

made up of an imagery that sprang from his own imagination and aesthetic sense. In the 1930's he introduced new techniques and a new method of creative expression that others could employ in ways that best suited themselves. He did much to carry abstract art in America to a mature state, and he invented a style that was compatible with the 20th century, without making a fetish of steel and other metallic substances of our time. David Smith died on May 23, 1965, when the big yellow truck in which he hauled his supplies and works hit a utility pole. He was then fifty-nine, and to the very last excited about the things he wanted to do next.

Theodore Roszak crystallized the principles of the Abstract Expressionist movement into the leading and most dynamic sculptural style in America in the twenty-five years following World War II. Roszak (1907- ) was born in Poznan, Poland, and brought to the United States at the age of two. The family settled in Chicago, where in time the boy was to receive his first lessons in art. While still in high school, he began attending classes at the Art Institute Professional School and eventually entered the regular curriculum as a full-time student specializing in painting. In 1926 he went to New York City, where for about a year he studied at the National Academy and on his own with George Luks. Of special significance at this point were the courses he took in philosophy at Columbia University, revealing an interest in the intangible forces that control men's lives. He was not especially impressed by the training he received in New York, and when he returned to Chicago in 1927, he was still largely unaware of the modern movement—by then more than two decades old. He resumed his studies at the Art Institute and during the summers maintained a studio in a corner of one of the old Columbian Exposition buildings. He was then occupied with lithography, and an exhibition of his prints was held at the Allerton Gallery in 1928. For a while he taught at the Art Institute.

The next phase of Roszak's career began in 1929 when he won the Anna Louise Raymond Fellowship for European study; it took him abroad for two years, and for the first time his eyes were opened to the glories of modern art. Still a painter, he found Cubist and Fauvist Paris interesting for six months, but Germany and Prague were more stimulating by far because of the Bauhaus experiments then being conducted there. The Expressionism of Kirchner or Kokoschka had little impact, but the potential of the new art of Klee and Kandinsky showed Roszak the way out of academic art. When he returned to the United States, his long student years were behind him; he had discovered the new aesthetics of the 20th century, and he was on the verge of beginning to work in sculpture. Roszak made a little sculptured "gimmick," which to his surprise won the Louis Comfort Tiffany award in 1931. With the money he won, he got married and settled in Staten Island.

In 1932 Theodore Roszak was invited to submit a piece to the first Biennial held by the new Whitney Museum of American Art, and has ever since been a regular

contributor to the Whitney's exhibitions of modern art. An example of his stylized abstract painting of these years is owned by the Whitney Museum—"Fisherman's Bride" (1934). The first period of his sculpture dates from about 1937 to 1945, during which time he clearly belonged to the Constructivist camp. In 1938 he joined Moholy-Nagy's Design Laboratory in New York City as an instructor in two- and three-dimensional design, becoming fascinated with the problems of good design for the objects necessary to a 20th-century urban technological society. He became so steeped in the transplanted Bauhaus principles that his own art—his constructions—became experiments in streamlined forms and new materials, as in the "Bi-Polar Form" of 1940 or the "Vertical Construction" of 1943. But by the latter date he had become aware of the coolness of Bauhaus art, of its detachment from the emotional side of contemporary life and its complete exclusion of any Romantic element in art and design. All this in time left Roszak—by nature an arch-Romantic in his art—with a great feeling of vacuum in his constructions. They looked as cold to him, as devoid of man's spirit, as the machines of the new technological age that surrounded them. The search began to find a spirit and warmth for his art. These years had taught him one thing, however: it was sculpture rather than painting that he wished to pursue.

During World War II, Roszak worked on the assembly line of the Brewster Aircraft Corporation. He had learned to use the tools of the 20th century during the time he was devoted to the Bauhaus concepts and principles, and in the airplane factory he put this knowledge to practical use for a number of years. Therefore, when the time came for his important search for the spirit that was to give his art its greatness, the materials and instruments of the machine shop were far more natural and familiar to him than were clay or marble, mallet, and chisel. Moreover, he had the precedent of David Smith and a good many Europeans to encourage him.

With the end of the war, Roszak could once more devote his energies to his art. He was teaching at Sarah Lawrence College to support himself and his wife, and soon a daughter, but there was nevertheless time to work at his own sculpture. He began experimenting with the welding torch and various materials, and discovered the enormous potential of the technique. His forms increased in size over the earlier constructions, and he liked the effects of the fretted surface, the coloration, and all the special qualities that little by little began to build into a rich vocabulary of forms and textures. Unlike David Smith, Roszak worked very slowly, with many carefully detailed drawings preceding each piece of sculpture. But in spite of this it took only a few years for the artist to evolve one of the most original and dynamic styles of the present century. That he soon approached a mature plateau in his search for his new means of expression is readily seen in "Spectre of Kitty Hawk" (1946-1947) at the Museum of Modern Art (Fig. 16.7). No airplane or airplane part is recognizable in the piece, yet there is a soaring quality, a surging astronomic form that sweeps heavenward in a crescent from earth below; it suggests the realization of man's long urge to fly like a bird. Yet

the spiky, jagged, tormented explosion of agonized form at its center reveals the corruption of Icarus' ancient dream and the Wright brothers' proud invention, for in two horrible World Wars the airplane had become an instrument of mass destruction. Thus are the name and the form self-explanatory, and anyone beholding the sculpture senses immediately the horror the sculptor sought to express. Roszak created a biting attack on a social order that among the many things it brought to the masses included mass destruction from the skies. The age of Abstract Expressionism had arrived in American sculpture.

Rozzak continued to pursue his new-found form the next year with "Thorn Blossom" (1948; Whitney Museum of American Art), begun shortly before the birth of his daughter, Sara-Jane. It represents a lovely flower form in the center—his symbol of the joy and innocence of childhood—which can survive only if protected by the enormous, powerful thorn that rises over it. In much of his work, nature is the point of departure for the sculptor, but he soon frees himself from any specific representational form. There may be an organic quality, or a very real sense of animation, or both, but all objective details are eliminated, the form abstracted, and the expression of a universal truth or concept looms as the primary feature of the work. In a piece such as "Anguish," forms clash and react violently to one another. The surfaces are agitated and the entire work pulsates with a nervous centrifugal energy that disturbs whatever complacency the spectator may have enjoyed before confronting Roszak's image. In "Anguish," the artist does not represent one specific example of criminal violence or social injustice (although a particular event may have been the primary stimulus), but rather pricks the human conscience, and the thoughts of the serious observer turn to whatever injustice or violence may exist in his own experience. Expressionism was thus converted from the representation of material form (as in German Expressionism) to the representation of intangible ideas. As each piece slowly evolved, the sculptor's power to express his observations and judgments on contemporary life became keener, and his abstract vocabulary gained greater precision. His welded, burnished, acid-burned, filed surfaces continually gained effectiveness.

In the 1950's Roszak attained recognition as the leading Abstract Expressionist sculptor in America. The Pierre Matisse Gallery represented him, but one-man shows were rare because of the comparatively few pieces he produced. He was chosen to create the sculptural tiara to crown Saarinen's chapel at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The three spires rise 45 feet into the heavens above the nondenominational chapel, like a soul striving to gain reunification with the divine being whence it came. In reference to the Gothic tradition of religious architecture, Roszak visualized his spire as a great gargoyle pointed toward the sky, since in modern times that is where danger comes from. At the base are expressionistic reliefs cast in aluminum, which—the sculptor explained—although not visible from the campus, may be seen by God from his heavenly abode.

Rozzak and his family spend the summers near Cape Ann, Massachusetts, where

the sculptor reads and makes drawings, many of which eventually take form as sculpture. He is drawn to the area itself by a fascination with the sea—the life that inhabits it and the people that take their living from it. Old sea tales and such novels as *Moby Dick* or the ballad of “The Wreck of the Hesperus” also inspire the sculptor and fuse with the forms of seashore life into a nonnaturalistic, non-literary art. The “Nantucket Whaler,” (Fig. 16.8) for example, suggests the foreboding, skeletal form of *Moby Dick*, the great white whale, which did in fact inspire the piece. Melville’s stories had a profound impact on Roszak, and the drama woven around Captain Ahab and the phantom that ultimately destroyed him offered just the sort of psychological and physical violence that the sculptor in his abstract forms felt compelled to depict. The bold horizontal thrust, impellent and irresistible, is balanced by the frothy wave of a heavy sea. The sightless eye and the partly opened jaw make the monstrous mammal a menacing foe to any man who pits himself against such enormous natural strength. Yet nowhere does the sculptor actually give the literal details of either mammal or novel; instead he transformed all specifics into a broad universal statement that is so articulate in its form that its message is immediately clear to the spectator.

There was other sculpture inspired by the sea, such as the “Sea Quarry” or the “Sea Sentinel,” the former from a passage in Melville’s “The Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles.” But the spiny, thorny plants of land continued to serve as points of departure for Roszak, as in the “Thistle in a Dream” (1955–1956). Like some great metal Rorschach blot, these sculptures are invested by the observer with his own interpretation; violence, anguish, pain, brute force, are frequently sensed, and sometimes there is in the midst of all the violence a gentle, poetic note, as in the “Thorn Blossom.” Roszak’s meaning is usually quite clear, and this has made his work a great favorite at the annual exhibitions; it is a kind of modern, abstract art to which people can relate emotionally. The show that brought Roszak to the attention of America in general was held in 1956, traveling from the Whitney Museum in New York, to Minneapolis, on to San Francisco, and finally to Seattle. It was a large retrospective exhibition with many of his earlier paintings and constructions, but the most fascinating and significant works were those done from 1945 on.

Another who belongs to the Abstract Expressionist group is Herbert Ferber (1906– ). Born in New York City, he got his B.S. from Columbia in 1927 and his D.D.S. in 1930. His desire to become an artist crystallized as he began studying at the Beaux Arts Institute of Design. He picked up the new method of direct carving in wood and stone, and his favorite subject became the nude female figure. A trip to Europe in 1928 opened his eyes to the expressionism of Ernst Barlach, to Negro art in the ethnological museums, and to the contorted figures of Romanesque sculpture. All these elements were blended with his earlier training to form a continually evolving style in the 1930’s. He carved compact, frontal figures and groups in awkward, straining positions, in a kind of figurative expres-