

KIRK NEWMAN

Kirk Newman was born in Dallas, Texas in 1926 where he lived for the first ten years of his life. He received a B.A. in art education and a M.A. in sculpture from the University of Tulsa, with additional study at the University of Iowa and at Ruskin School, Oxford University.

He joined the faculty at the University of Michigan in 1949 as an instructor for the Extension Division of the University's School of Architecture and Design. At that time he was responsible for setting up ceramics programs at art centers in several southwest Michigan communities, including Kalamazoo. He did additional teaching part-time teaching at Kalamazoo College and was an instructor at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts. He served as associate director for art at the KIA from 1966-78. Under Kirk's direction, the educational programs offered at the KIA were broadened to include workshops and summer programs for students of all ages. He believed in the value of art for everyone and treated this as his mission during this time.

The ten years between 1953-63 are considered his formative stage as he experimented with a wide-range of art forms, mostly abstract, including sculpture and painting. In 1963 he created a welded steel sculpture entitled "Businessman" which represents the underlying connection between the realms of physics and the contemporary world of the corporate man. This conversion to figurative realism was an attempt to express his concept of the human condition.

From the late 1970's to the present, he has moved away from three-dimensional pieces in favor of bronzes that appear as silhouettes and shadows, searching for the image of man as seen through his shadow. The changing shape of man's shadow represents the transitory nature of man. "It has flow, movement and no volume. That's how I interpret the world of our time. Our time is such a fleeting moment on earth. We are practically a blink of an eye." Kirk begins these "shadow" sculptures by first working in wax, utilizes a variety of soldering tools to melt and sculpt the wax into figurative forms.

Although known primarily as a sculptor, Kirk has a command of a variety of other media including drawing, printmaking, ceramics and painting.

Kirk has receive numerous commissions and is widely collected. His studio is located in Kalamazoo; most of his casting is done locally. He has several public sculptures in the Kalamazoo area:

- "People" - Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, 1974
- "When Justice and Mercy Prevail" - Bronson Park, 1976
- "Martin Luther King" - Kalamazoo Public Museum, 1977
- "Locus Curae Validae" - Bronson Hospital, 1983
- Disabled American Veterans Memorial, 1985

Kirk has two public commissions in the Detroit area:

- Detroit People Mover's station at Cass and Michigan Ave. - 15 shadow sculptures representing commuters, shoppers and corporate types.
- "A Family at Work and Play" - Detroit Receiving Hospital

In 1990 his "Hong Kong People" sculpture was unveiled as the focal point of the lobby in the Hotel Conrad in Hong Kong.

His work has exhibited internationally and is in numerous private and corporate collections.