

Norbert Kricke

Author

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NORBERT KRICKE

the museum of modern art, new york

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NORBERT KRICKE

The Museum of Modern Art is happy to present a selection of sculpture and drawings by Norbert Kricke to the Museum's members and the New York public. Kricke is already well established in Europe but has thus far not received the recognition he deserves in New York.

Kricke was born in 1922 in Düsseldorf which has been his permanent residence since 1947. He began working as a sculptor in the constructivist tradition soon after the war and has been exhibited widely in one-man and group shows since 1952. In 1955 he traveled in England and Scotland as guest of the British Arts Council and in 1958 he received a Graham Foundation Grant to visit the United States. By that time he had already begun his collaboration with architects on the use of water and light as architectural elements. He has carried out important architectural commissions in Stuttgart and Düsseldorf, and has made reliefs and water sculpture for the new opera houses in Gelsenkirchen and Düsseldorf. At the present time he is collaborating with Walter Gropius on a water-sculpture for the University of Baghdad.

Among his important recent exhibitions, his participation in Documenta '59 in Kassel, his inclusion in "Fourteen European Sculptors" at

the Staempfli Gallery, New York in December 1959 as well as the "Kricke-Luginbuhl-Tinguely" exhibition at the Kunsthalle, Bern in the autumn of 1960 should be mentioned.

At the beginning of his career as a sculptor Kricke's work was characterized principally by his "writing into space" with vertical, horizontal, and diagonal wire and tubing, which was painted to articulate the vigorous movement.

This then led him to more complex "space structures" where linear movement is expressed through bundled and twisted coils or where welded rods soar into space in twisting and impinging planes. He has also been occupied with the "Flächenbahn" in which rods or tubes are placed irregularly in a parallel structure articulating the plane with new movement. During the last few years architectural and fountain projects have assumed major importance in his work.

The Museum wants to express its special thanks to Dr. Carola Giedion-Welcker for the appreciation of Kricke's work which she has contributed to this catalogue.

PETER SELZ, Curator, Department of
Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions

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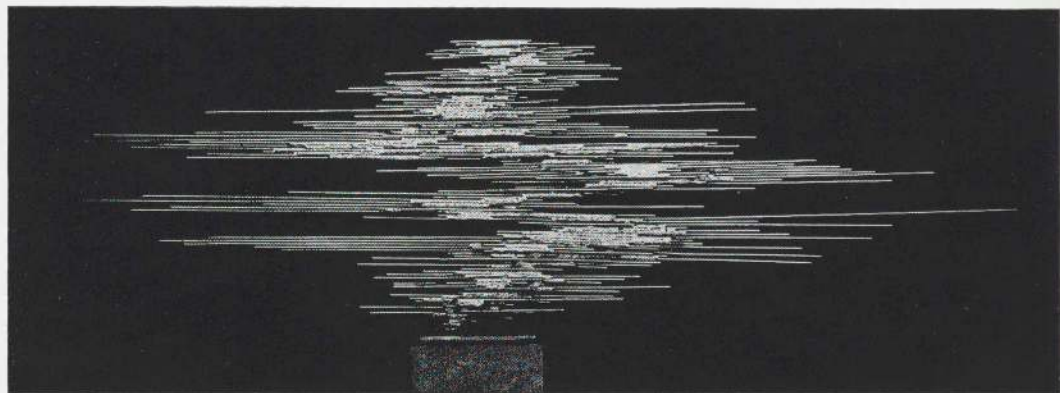
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8 Flächenbahn, 1960

The trend toward dematerialization, transparency and space-time dynamics with which our present-day world is preoccupied has also increasingly affected our art. It has stimulated particularly the attitudes and techniques of the younger and youngest generation of sculptors. Since Pevsner, Gabo and Gonzalez, there have been produced, in ever newer idioms, pierced and intricately-cut linear constructions which allow the air to flow through. This intensive dialogue with space has become of the essence and has drowned out all other voices.

Norbert Kricke is one of the most individual and most imaginative young sculptors, and has invested the linear dynamics of his constructions with the outspoken accentuation of the element of time. A tautly-spanned, softly-bent or angularly-broken linear form is given, in his work, through bunching, through curves and parallels, a suggested quickening of movement that not only attacks space with the speed of an arrow, but does so with the same understanding that a musician has for the instrument he plays. It is Kricke's "secret" that he never "designs" tasteful, abstract forms but charges his line-structures psychologically and knows how to infuse them with poetry.

Even in his early work we find outlines of figurative sketches which vibrate sensitively and which remind us of the artistic beginnings of the young Klee. For, although they still encompass a "subject," one senses that they tend automatically toward unhampered expression. Thus during his period at the Berlin Academy, the chief inspiration for the young sculptor was actually the internal structure of form. This feeling for structure guided him away from the solid mass toward free forms. The expressive linearity that shoots into space freely but in a strongly disciplined fashion was henceforth to become the artist's medium of expression. Two major impulses — the division and the enclosure of space — became emotionally significant. As an accelerating or a retarding influence, color often appeared, no longer as a factor determining mood, but as an element of temporal action. Everything is directed toward the exploration of space-time, toward a simplified speech full of sensitivity.

It is characteristic that Kricke, a former pilot, got his inspiration for his dynamic trajectories not from machines but from the flight of birds — from nature. The carrier-pigeons that he raises and sends out into space are, in their various

types of hoverings, the center of his impassioned observation. His birds are recognizable and familiar to him from afar, like human gestures. What is decisive in all this is that Kricke's linear forms derive, not from the esthetic refinements of a training in graphics — a disease of modern times — but from a genuine, original contact with the workings of nature: with living functions, with growth, with the flowing and streaming of water and air.

Thus he seeks, in his new type of water-sculpture, to let the element speak for itself and not to attach it as an accessory to a configuration or a construction. Vertical plexiglas columns, in which the flowing element rises and falls in vibrating, filmy structures, can be grouped to form whole "water-forests." In addition, he wants to expose the large planar masses and hollow forms by means of ever-changing water surfaces alternating like the tides.

In the building for the University of Bagdad which is being carried out by Walter Gropius, there will be a giant relief of this type, with the flowing element rising and sinking in permanent metamorphosis.

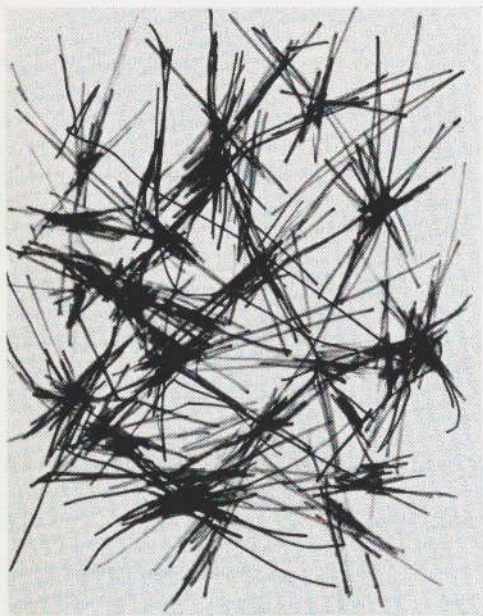
Kricke, who started with the dynamic move-

ment of a single line, has today already reached great orchestration. Parallel extending *Flächenbahnen* as well as bundled and swinging linear forms, have now developed in his compositions into polyphonic artistic statements. With his large mural relief for the Opera House at Gelsenkirchen, he has not only succeeded in giving rhythm to the wall, but at the same time, in creating a relationship to exterior space which is articulated by the vertical water-constructions. He is concerned with the intimate integration of architecture and sculpture, beyond the decorative. From this harmony of architecture and art there should emerge, by the unique contribution of the sculptor, a new third form, an inseparable fusion of the whole.

CAROLA GIEDION-WELCKER

*Translated from the German
by Rose Kolmetz*





above: 26 *Drawing*. 1958

back cover: 12 *Space Sculpture*. 1960

front cover: 5 *Space Sculpture*. 1958

SCULPTURE

- 1 *White Coil*. 1956. Painted steel, 28 $\frac{3}{8}$ " high. Leo Castelli Gallery, New York
- 2 *Flächenbahn*. 1957. Aluminum wire, 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ " high; 21" long. Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 3 *Flächenbahn*. 1958. Stainless steel, welded with silver, 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high, 6' 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ " long. Leo Castelli Gallery, New York
- 4 *Construction*. 1958. Aluminum wire, 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " high. Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 5 *Space Sculpture*. 1958. Wire, welded with silver and bronze, 12 $\frac{1}{8}$ " high. Collection Mr. and Mrs. Carlos van Bellinghen, New York
- 6 *Space Sculpture*. 1959. Stainless steel, welded with silver, 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ " high. Collection Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Cowan Merrill, New York
- 7 *Flächenbahn*. 1960. Stainless steel, welded with silver, 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ " high; 28 $\frac{1}{4}$ " long. Lefebvre Gallery, New York
- 8 *Flächenbahn*. 1960. Stainless steel, welded with silver, 22 $\frac{7}{8}$ " high; 6' 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " long. Lefebvre Gallery, New York

- 9 *Space Sculpture*. 1960. Stainless steel, welded with silver, 22 $\frac{3}{8}$ " high. Lefebvre Gallery, New York
- 10 *Space Sculpture*. 1960. Stainless steel, welded with silver, 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ " high. Lefebvre Gallery, New York
- 11 *Space Sculpture*. 1960. Stainless steel, welded with silver, 20" high. Lefebvre Gallery, New York
- 12 *Space Sculpture*. 1960. Stainless steel, welded with silver, 42 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high. Lefebvre Gallery, New York

DRAWINGS

- 14 *Drawing*. 1953. Crayon, 24 x 16 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 15 *Drawing*. 1953. Crayon, 16 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 24". Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 16 *Drawing*. 1954. Crayon, 16 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 24". Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 17 *Drawing*. 1954. Crayon, 24 x 16 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 18 *Drawing*. 1955. Crayon, 16 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 24". Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 19 *Drawing*. 1955. Crayon, 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 19 $\frac{5}{8}$ ". Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 20 *Drawing*. 1955. Crayon, 24 x 16 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 21 *Drawing*. 1955. Crayon, 24 x 16 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 22 *Drawing*. 1956. Crayon, 16 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 24". Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 23 *Drawing*. 1956. Crayon, 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 24 *Drawing*. 1956. Crayon, 24 x 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 25 *Drawing*. 1956. Crayon, 24 x 16 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Staempfli Gallery, New York
- 26 *Drawing*. 1958. Felt pen, 25 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Lefebvre Gallery, New York
- 27 *Drawing*. 1958. Felt pen, 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 25 $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Lefebvre Gallery, New York

