

Statement on Peter Forakis Sculpture

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By Linda Dalrymple Henderson, author of *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry and Modern Art* (new ed., MIT Press, 2010) and curator of *Reimagining Space: The Park Place Gallery Group in 1960s New York* (Blanton Museum of Art, 2008) :

Peter Forakis is a key figure in the history of 20th-century sculpture, whose intuitive understanding of geometry led to a body of significant work exploring complex spatial experience and demonstrating remarkable technical innovation. As an art student in the 1950s and, subsequently, as a co-founder of the co-op Park Place Gallery (New York, 1963-67), Forakis played a crucial role in recovering the concept of the geometrical "fourth dimension" of space, which had been virtually eclipsed at mid-century by Relativity Theory's time as a fourth dimension. When Forakis connected with Marcel Duchamp in the 1960s, the two shared a deep commitment to four-dimensional geometry, although neither artist realized the extent of the other's interest. Duchamp would have been delighted to know that Forakis would carry out investigations of four-dimensional space paralleling those he had made 50 years earlier in the context of his *Large Glass* project.

In the 1960s Forakis explored the topology of bent metal as well as mirror effects, symmetry, shadows, and left and right-handed modules in an impressive body of spatially complex sculptures. Responding to the ideas of Buckminster Fuller on basic geometrical structures in nature, he also created his monumental *Atlanta Gateway* (1968), two tip-to-tip tetrahedrons formed by intersecting 200-foot steel pipes that mutate continuously as a viewer moves around the work. In his subsequent works Forakis continued to draw inspiration from the geometry he loved and understood so well, creating a substantial oeuvre of direct-steel sculpture that stands in striking contrast to the Minimalism that had come to dominate the New York art world by the later 1960s. Critical for Forakis's works from the 1970s onward was the technique of interconnecting "slots" he invented, which allowed him to create towering sculptures without any welds. Fellow sculptor and friend Ronald Bladen marveled at the unity between form and structure Forakis achieved in such works, in which gravity was now the force holding a sculpture together. Later in life Forakis would declare that, for a sculptor, gravity was the "fourth dimension," but he was delighted, too, to see that string theorists in physics had finally caught up with artists, like Duchamp and himself, who had been exploring higher dimensions of space through the century.