

Landmarks Guide for Adolescents



Seymour Lipton
American, 1903–1986

Pioneer
1957
Nickel-silver on Monel metal



Catacombs
1968
Nickel-silver on Monel metal



Guardian
1975
Nickel-silver on Monel metal

Subject: Abstract expression of feelings

Activity: Create a painting, drawing, or sculpture of a feeling

Materials: Choose your own materials

Vocabulary: Abstract, abstract expressionism, brazing, direct carving, Monel metal

Seymour Lipton, continued



Introduction

Seymour Lipton was a dentist before becoming an artist. His interest in art prompted him to begin making wood sculptures with hand tools in the direct-carve method. Later, Lipton began working in metal. After metal was restricted during World War II, he switched to scrap metal and then eventually to Monel metal, an industrial alloy available in strong thin sheets. He was able to heat this metal and shape it into abstract forms.

In his sculptures, Lipton wanted to express the emotional experiences of people who lived, as he did, through World War II: “Sculpture is used by me to express the life of man as a struggling interaction between himself and his environment.” Lipton developed a style based on tension between curved and straight elements, internal hollows and external shells. As the artist later said, he wanted to create sculptural equivalents for the “dark inside, the evil of things, the hidden area of struggle.”

Questions

What different emotions do you see depicted in each of these sculptures?

How do you think working with Monel metal allowed Lipton to create *Catacombs* and *Guardian*?

What do you think of the titles of these pieces? How do they affect your understanding of the artwork?

These three pieces are close to the same height. Why do you think this is? Why do you think Lipton chose this height?

Activity

Choose an emotion to depict. Then, brainstorm a list of words associated with that emotion. Using your list of words think about an abstract way (without the use of objects or figures) of depicting the emotion with a drawing, painting, or sculpture. See if you can include a mix of curved and straight elements, along with hollows and shells. When you’re done, have someone try to guess the emotion.

Look Again

Seymour Lipton and Louise Bourgeois are both abstract expressionists. This movement attempted to depict emotional circumstances using “pure” abstract forms. Think about why Lipton and Bourgeois are considered abstract expressionists. How are their sculptures similar? How are they different?

Seymour Lipton, continued



! BTW

Lipton made several technical innovations. For instance, he created a technique that made his Monel metal sculptures rust resistant.

ABC Vocabulary

Abstract - Expressing a quality apart from the way an object appears to the eye; the opposite of realistic

Abstract expressionism - 1940s New York painting movement based on abstract art

Brazing - Melting metals to join them

Direct carving - A twentieth-century term used to describe a less-planned approach to carving in which the sculptor carves the finished sculpture without using models, or maquettes.

Monel metal - An industrial alloy resistant to corrosion and available in strong thin sheets