

## **“MAKING IT MODERN” EXHIBITION**

### **Docent Summary Notes on AGGREGATES**

**MELVIN SCHULER**- *Caged Form, 1968*. This sculpture is a great example of how “clusters” or aggregates, add to the visual/psychological experience for the viewer. Schuler has combined beautiful freeform abstract pieces of wood (walnut) with a top and bottom structured rectangular block of wood, and then further encased the wood in a metal cage. These parts play a role in the dynamic impact and stability of the piece.

**GUNTHER GERZSO**-Mexican painter and set designer best known for his abstract paintings based on architectural relationships and geometric structures. Gerzso built sets for a local theater in 1934. During his career designed for 250 films, including director John Ford. His aggregated layers of colored forms are suggestive of chambers in Mesoamerican temple ruins, which inspired him. Large, organic, and geometric forms appear to float in dark, mysterious and infinite space. Luminous color is achieved through layering thin, transparent colors and glazing typical of Renaissance painters.

**Russell Cowles** - landscape and figure painter, influenced by Gauguin and Cezanne. He believed that the artist’s work should be based on close observation of nature. Traveled widely around the world, experimented with semi-abstract compositions. *Enchanted world (1940)* is colorful, full of energy, and multi-layered.

**REG BUTLER**- *The Manipulator*, English sculptor, worked for Henry Moore for a short time, studied architecture and wrote essays about surrealism. Early sculptures were of highly distorted bodies, later work was more figurative, and his last sculptures are exclusively of women. *Manipulator* has an aura of science fiction. The figure is elevated into the air on an aggregated cluster of narrow rods, and also holds some mysterious objects in his hands. What are the rods and/or mysterious objects?

**LOUISE NEVELSON** enshrined the everyday object! Her sculptures combined the techniques of assemblage with abstract expressionism’s monumentality and dramatic use of color. She is considered to be the “Grande dame of contemporary sculpture”. She arranged found wooden objects for their evocative potential to call to mind forms of the city, nature, and the celestial bodies, etc. The pieces gain force once combined with others, and the voids between pieces animate the negative space which surrounds the work. Individual pieces become monumental when viewed holistically. She was a dramatic figure, and paved the way for the Feminist art movement of the 1970’s,

**RICHARD STANKIEWICZ**-pioneer of “junk” sculpture, used scrap metal and welded them into carefully ordered sculptural compositions. His sculpture was not junky, but included beautifully wrought forms which abound in vivid images. He was a figurative sculptor who brought a sense of humor, wit, and the absurd to the vocabulary of abstract form.

**PETER VOULKOS**-singlehandedly elevated the field of ceramics from arts and crafts to fine art. He was inspired by the scale and spontaneity of the Ab Ex artists in New York, and abandoned ceramic conventions such as utility. The parts of the pottery piece in MIM are chunky and unrelated, but Voulkos has combined them to take our eye up in exploration, and has glazed the areas to suggest rhythm and unity. The piece could easily be an abstract painting.