin Zarnescu, *Aforismele Si textele lui Brancusi*. Craiova, 1980.

6. Lipsey, *An Art of Our Own*, 355, 356.

7. Alexander, *Space, Time, and Deity*, 428.

8. Umberto Boccioni, "Technical Manifesto of Futuristic Sculpture," 1912 in *Theories of Modern Art*, edited by Herschel B. Chipp (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968) 298-304.

9. Gabo, "The Realist Manifesto," 1920, in Newman, Naum Gabo, *The Constructive Process*, 25.

10. Richard Lippold, "Construction for the J. Walter Thompson Co., New York," unpublished manuscript, 1961: Courtesy, Miani Johnson, Willard Gallery files.

11. Richard Lippold, "Space Man," *Newsweek*, January 29, 1968: 82, 83.

12. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (London: Macmillan, 1929) 529, 530.

13. Richard Lippold, "Lippold's Lippolds," unpublished manuscript: Courtesy of the artist.

14. "Richard Lippold," in M. Alexenberg, *Aesthetic Experience in Creative Process*, (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1981) 102.

15. Richard Lippold, "A Sculptural Symbol for Pan American Airways," January, 1961. Courtesy: Miani Johnson, Willard Gallery files.

16. In a conversation at the Cathedral of Saint Mary in San Francisco, the current pastor, the Rev. Milton Walsh, suggested that for him the primary meaning of the piece centered on the Holy Spirit.

17. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Part I, Question 39, Article 8. Also, remarks by Joseph T. McGucken, Archbishop of San Francisco, cited in "Saint Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco, *Architectural Record*, September, 1971: 114. The spiritual aspects of Lippold's *Baldacchino* are also discussed in John Dillenberger's *A Theology of Artistic Sensibilities* (New York: Crossroads, 1986), 167-170.

18. "Saint Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco," *Architectural Record*, 113-120.

19. Richard Lippold, "Lippold's Lippolds," unpublished manuscript, n.d. Courtesy of the artist.

20. G.F.W. Hegel, *Aesthetics* translated by T.M. Knox, reprinted in Stephen David Ross, *Art and Its Significance* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), 158-160.

21. Richard Lippold, Willard Gallery Exhibition Catalogue, New York, February 6 - March 3, 1962.

22. See Patricia C. Phillips, "Added Attractions," *Art Forum*, May, 1989: 108-111.

23. *The New Yorker*, April, 8, 1961: 47-49.

24. Richard Lippold, "To Make Love to Life," in *Graduate Comment Wayne State University*, III, 1, October, 1959: 2. Reprinted, *College Art Journal*, XIX. 4. Summer, 1960: 298-305.

25. See Richard Lippold, "Illusion As Structure," in *Structure in Art and Science* edited by Gyorgy Kepes (New York: George Braziller, 1965), 152-164.

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