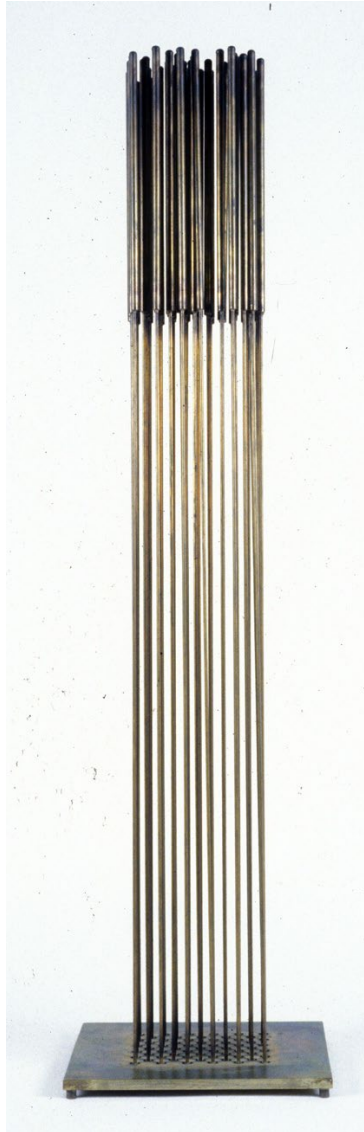


SPOTLIGHT: Harry Bertoia

Title of Piece: Sound Sculpture, Specifically the Diamond Chair



El Presenter: Jennifer Lowery

Date: June 3, 2008

Title of Piece: Sound Sculpture, Diamond Chair

Year created: Unknown

Artist: Harry Bertoia (1915 – 1978)

Five most essential aspects of this work of art:

1. About his chair, Harry Bertoia stated, "If you look at these chairs, they are mainly made of air, like sculpture. Space passes right through them. . .once you get down to it, the chairs are studies in space, form and metal too."

2. Commercial success of the diamond chair in 1952 allowed Bertioia to devote himself to sculpture. "Legend" has it that he was working in his studio and the clang of two metal rods inspired his sound sculpture.
3. Bertioia made several hundred sounding sculptures called "Sonambients". He performed with them in concerts and produced a series of albums of the music made by his art. They have been called "metallic harps". They were made from many metals, but most commonly of beryllium copper.
4. He did not sign or title his artworks because they were part of a universal design and he did not want to influence another person's imagination.
5. Nature was inspiration. He would magnify in metals for the observer to be surprised with beauty that may have been overlooked in (nature's) small scale.

Possible questions to use when discussing this piece with museum visitors:

1. Why would a museum display a chair as art? What makes it art? Would you want to have this chair in your room to sit on?
2. What do these two pieces have in common?
3. If the sound sculpture didn't make noise, would it be as interesting? If it were a silent structure, do you think it would be in a museum?
4. What, in nature, does the sculpture remind you of?
5. Can you think of any other art medium that you could use to make an interesting sound sculpture.

Tour Type: Learning to Look, All tours

JSMA Collection:

<https://jsmacollection.uoregon.edu/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=493;type=101>