

MIT List Visual Arts Center

Isaac Witkin

MEDIUM Sculpture

NATIONALITY American

LIFE DATES Johannesburg, South Africa 1936 - 2006 Pemberton, New Jersey

Born in Johannesburg, South Africa, where he began his sculpture studies, Isaac Witkin immigrated to England in 1956. He was a student in the sculpture department of St. Martin's School of Art for three years, coming under the influence of sculptor Anthony Caro.

He graduated in 1960 and in 1961 became an apprentice to Henry Moore. In 1963, he joined the faculty of St. Martin's sculpture department. During this time, Witkin emerged among the ranks of the New Generation sculptors who excited interest in England in the mid-1960s. His brightly colored wood, then fiberglass, sculptures were admired for their bright Pop sensibility and wit.

In 1965, Witkin relocated to the U.S. to become artist in residence at Bennington College, Vermont. In 1975, he became a citizen, later acquiring a farm in Burlington County. Witkin explored welded steel during the 1970s, exhibiting his works frequently in New York. Late in the decade, he began to move from hard-edged steel to bronze biomorphic shapes, following the earlier inspiration of Henry Moore. From 1978, as artist in residence at the Johnson Atelier foundry in New Jersey, he honed his sand casting technique.

During the following two decades, Witkin taught at the Parsons School of Design, New York, and Philadelphia College of Art. In 1965, he received a First Prize at the Paris Biennale, and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1981. He was also a Member of the National Academy, New York, in 1996 and a Member of the Royal Society of British Sculptors, 1998-2002.

Witkin participated in several prominent exhibitions including The New Generation, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1965; Primary Structures, the Jewish Museum, New York, 1966; The Golden Door, The Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C., 1976; and the Nippon International Art Exhibition, Yokohama, Japan, 1991. His sculptures are in the collections of the Art Council of Great Britain; the Tate Gallery, London; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Storm King Art Center, Mountainville, New York; and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.

Isaac Witkin died on April 23, 2006, at age 69.

