

Steptoe

Diversity & Art: A Virtual Tour

Philippe Hiquily

France (1925-2013)

Marathonienne



Work

Philippe Hiquily's work plays with shapes and balance, often merging sculpture with function, as seen in his unique furniture designs. Whether they are made of iron, brass, or steel, the principle behind his work is that art must be playful and esthetic, with movement and curves that often transform the work into something sensual. He was also a furniture and jewelry designer. In all its forms, his art embodies his artistic aspirations, bearing the same and often biomorphic characteristics, insect physiognomy, and other forms.

After graduating from the French National School of Fine Arts in 1953, Hiquily worked to develop his "direct metal" technique inspired by Julio Gonzalez, Spanish painter and sculptor, and the "Sphyrelaton," an ancient technique inspired by classical Greek sculptors. This was achieved by hammering metal on wood using industrial equipment to shape metal directly through cutting and welding rather than use molding casts. Through this method, Hiquily worked with various metals to develop his own sculptural language.

Hiquily also experimented with motorized and moving sculptures inspired by Alexander Calder, whose work he admired, and, according to his Catalogue Raisonné, published in 2012 by Galerie Loft, Paris, Philippe Hiquily's monumental sculpture, much like Calder's large size sculptures, have shaped the French and international space since the 1960s.

Marathonienne (the woman marathon runner), states Dr. Malika Vinot, Coordinator of the Catalogues Raisonné Ph. Hiquily & F. Marino Di Teana at Loft Gallery, Paris, is one of Hiquily's most iconic sculptures. Initially conceived in 1981 as a six-meter high monumental sculpture, it is central to many cultural events in Europe and all over the world and revealed to a wide audience thanks to the American television series *Billions*. Dr. Vinot further states that the softness of her curves contrasts with the rigor of her composition (the perfect geometry of a circle divided in three angles of 120° on a central axis); adding that this modern sports woman, "immortalised in an ultimate moment of grace, both strong and untameable, is rendered vulnerable by the stolen moment in which she seems suspended."

About the Artist

Born in Paris on March 27, 1925, Philippe Hiquily distinguished himself as a modern sculptor and designer, as well as a war hero. After a brief stint at the School of Fine Arts of Orléans, and during World War II, at the age of 18, Hiquily assisted his father, who was a leader in the French resistance against the Nazis. Following the war, he joined the Leclerc Division in the French Expeditionary Corps sent to restore French sovereignty in Indochina, where he served from 1945 to 1947. For his service there, he received the medal of the Royal Order to Luang Prabang, awarded to him personally by King of Laos, Somdet Prachav Sisavang Vong.

Upon his return to France, he went against his father's wishes to enter the engineering profession and pursued a career in art, entering the Beaux-Arts School of Paris and developing a passion for sculpture.

In 1959, Hiquily won the Critic's Prize for sculpture at the Paris Biennial, and was invited by "The Contemporaries" gallery to present his work in New York. The exhibition was such a success, that all the works presented were sold, while the Guggenheim Museum acquired one work. Hiquily acquired star status practically overnight and spent three months in New York, where he had opportunity to network and connect with the New York art world, both collectors and artists, such as Leo Castelli, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Marie Sol, Jasper Jones, Jack Kerouac, and others. Despite this success, he chose to return to France and dedicate his time to experimenting with different kinds of art, creating inspiring sculpture, including many monumental pieces.

Hiquily lived a full life and coincidentally died on his 88th birthday in Villejuif, France. His work is represented in many museums around the world, including among others, the Museum of Modern Art, NY; the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC; the Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris; the Guggenheim Museum, NY; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Montreal; the Museum of Modern Art in Havana, Cuba; and the Museum of Art Moderne in Saint-Étienne, France.