

THE SCULPTURE OF MERYL TARADASH

In the work of artist Meryl Taradash, the built city square becomes an urban meadow. The medium Taradash works in really is light and wind, reified in sinuous metals. The artist has created a significant body of sculpture in the last 20 years, all of it designed to move with the wind. "The unpredictability of natural forces is essential to my work," the artist notes, "I want people to see these elements in my work."

Taradash's wind-moved sculpture is intricate work, the finishings exquisite, the forms truly permeable, and the engineering subtle. She uses metals--stainless steel and aluminum--that are particularly difficult to form into graceful, continuous curves and spirals, yet curves and spirals are the lines that characterize her work. All of her sculpture is hand-crafted. The interior workings of the forms have been custom-designed by the artist with the assistance of engineers Wayne La Pierre and Joe Welch. The fittings are intricately calibrated, allowing the pieces to balance and move freely.

Many of the artist's works celebrate human gesture and thought. In *The Caged Bird Dances II* (2001, stainless steel, aluminum, 12' 6" x 3' 6" x 3'), wind accelerates the form's rotation within its spiral. The form appears to dissolve into light as though absorbed by the air surrounding it. In Taradash's hands, wind and light are seen as the necessary vehicles of human thought.

In *Holding On / Letting Go* (1999, stainless steel, aluminum, 11' 6" x 5' 3" x 3' 6"), two tendrils of steel intertwine, both reaching towards the sky, then veering off in different directions. A pair of hemispheres rotates endlessly. The tendrils are conjoined, yet clearly

separated. They suggest the growth and renewal of old relationships--child to parent, lover to spouse, student to teacher--relationships that are also part of urban life.

Sisyphus (2001 stainless steel and aluminum, 8' x 9' 4" x 4') continues this line of inquiry. Here, the artist uses four Mobius loops to frame what appears to be an infinity symbol, but it is not. The lines do not quite meet: they reach, but fall short of their goal.

Another of Taradash's large-scale sculpture uses the paradoxical principle of the Mobius loop as its motion source. *Getting There* (1997, aluminum, painted steel, 12' 6" x 18' 7"6") can be found on the grounds of Cold Spring Harbor on Long Island.

In all of Meryl Taradash's work, we see the artist's fidelity to the modernist criterion stated by Mies van.der Rohe "Less is more."

To B. (2001, aluminum, painted steel, 11' 1" x 2' 6" x 2' 6") is a tribute to the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi, one of the last century's most important artists. Taradash has created this column by twisting three sheets of aluminum into a spiraling obelisk.

One of the first public art commissions the artist received (*Light Dance*, 1984) resulted in a suspended work of translucent acrylic. *Light Dance* showers natural light into the atrium of the Camden building of the New Jersey College of Medicine and Dentistry. Taradash notes the importance of this commission so early in her professional career: "*Light Dance* really pushed me. I left the safe, easy two-dimensional world of painting for the challenge of installation art. I had to climb a five-story scaffolding to install *Light Dance*. That was scary."

Meryl Taradash prefers to work in public areas. The artist explains why, ‘We live in the city, We are being stunned by the buzz of electronic media. It is all around us. But, we also are enveloped in natural light and real wind, if we take the time to notice. My work helps people see that part, too.’”

Meryl Taradash takes care to install her sculpture in relation to the pedestrian traffic patterns of the site. She leaves room for the spontaneity of wind and light and room for viewers to pause a moment. Her sculpture is a natural fit for the urban space. That is why her work turns space into place.

Maureen Korp, PhD Lecturer and Writer
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Meryl Taradash has received commissions from Aramark Corporation of Philadelphia, the David Bermant Foundation, and the New State Council for the Arts. Her solo exhibitions include the Art Museum of the University of California at Santa Barbara, the James A. Michener Art Museum in Pennsylvania, the Elaine Benson Gallery on Long Island, and the Fordham University’s Lincoln Center Campus etc.

The artist earned an MFA in Painting (1978) from Pratt Institute. Taradash teaches at the School of Visual Arts, New York City, and Montclair State University, New Jersey. The artist is represented by the Elaine Benson Gallery in Bridgehampton, New York.