

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

## NAUM GABO, Distinguished American Sculptor to give the A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts at the National Gallery of Art

For the first time since the series was inaugurated in 1952, the A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts this year will be given by a practicing artist.

Naum Gabo was born in Russia in 1890, the son of a business executive. After a standard education in Russia he went to Munich to enter the University as a medical student. Here he studied mathematics, physics, and chemistry, and eventually he turned to civil engineering. Here also he came in contact with the revolutionary artistic movements which in Italy produced Futurism and in Germany the "Blue Rider" group.

He studied under the famous art historian Wölfflin and became associated with Kandinsky and other artists of the avant garde group. About 1914 he made his first sculpture.

Directly after the Russian Revolution Naum Gabo returned to Moscow, where he worked with Kandinsky, Malevich, and his brother Pevsner, also a well-known sculptor, in establishing the "Higher Art and Technical Workshop," an association of

artists devoted to establishing new principles for the arts. For three years Naum Gabo remained in Russia making projects for industrial designs and developing his highly personal sculptural techniques.

In 1920 he started making sculpture out of forms processed by mechanical devices, and using new materials such as plastics. The same year he started experimenting with moving forms and his designs in kinetic rhythms are considered the first in the history of sculpture to make use of forms in motion.

In 1922 he was sent to Germany to supervise an exhibition of avant garde Russian constructivist art. Deciding that the reactionary forces in Russia would not permit the free development of his ideas, he left Russia and became a resident of Germany. His first one man exhibition was held in Hanover in 1930. Two years later he left Germany and in 1935 settled in London. Here he became associated with Ben Nicholson, publishing the review "Circle, International Survey of Constructivist Art." He was also active with Herbert Read in formulating plans for cooperation between artists and industry. In this capacity he helped to design the Jowett automobile and other industrial products.

His use of plastics in interpenetrating planes had a profound influence on contemporary English art. In 1949 he

came to the United States, subsequently became a U.S. citizen, and is now a resident of Connecticut.

Naum Gabo occupies an important position in the history of sculpture, both because of his work, which is included in virtually all the world's outstanding collections of contemporary art, and for his theoretical writings. "Older sculpture" he wrote in 1915 "was created in terms of solids; the new departure was to create in terms of space." This concept has been basic in the development of modern sculpture, industrial design and architecture, and in each of these fields Naum Gabo's thinking has had a lasting influence.

In these six lectures the artist will discuss the history of sculpture as interpreted in terms of contemporary theories of art. The title of the series is "A Sculptor's View of the Fine Arts."

The lectures will be given on six consecutive Sundays beginning on April 5th, and are open to the public without charge.

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