

Theodore Roszak

MEDIUM Sculpture

NATIONALITY American

LIFE DATES Poznań, Prussia, Poland 1907 - 1981 New York, New York

Born in Poznań, Prussia (now Poland) in 1907, Theodore Roszak immigrated to the United States with his family at the age of two. He began his studies at the Art Institute of Chicago, taking evening classes while attending high school and enrolling as a fulltime student in 1925. Drawn to New York by the American Realist painters, Roszak left Chicago in 1926 to study at the National Academy of Design. He also took private lessons from George Luks while attending courses in logic and philosophy at Columbia University. In 1927, he moved back to Chicago and began teaching at the Art Institute. His first one-man show displaying lithographs took place at the Allerton Gallery in Chicago in 1928. Granted a European travel fellowship in 1929, Roszak spent the next few years in Prague, France, and Germany, assimilating the major currents of Modernism.

Upon his return to New York, he began teaching at Lazlo Maholy-Nagy's experimental Design Laboratory and fabricating painted wood, metal, and plastic constructions based on Bauhaus and Constructivist ideas. These distinctive freestanding works, ranging from two to nine feet in height, juxtaposed abstract geometric shapes. Evoking a strong industrial quality and typically painted in primary colors, Roszak's sculptures from this period integrate Dadaism's machine aesthetic with the clear, precise formal principles of Constructivism. They were first exhibited in 1940 at the Julien Levy Gallery.

Dramatically disillusioned by the violent use of technology during the Second World War, Roszak abandoned his constructions in favor of expressionistic welded-steel sculptures. He also produced many large-scale drawings of cosmological subjects.

Roszak's many awards and fellowships include a Tiffany Foundation Fellowship in 1931, a Frank G. Logan medal from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1947, a Purchase Award from the Museu de Arte Moderna in São Paulo in 1951, and a George E. Widener Gold Medal in Sculpture from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1956. His numerous group and solo exhibitions have taken place at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Palacio del Virreina, Barcelona; the Tate Gallery, London; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Rodin Museum, Paris.

Roszak died in New York in 1981.

