



Selections from the Kresge Art Museum Collection VIII:

Art in Motion

COLLEGE OF ARTS & LETTERS
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Selections brochures such as this are publications on the collection featuring new acquisitions, and new research on former acquisitions, published in conjunction with an exhibition. The recent acquisition of a major piece of kinetic sculpture by John Scott, *Doorway for the Blues*, 1996, sparked this exhibition of 25 works of art from the collection focused on movement. Whether implied or actual, movement is celebrated in this group in a variety of mediums, from the late 19th and 20th centuries. The approach is different for each artist. Harry Bertoia's *Sound Piece*, 1978, is moved manually to function acoustically as well as visually. Julio Le Parc's *Continual Mobile Lumiere*, 1968, is electrified. Three artists use the natural motion of air currents: Alexander Calder, George Rickey, and John Scott. Calder's elements swivel; Rickey's rotate on the swing of a pendulum; and Scott's use the wave energy created when two taut lines cross. Others depict movement and Op artists make it happen in the viewer's eye.

Before the 20th century, movement in art was not real only depicted, as it is in Rodin. It could be said that around 1910 Cubism drew the blueprint for movement to occur by separating the things of the world into their constituent parts and diagramming their possible alternate positions. The art movements that followed, Dada (primarily in the person of Marcel Duchamp), and Constructivism (as practiced by Naum Gabo), set those Cubist planes in motion in the 1910s and 1920s. Then a tinkering artist with an engineering degree from America, Alexander Calder, became the talk of Paris with his mini-mechanical circus performances and, in the 1930s, his moving sculptures dubbed "mobiles" by Duchamp. They influenced all subsequent kinetic sculptors.

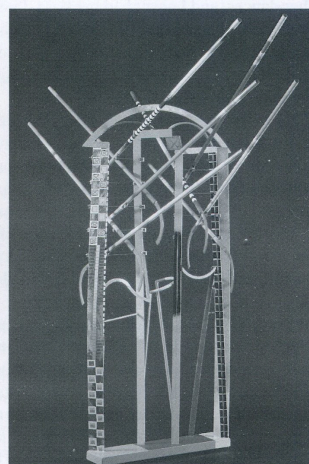
Calder's *Sunrise Over the Pyramid*, 1965, is both a mobile and a stabile, the pyramidal form making a base for the planets floating in space above as they swivel around its tip. George Rickey, whose early sculptures were very Calder-like, developed his own movement system, based on controlling the swing of a pendulum. The four outer units in *Four Rectangles - One Square, Variation III*, 1972 rock up and down, creating, with the flickering light picked up on their surfaces, a sense of sunlit waves. John Scott had long wanted to make his sculptures move, but had to find a way to do so that didn't imitate either Calder or Rickey. While studying African musical instruments in the early 1980s, Scott discovered wave physics, the idea that any two crossed wires will generate wave energy, be it sound or motion. In *Doorway for the Blues* the hollow rods strung on taut wires move gently, rhythmically, amid a joyful plethora of colors.

The movement in other sculptor's works is not left to chance.

In Bertoia's *Sound Piece*, the tones vary according to the metals and the thickness of the rods once they are set in pendulum motion by hands, and they sound like a carillon. Constant movement, vibrating light, mirroring, and tinkling sound, characterize Julio Le Parc's *Continual Mobile Lumiere*, 1968 and most of his other work. Among the stationary pieces that depict movement are Auguste Rodin's *Figure Volante*, 1890-91, Gaston Lachaise's *Floating Nude Acrobat*, 1922, a drawing of dancer Isadora Duncan by Abraham Walkowitz, Alberto Giacometti's *Walking Man*, 1957, and Emilio Greco's *Dancer No. 29*, c. 1958.

The 1960s and 1970s were a hotbed of worldwide activity in kinetic sculpture, and in Op Art, its two dimensional sister. The optically activated pieces included here by Israeli Yaacov Agam, Michael Challenger and Bridget Riley of Britain, American Babe Schapiro, Yugoslavian Ivan Picelji, and Victor Vasarely from France attest to Op's internationalism. More recent pieces by Americans Judy Pfaff, Ann Hamilton, Fred Wilson, Andres Serrano, Janet Sullivan Turner and Bruce Thayer, and Krzysztof Wodiczko from Poland, though neither Op nor kinetic, reflect a continued cross-cultural involvement with motion in art.

April Kingsley
Curator



John Scott
(American,
born 1940)
**Doorway for the
Blues, 1996**
Polychrome steel
and aluminum,
92 x 112 x 44 inches
MSU Purchase
funded by Selma and
Stanley Hollander,
2001.11