



## **GEORGE RICKEY (1907-2002)**

### **Three Lines Contrapuntal**

Signed on base, "Rickey 1967"

stainless steel

97 x 52 x 8 in.

246.38 x 132.08 x 20.32 cm

unique

1967

46218

#### **PROVENANCE:**

Sotheby's, October 8, 1988

Private Collection, acquired from the above

Private Collection

George Rickey's "Two Up One Down Staggered" exemplifies his ability to marry minimalist aesthetics with complex mechanical motion. Ninety-seven inches tall and meticulously crafted from stainless steel, the sculpture reflects this synthesis beautifully. It explores the intersection between the precise movements of machinery and the organic, unpredictable motions found in nature. It features two elongated stainless-steel arms (Rickey called 'blades') extending upwards, balanced by a single element pointing downwards; all arranged staggered. This staggered configuration creates a dynamic visual rhythm, emphasizing the interplay between balance and imbalance and enhancing the sculpture's kinetic properties. The title succinctly encapsulates the components' structural arrangement and dynamic interaction, providing insight into Rickey's thoughtful design and his exploration of geometric and kinetic relationships.

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Stainless steel gives the sculpture a sleek, modern appearance and ensures its durability, allowing it to withstand outdoor conditions. This material choice underscores Rickey's intention for his works to engage directly with natural forces like wind and gravity. The components move gently with the slightest breeze, transforming static metal into a fluid, ever-changing form. A close inspection of Rickey's solution for its fastening structure offers an appreciation for its precise engineering and a tribute to his attention to detail and craftsmanship. These fastening elements also show an artisanal touch, with visible welds, rivets, and sheet metal 'shaving' that emphasizes the handcrafted nature of the piece. These details reveal the manual labor and meticulous skill involved in the sculpture's creation while adding an element of authenticity and rawness to the artwork.

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The simplicity of the design belies the complexity of "Two Up One Down Staggered." Rickey's precision in engineering these delicate movements ensures that each component interacts seamlessly, inviting contemplation and highlighting the beauty of kinetic art. This interplay of balance and

motion captures the viewer's attention, transforming the act of observing into an engaging experience, and his work continues to inspire and challenge our perceptions of art, mechanics, and the natural world, making him a pivotal figure in the evolution of kinetic sculpture.</font></div>

Born in South Bend, Indiana, in 1907, Rickey was raised near Glasgow, Scotland. Rickey read modern history at Balliol College, Oxford, took classes in drawing at the Ruskin School, then studied painting in Paris at André Lhote's academy and at the Académie Moderne with Fernand Léger and Amédée Ozenfant.

During the 1930s he painted first in a Cézannesque style, later in a Depression-era, social realist mode. He supported himself by teaching at Groton and at a series of colleges and universities. In World War II Rickey served in the Army Air Corps, testing computing instruments used by bomber gunners. The work required both mechanical skill and understanding the effects of wind and gravity on ballistics, laying the foundation of his move from painting to kinetic sculpture.

Under the G.I. Bill, Rickey studied at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University and from 1948-1949 attended the Institute of Design in Chicago, an outpost of Bauhaus teaching. Intrigued by both the history of constructivist art and by the mobiles of Alexander Calder, he began creating kinetic sculptures. In the 1950s and early 1960s, Rickey developed systems of motion for his sculpture that responded to the slightest variation in air currents. Over the next three decades he developed sculpture with parts made of lines, planes, rotors, volumes, and churns, moving in paths that change from simple oscillation to conical gyrations, describing a variety of planes or volumes. Many works during this period have been large-scale public commissions for sites in the United States, Europe, and Japan. Rickey died at home in St. Paul, Minnesota, on 17 July 2002 at the age of 95.

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