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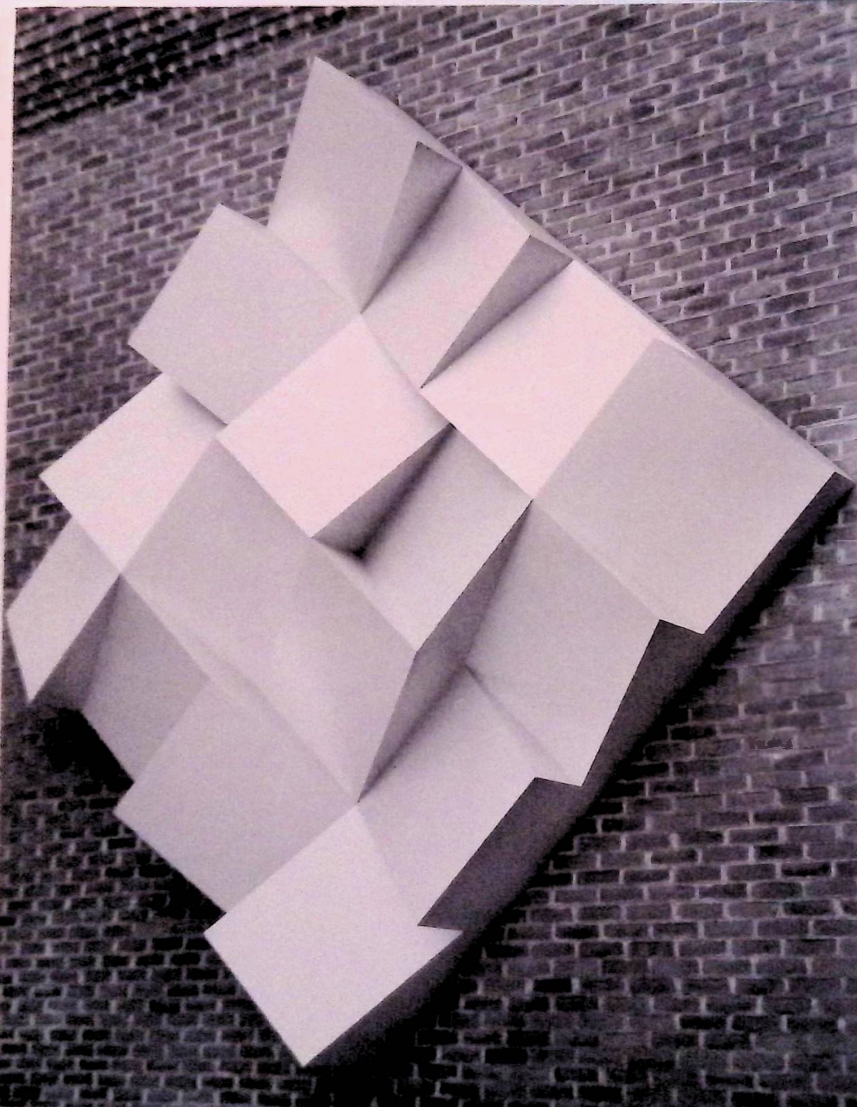
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WILKES-BARRE, PA

**HERBERT
SIMON**



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(fig. 1)

FACETS, 1977

Aluminum

Schaeffer Lecture Hall

Wilkes College

H E R B E

M E T A L S C

1

THE SCULPTURE OF HERBERT SIMON

Any artist's work should be seen in its collective variety, but it is especially edifying to see Herbert Simon's work in this way. Having worked geometrically in metal for the past ten years, his course has been consistent and evolutionary, a chain of variations upon an initial idea leading ultimately to another idea and another set of variations.

His primary starting points in the history of modern sculpture have been Constructivism, particularly David Smith's American version, and the more recent Minimalism, both of which have based themselves upon geometric forms and assemblage techniques. Simon has been exploring an area generally lying somewhere between the more complex, sometimes expressionistic style of the Constructivists and the spare, often inert manner of the Minimalists. Although his works are highly reductivist in character, their simplicity does not obscure their complexity.

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HERBERT SIMON

METAL SCULPTURE

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Simon creates visual fugues; in this day and age, we might call them "cybernetic" variations. They result from the method of playing and replaying upon a basic module, in a kind of rationalist improvisation. This technique may apply to a single piece; simply, as in *Rorient II*, where the two modules are placed on different axes; or more complexly, as in *Facets* (see fig. 1), where sixteen modules are grouped in different planar relationships to create a hidden symmetry. The method may also apply serially, where the module is carried through a set of individual sculptures, so that comparison of two or more pieces within the set provides another level of interrelational interest.

The present exhibition is made up mostly of two such series, the *Mazes* and the *Thrus*, plus a number of pieces from earlier series. In the *Mazes*, executed in 1978, Simon recalls the words of Paul Klee by "taking a line for a walk."

(fig. 1)

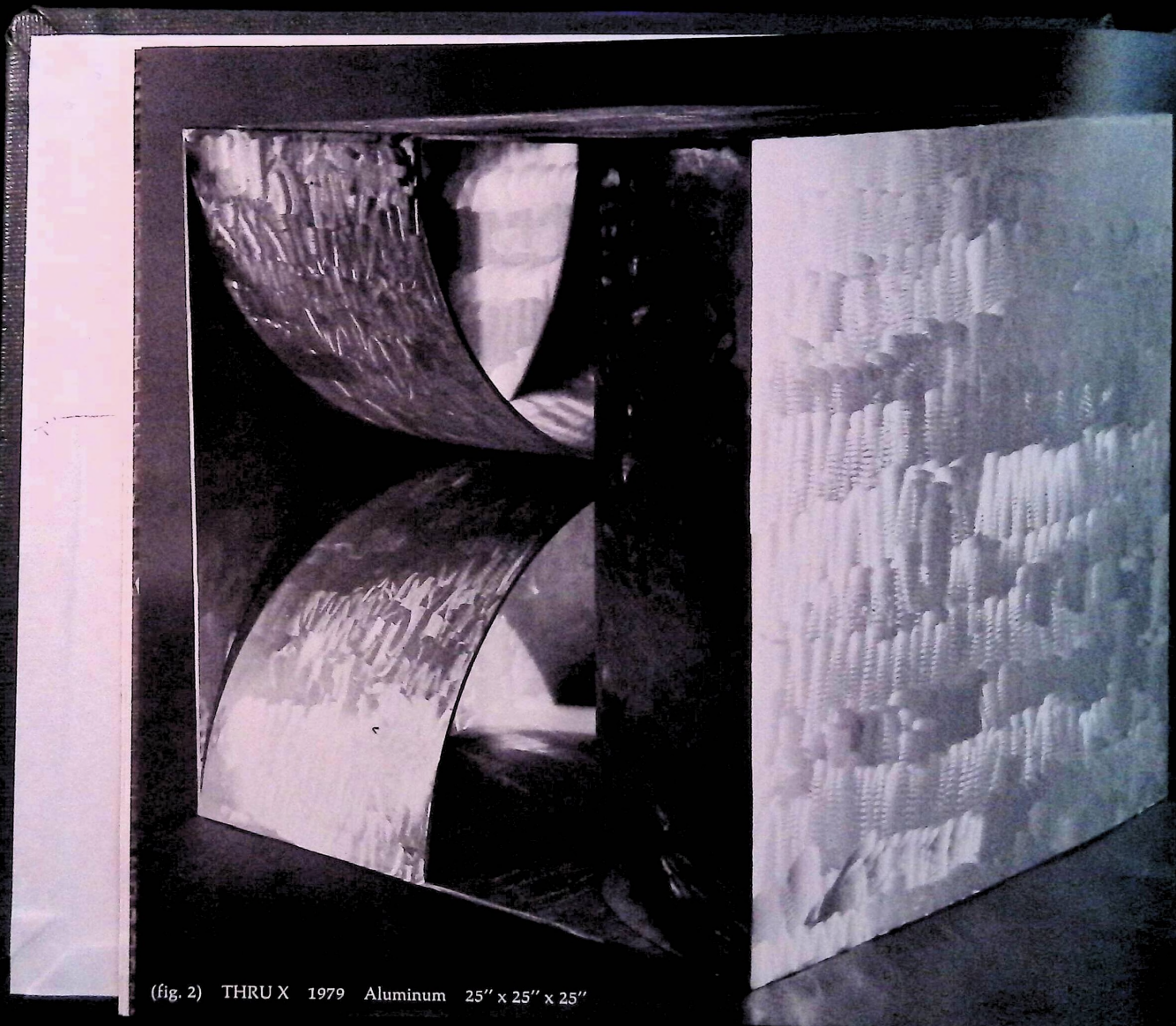
FACETS, 1977

Aluminum

Schaeffer Lecture Hall

Wilkes College

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(fig. 2) THRU X 1979 Aluminum 25" x 25" x 25"

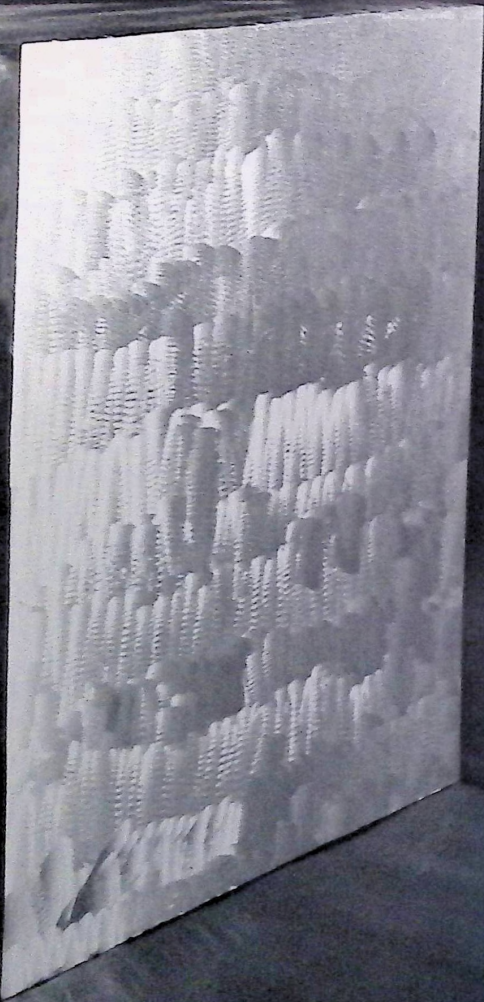
An aluminum line travels the plane to a vertical one, from vice versa. By working with system, the artist is able to a number of possible variables the system result in subtle b in psychological effect.

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It is possible to think about aesthetic events in individual collectivity. Points of convergence, interplays of void and shadow — all these become which is geometrically uncomplexity.

As the *Maze* series explores and is essentially open in character into a realm of cubical spaces



An aluminum line travels through space, from a horizontal plane to a vertical one, from inside to outside and back, or vice versa. By working within a strictly limited modular system, the artist is able to explore and analyze a greater number of possible variables. Minor physical shifts within the system result in subtle but often significant differences in psychological effect.

Nexus, for example, seems to rise from the floor while it links the plane of the floor to that of the wall; but it also appears to hold those planes apart, like some fragile but perfectly positioned buttress. The *Wall Fall* pieces seem to drop from the wall to the floor, suggesting two delicate cataracts just beginning their journey across the horizontal plane which extends before them. *Juncture II* has a classically uniform perpendicularity, but *Reorient II* uses the same module to suggest something playfully dynamic and "baroque."

In another sense, all of the *Mazes* are dynamic. They are not closed systems, but could easily continue on indefinitely. The spiralling movement is open-ended. Even when it reaches the point of internal constriction, as in *Ravel Up*, the metal line suddenly breaks into a vertical direction and begins a soaring ascent. Perhaps it could become another *Nexus*, or perhaps something altogether different. *Ravel Up* alludes to potentiality, while *Nexus* takes us to a further level of resolution (but not finality; the ends are still open).

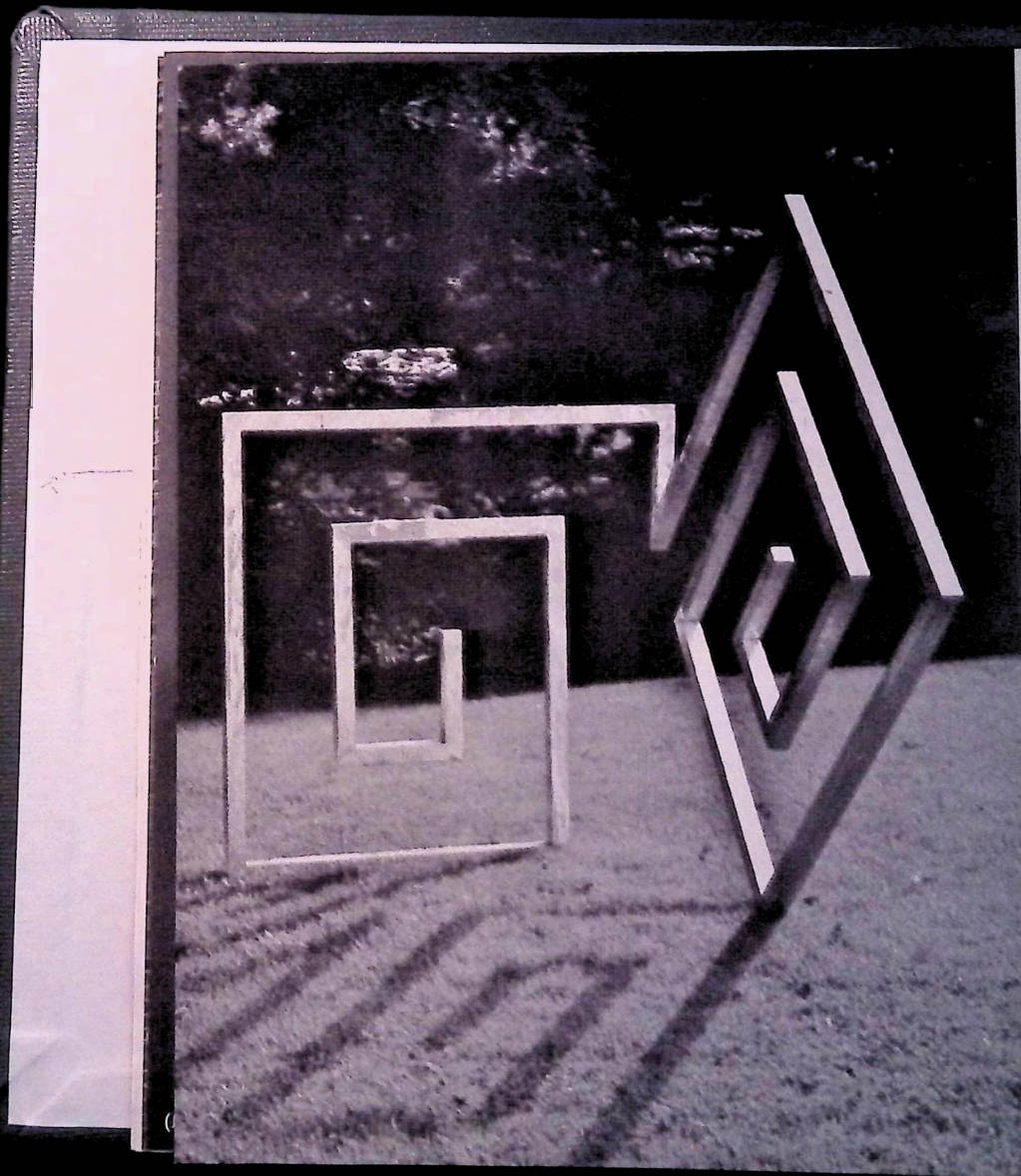
It is possible to think about and react to many separate aesthetic events in individual works as well as in their collectivity. Points of convergence or tangency, shifts of direction, interplays of void and mass, patterns of light and shadow — all these become more conspicuous in sculpture which is geometrically uncomplicated. Therein lies its complexity.

As the *Maze* series explores linear movements in space and is essentially open in character, the *Thru* series takes us into a realm of cubical spaces enclosed by flat planes.

Suggesting architecture or even stage sets, these structures invite us to enter vicariously. Here our eyes are not following the route of a linear form through space. Rather, we imagine ourselves passing through the shaped spaces of the boxes. Sometimes the passage is open, but sometimes it is unclear where we will end up, or whether we will be able to pass through at all. An element of mystery or of potential frustration ensues. This effect is only heightened by the play of shadows within the box, sometimes suggesting ominous cul-de-sacs, but at other times giving way to a "light at the end of the tunnel."

To some extent, the variables in the *Thrus* are more intriguing than those of the *Mazes*. The constant of the outer cube establishes strict boundaries which are absent with open space, and which force the sculptor to work within the given configuration. Still, the possibilities are virtually limitless. The interior partitions may be straight, bent, or curved, slanted or erect, contiguous or separated, so that each sculpture ends up with a distinct character. Never do these interiors become fussily complex, however. The planes remain large and limited in number. The essential aspect of each work is easily comprehended, even when the eye is prohibited total entry.

The brushed aluminum surfaces of most of Simon's pieces create another kind of variation, by compounding the dynamics of a "line" or a plane. The shimmer fluctuates from soft to sharp, often in optically teasing ways, to quicken or retard the eye's movement along a surface. In some of the *Thrus*, it even creates momentary mirages by "floating" a plane in or out, depending upon the spectator's viewpoint. This kind of surface lighting also enhances the effect of lightness of weight by clothing every mass with diaphanous glitter, allowing it to merge with surrounding space. In *Wall Fall*, both plain and brushed surfaces are used, enabling us to consider directly their different impacts.



(fig. 3)

REORIENT II 1978

Aluminum 70" x 50" x 72"

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HERBERT S

Born in 1927, Na

EDUCATION:

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Vanderbilt U

Brooklyn Mu

Hans Hofma

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Like most sculpture which employs space as a positive element of form, Simon's work is invariably environmental. *Nexus*, for example, actively engages wall and floor, forcing them into complicity rather than allowing them to remain neutral. Even when the works are small, they are architectonically conceived — the *Mazes* like bridges, the *Thrus* like buildings. A *Thru* enlarged to the scale of Simon's Coal Street Park sculpture (see fig. 5) would provide us with another level of experience by allowing us to enter it, but even the small ones we see in the exhibition should be explored from all possible angles.

Although similar materials, surfaces, and geometric shapes prevail in both *Thrus* and *Mazes*, the two series lead to opposing responses. The closed *Thrus* are experienced as interiors in which space has definite, but not always immediately comprehensible, volume and shape. The open *Mazes* are experienced as totally visible exteriors inhabiting endless space. They appear extroverted but somewhat vulnerable, while the *Thrus* seem introverted but comparatively invulnerable. Both sets of works are about movement through space. In the *Mazes*, the tube itself is the moving element, linear and open-ended. But in the

Thrus, the sculptured form becomes a channel for movement; curved or glancing planes define *our* journey. The *Mazes* convey an order, clarity, and precision which verge upon the militaristic, while the *Thrus*, for all their cleanness of edge and surface, suggest the indefinite and the secretive. As the most recent of Simon's works, the *Thrus* seem to constitute a movement toward greater complexity and introspection, a kind of reductivist turning from the classical to the romantic.

The cool adjoins the playful. The clear confronts the enigmatic. Clean, precisionist forms become animated and dramatic. Rationalist restraints are surmounted by the idiosyncratic and unpredictable. Addressing the contemporary sculptural concerns of minimalist form, serial development, and environmentalism, Simon demonstrates again that one can work within the seemingly limited and rigid system of geometric abstraction, while retaining a distinctive and highly personal style.

WILLIAM STERLING
Director, Sordani Art Gallery

HERBERT SIMON

Born in 1927, Nashville, Tennessee

EDUCATION:

New York University (B.A., M.A.)
Colorado College
Vanderbilt University
Brooklyn Museum Art School
Hans Hofmann Art School
Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture

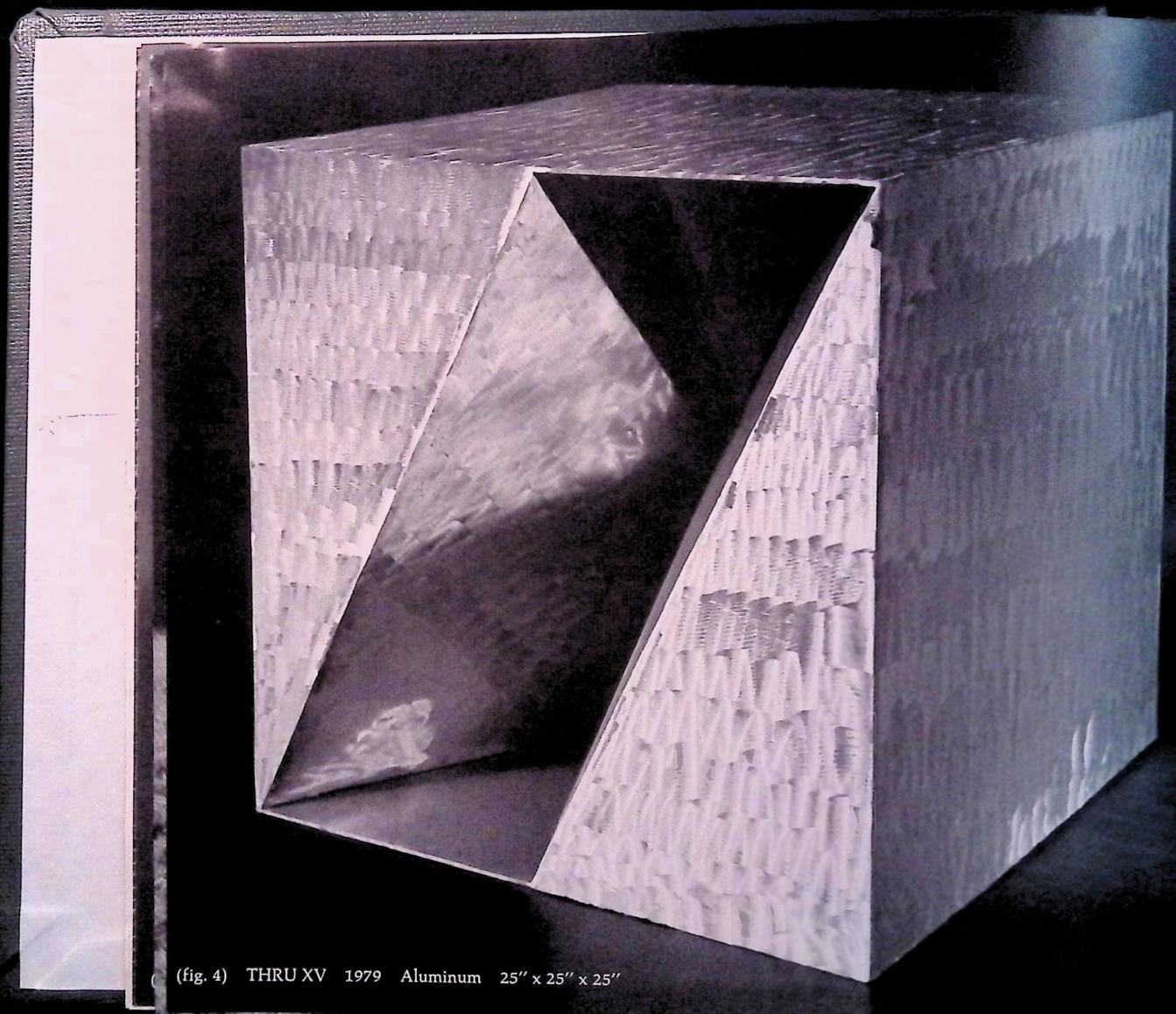
PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

1969 to present. Associate Professor of sculpture and three-dimensional design. Wilkes College
1960-1968 Art Instructor, various high schools in New York City; Art History Instructor, Fashion Institute of Technology
1956-1958 Instructor, School of Design, North Carolina State College, Raleigh, NC

(fig. 3)

REORIENT II 1978

Aluminum 70" x 50" x 72"



(fig. 4) THRU XV 1979 Aluminum 25" x 25" x 25"

EXHIBITIONS:

- 1979 One-Person Show — Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA
- 1978 One-Person Show — State University of New York, Binghamton, NY
- 1974 One-Person Show — Sordani Art Center, Wilkes College, Wilkes-Barre, PA
- 1970 One-Person Show — Hazleton Art Center, Hazleton, PA
- 1966 One-Person Show — Phoenix Gallery, New York, NY
- 1964 One-Person Show — Phoenix Gallery, New York, NY
- 1978 Arts-On-The-Go — Northeastern Arts Alliance Invitational
- 1977 Drawing and Sculpture Show — Kutztown College, Kutztown, PA
- 1976 13th Annual Exhibition — Allentown, Allentown, PA
- Regional Art Exhibition — Everhart Museum, Scranton, PA
- Regional Art Exhibition — William Penn Museum, Harrisburg, PA
- 1972 Regional Exhibition — William Penn Museum, Harrisburg, PA
- 1971 Susquehanna Regional — Robert Rauschenberg, Binghamton, NY
- 1970 Regional Art Exhibition — Everhart Museum, Scranton, PA

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- 1979 One-Person Show — Lehigh University,
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- 1978 One-Person Show — State University of
New York, Binghamton, NY
- 1974 One-Person Show — Sordoni Art Gallery,
Wilkes College, Wilkes-Barre, PA
- 1970 One-Person Show — Hazleton Art League,
Hazleton, PA
- 1966 One-Person Show — Phoenix Gallery,
New York, NY
- 1964 One-Person Show — Phoenix Gallery,
New York, NY
- 1978 Arts-On-The-Go — Northeastern Pennsylvania
Arts Alliance Invitational
- 1977 Drawing and Sculpture Show — Kutztown State
College, Kutztown, PA
- 1976 13th Annual Exhibition — Allentown Museum,
Allentown, PA
Regional Art Exhibition — Everhart Museum,
Scranton, PA
Regional Art Exhibition — William Penn
Museum, Harrisburg, PA
- 1972 Regional Exhibition — William Penn Museum,
Harrisburg, PA
- 1971 Susquehanna Regional — Roberson Art Center,
Binghamton, NY
- 1970 Regional Art Exhibition — Everhart Museum,
Scranton, PA

- 1967 Six Artists — Loeb Student Center, New York
University, New York, NY
- 1966 Hartford Arts Foundation — Hartford, CT
- 1964 The American Family in Art — Farleigh
Dickinson University, Madison, NJ
- 1955 Provincetown Art Association —
Provincetown, MA
Drawings USA — Museum of Modern Art,
New York, NY

COMMISSIONS:

- Two Modules* — steel sculpture, Coal Street Park,
Wilkes-Barre, PA 1977
- Facets* — aluminum relief, Wilkes College,
Wilkes-Barre, PA 1977
- Aluminum Relief* — Schaeffer Residence,
Mountaintop, PA 1978

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS:

- 1976 Purchase Prize Regional Art Exhibition,
Everhart Museum, Scranton, PA
- 1971 Award, William Penn Museum, Harrisburg, PA
- 1970 Honorable Mention, Regional Arts Exhibition,
Everhart Museum, Scranton, PA
- 1963 Fellowship MacDonwell Colony,
Peterborough, NH
-

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

THRU Series

1. THRU II	—	11" x 11" x 11"	—	Aluminum	1979
2. THRU VI	—	14" x 14" x 14"	—	Aluminum	1979
3. THRU VIII	—	21" x 21" x 21"	—	Aluminum	1979
4. THRU X	—	25" x 25" x 25"	—	Aluminum	1979
5. THRU XI	—	20" x 20" x 20"	—	Aluminum	1979
6. THRU XII	—	11" x 11" x 11"	—	Aluminum	1979
7. THRU XIII	—	10" x 10" x 10"	—	Aluminum	1979
8. THRU XV	—	25" x 25" x 25"	—	Aluminum	1979
9. THRU XVII	—	25" x 25" x 25"	—	Aluminum	1980
10. THRU XVIII	—	25" x 25" x 25"	—	Aluminum	1980

MAZE Series

11. REORIENT I	—	18 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 13"	—	Aluminum	1978
12. REORIENT II	—	70" x 50" x 72"	—	Aluminum	1978
13. JUNCTURE I	—	50" x 50" x 98"	—	Aluminum	1978
14. JUNCTURE II	—	13" x 13" x 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	—	Aluminum	1978
15. NEXUS	—	67" x 20" x 45"	—	Aluminum	1978
16. WALL FALL	—	93" x 18" x 21"	—	Aluminum	1978
17. RAVEL UP I	—	41" x 46" x 47"	—	Aluminum	1978
18. RAVEL UP II	—	16 $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 12" x 12"	—	Aluminum	1978
19. INNER	—	12 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	—	Aluminum	1978

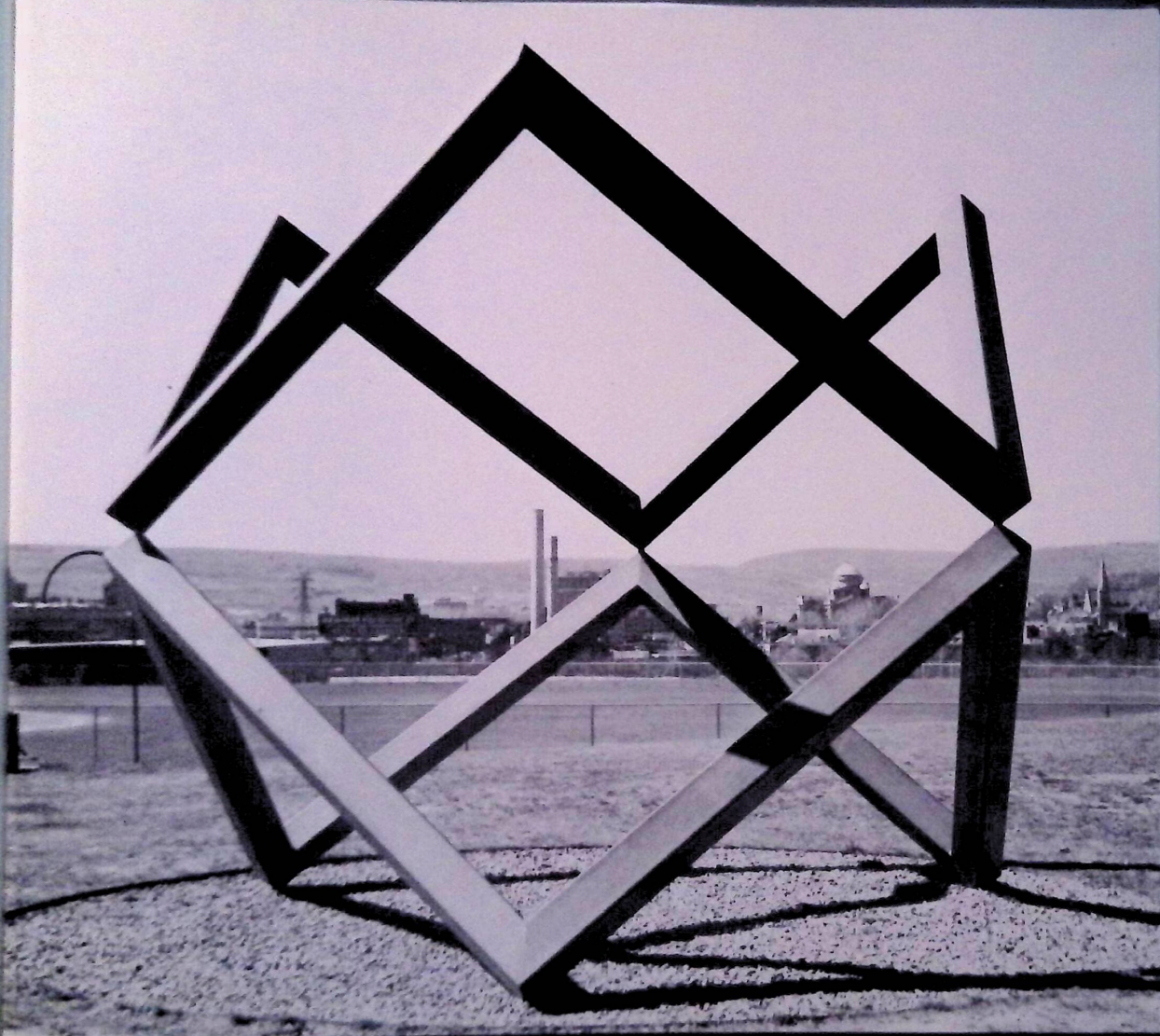
SMALL MODULAR SCULPTURES

20. ZIG ZAG	—	32" x 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	—	Aluminum	1976
21. ZIG ZAG	—	12 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	—	Aluminum	1979
22. ZIG ZAG	—	23 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	—	Steel	1977
23. MODULE	—	12 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 32" x 32"	—	Steel	1976
24. CRAB	—	8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 10"	—	Steel	1977
25. JAWS	—	9" x 9" x 14"	—	Steel	1977

(fig. 5)
TWO MODULES
1977 Steel
Coal Street Park
Wilkes-Barre



(fig. 5)
TWO MODULES
1977 Steel
Coal Street Park,
Wilkes-Barre



May 3-28, 1980

SORDONI ART GALLERY
WILKES COLLEGE
Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania



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