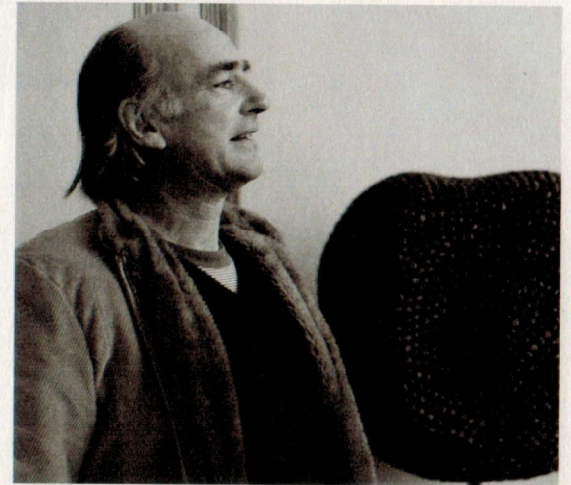




harry bertoia material and form



**daily work in bertoia's studio was like entering a very special world.
the amazing amount of new works in progress,
metals of great varieties and welding techniques impress me to this very day;
last but not least bertoia in the midst of it: genius at work.
everything he touched and formed and stated was profound, made to last.
he was a master of the welding torch;
no matter if it was jewelry, furniture design, small or very large sculptures.**

Klaus Ihlenfeld, friend



Photo: As illustrated in a Knoll International brochure dated 1966

Harry Bertoia's sculptures have a striking presence that resonates with our senses. From the undulating Bush Forms to jewelry, his works are at once straightforward and precise, yet complex and enduring. The simultaneity of these attributes speaks to the absolute mastery of Bertoia's artistic processes and the metaphysical nature of his inspiration. As he stated, "[a]t most my work registers a process of inquiry, an expression of joy for life, an aim toward understanding, a mark for existence"¹ --a telling observation that elucidates the potential of his artworks. Each object he created can be considered a fragment of a larger system of thought, a quality that instills a sense of exploration and inquiry within the physical form. These possibilities lend a feeling of infinite expansion, endless movement and lyrical repetition to Bertoia's sculptures and works on paper. The "mark for existence" comes with an allusion to an immediate presence that is actualized through an unfolding experience. This complexity within simplicity epitomizes his work and renders each artwork timelessly relevant and meaningful.

Surrounded by nature for most of his career, Bertoia found inspiration in the shapes, sounds and organic processes around him. Drawing on his environment for both form and content within his art, he observed, "[n]ature is at every instant instructing us."² The reference to nature is merely that: referential, not representational, as he has stated, "[a]ny form, first and always, must be itself."³ Rather than duplicating what he saw with his eyes, he attempted to capture the feeling of nature through attention to microcosmic details like a blade of grass or a piece of pollen. Bertoia translated these minute elements into forms that embody the essence of nature, while the works themselves remain formally abstract.

¹ Willenbecher, John B. "Harry Bertoia: A Monograph." Thes. Brown Univ., 1958. pg. 52

² Willenbecher, John B. "Harry Bertoia: A Monograph." Thes. Brown Univ., 1958. pg. 18

³ Schiffer, Nancy, and Val Bertoia. *The World of Bertoia*. Atglen, PA: Schiffer Ltd., 2003. pg. 49.