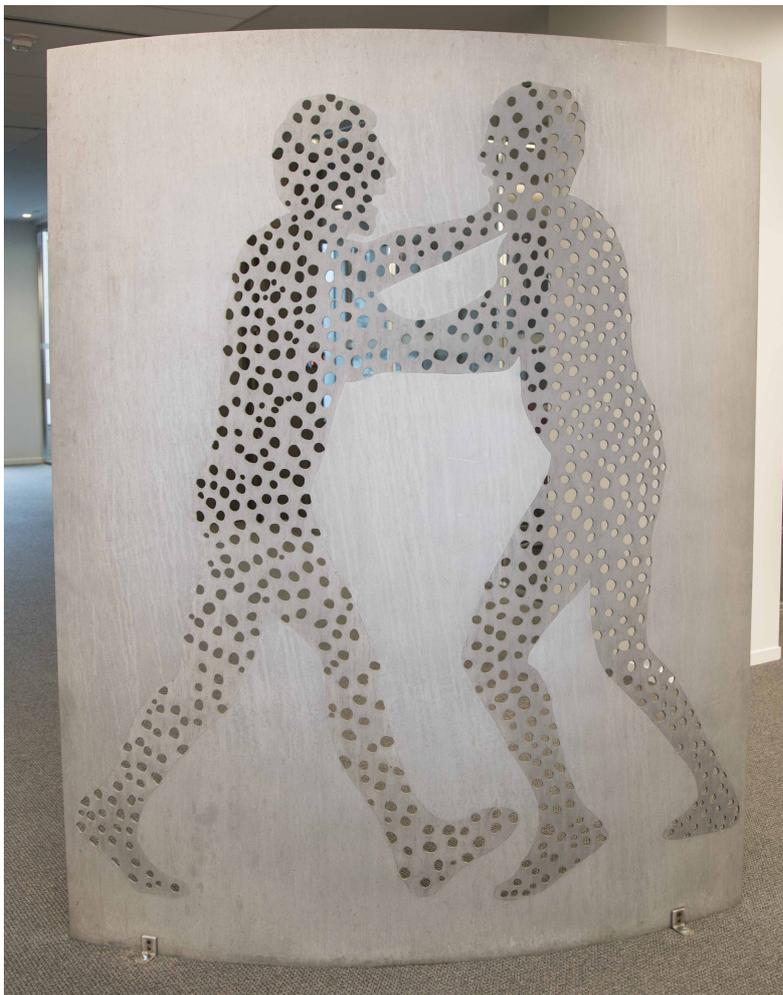


Steptoe

# Diversity & Art: A Virtual Tour

Jonathan Borofsky

United States (b. 1942)



**Molecule Man**

**Work**

Over the past 30 years, much of Jonathan Borofsky's public work involves gigantic sculptures that depict the human form. Most of these works, including the *Hammering Man* and the *Molecule Man* are not to be found in idyllic surroundings but in urban settings, in the midst of the hustle and bustle of human activity and life.

Borofsky himself has stated that his challenge and goal as an artist is to invent "innovative forms—new ways to express archetypal feelings and ideas that are inside each one us." While he is inspired by his own life experiences, dreams, thoughts, and observations, he still considers his work to be as much an expression of himself as of every man; and as personal as much as universal. For Borofsky, art is an expression of the human desire to strive forward into the future in a "collective search for wisdom and awakened consciousness." His work touches upon the interconnectivity and influence between billions of individuals, all of whom together make up the human race, which, as immense as it seems to us, is but a fleck in a greater infinite whole.

*Molecule Man*, a series of aluminum sculptures installed at various locations around the world, including Germany and the United States, is a metaphor for the similarities that make up the human race. The sculpture often depicts three, and at times, two connecting human forms fully engaged in a motion of leaning towards each other, with arms converging into one another, as if about to embrace. According to the artist, the sculpture was inspired by a photograph on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* in which two college basketball players are running to congratulate each other after a championship victory.

The figures are not solid, but dappled with hundreds of holes cut into them, perforated to represent a molecular structure, creating a patterned texture. The holes themselves are the molecules which all human beings are made of and share, coming together to create our universe, as denizens of one of a billion planets in a galaxy amidst billions of other galaxies in constant gyration.

Borofsky states that for him, the aluminum sculptures refer “not only to the lightness inside our own solid bodies, but also the figures joining the center, refer to the molecules of all human beings coming together to create our existence.” Touching upon themes of unity and connection, there is an airiness and transparency through and bouncing off the sculpture’s reflective surfaces reminding us that while the human body appears solid, it is frail and made mostly of water. Furthermore, while each one of us appears different or unique, we are ultimately the same regardless of race or culture, sharing the same chemistry.

## **About the Artist**

Jonathan Borofsky is an inventive and multifaceted Jewish American artist who has worked in a variety of media, including painting, prints, video, light, complex installations, and gigantic site-specific sculptures. Borofsky, who lives and works in Maine, was born on December 24, 1942, in Boston, Massachusetts, into a family of artists. His father was a musician and his mother was an architect and artist. Both reinforced their son’s interest in painting, making it possible for him to be engaged in artistic ventures, allowing him to take painting lessons when he was eight from a professional artist, who allowed him to pursue abstract painting at an early age.

Borofsky received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1964 and a Master of Fine Arts from Yale University in 1966. He subsequently moved to New York City where he began to record his thoughts, dreams, and observations, as well as his compulsive and prolific counting, which became his unique brand of meditation and signature for his art works for many years.

Borofsky is best known to the general public for his gigantic sculptures, such as *Hammering Man* and *Molecule Man*. The former has been installed in several cities in the US and around the world, including Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York, and Seattle as well as Basel, Switzerland and Lillestrom, Norway. The largest of his sculptures stand in Seoul, Korea, and Frankfurt, Germany. *Molecule Man*, which is 100 feet tall, stands on Berlin’s Spree River, formerly the dividing line between East and West Berlin.