

# MIT List Center

## Louise Nevelson

Louise Nevelson's *Transparent Horizon* was made in 1975 for the Landau Building. It was the first Percent-for-Art commission at MIT, an initiative begun in 1968 that allocates a portion of the budget from each new building project or major innovation to the purchase or commission of art for public space.

It was I.M. Pei, architect of the Landau Building and MIT alumnus, who recommended Nevelson for the job. This sculpture incorporates many of Nevelson's varied interests, including primitive art, cubism, and surrealism.

MIT professor of art history, Carolyn Jones--

Nevelson didn't want to carve her sculptures, though. She was more drawn to the surrealist technique of assemblage, in which she would take various bits of found materials and put them together to make a surprising result.

In this work, she combines fabricated and found metal pieces in sculptures that evoke forms found in nature.

Nevelson was very interested in a particular kind of surrealist form making that we characterize as biomorphic. And what this means is that you won't have a single figure--the comprehensible head, arms, legs, and so on. So this is not a figurative entity that you're meant to see as having a central core mass. This is a gestural drawing that is unfolding in front of you in space as you move around.

The frond and petal shape projections of *Transparent Horizon* curve into a gate-like form. The artist herself said that, "It stands like this door. Straight and frontal, you don't see it standing isolated. You see it extending. The environment becomes its frame."