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| Meadmore, Clement (1929-2005) |
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| Clement Meadmore was a major twentieth century sculptor with many works *in situ* across North America, Australia and Japan, often commissioned as design features within substantial architectural installations and urban design projects in the International Style. Their heroic and rhetorical positioning on the forecourts of large corporate towers or in plazas on university campuses and other public institutions could almost be classified as a cliché of mid- to late-twentieth-century visual experience, except that his works captured attention on their own merits for their impeccable fluid grace and balance, hovering between a celebration of the structural robustness of steel and a denial of their very materiality. Outlasting the trends in civic landscaping that begot the commissions, Meadmore’s sculptures have frequently been exempt from the popular abhorrence of abstract sculpture. Classifying the sculptures as minimalist overlooks Meadmore’s key working processes. As his work developed through improvisation and intuitively by trial and error through slow and painstaking visual readjustment of elements in small-scale models, it never comprised the physical realisation of a well-established preconceived idea. |
| Clement Meadmore was a major twentieth century sculptor with many works *in situ* across North America, Australia and Japan, often commissioned as design features within substantial architectural installations and urban design projects in the International Style. Their heroic and rhetorical positioning on the forecourts of large corporate towers or in plazas on university campuses and other public institutions could almost be classified as a cliché of mid- to late-twentieth-century visual experience, except that his works captured attention on their own merits for their impeccable fluid grace and balance, hovering between a celebration of the structural robustness of steel and a denial of their very materiality. Outlasting the trends in civic landscaping that begot the commissions, Meadmore’s sculptures have frequently been exempt from the popular abhorrence of abstract sculpture. Classifying the sculptures as minimalist overlooks Meadmore’s key working processes. As his work developed through improvisation and intuitively by trial and error through slow and painstaking visual readjustment of elements in small-scale models, it never comprised the physical realisation of a well-established preconceived idea.  Meadmore studied aeronautical engineering but then transferred to the first Australian industrial design course established at RMIT. His commercial works included furniture, lighting and interiors. Although he later emphasised 1950s Australia’s uncongenial provincialism and his overriding need to escape, his metal furniture was highly acclaimed. This early success indicates both the international outlook of design customers in Australia and his grasp of the interplay between structure, lightness and balance, which defined his mature work.  When Meadmore arrived in the United States in 1963, he worked on maquettes, befriended artists and viewed exhibitions while taking two years to find a dealer. He removed the heavy textural encrustation of his early work, which he now regarded as an affectation, and started working with smooth surfaces. Many of his works feature a squared off pipelike form imbued with a reptilian flexibility. The positioning of the cubed end pieces, undertaken with as much care as balancing and shaping the main curved lines required, augmented the compositional variety of his work. Black was Meadmore’s preferred colour for its tonal consistency, whereas white absorbed various hues and interfered with the clear reading of the form.  Image: MeadmoreClement\_HobNob.jpg  Figure 1 Clement Meadmore, *Hob Nob*, 2007 (1992), aluminum, University of Michigan. Source: http://public-art.umich.edu/the\_collection/campus/north/17  Internationally Meadmore ranks as the most frequently commissioned white Australian artist, with only another earlier sculptor, Sir Bertram Mackennal, sharing a similar international profile. Meadmore’s sculptures bear no signs of his Australian origins, unlike painters Arthur Boyd or Sidney Nolan who traded substantially on the romantic and exotic Otherness of Australia. Meadmore regarded such regionalism as worthless and the substantiating influences on his practice were international. Mondrian’s writings were a crucial guide in the late 1940s and early 1950s. An outdoor sculpture exhibition at Antwerp he saw in 1953 confirmed his self-positioning as a sculptor, while viewing contemporary American painting in 1959 in Japan confirmed his belief that he needed to work in the United States. In 1976 he became an American citizen. This choice did not simply enable easy contact with dealers, clients and expert fabricators; for him North America embodied much of what he found congenial, including his life in urban New York and his legendary love of jazz and even the relentless, rigorous, self-guided meritocracy that shaped his artworks. |
| Further reading:  (Fox)  (Gibson)  (de Groen)  (Meadmore)  (httTh) |