

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Seymour Lipton

METAL

March 20 - May 17, 2008

(March 20, 2008, New York) - Throughout his prolific fifty-year career, sculptor **Seymour Lipton** (American, 1903-1986) devoted his art to exploring the depths of human existence and experience. From his early use of wood to his later preference for metal, Lipton represented the social upheaval that marked the decades surrounding the Great Depression and World War II in works of sculpture that reveal a fundamental understanding of the complexities of anatomical and natural forms. By adding to, eliminating or otherwise altering the figure of a once-identifiable object, Lipton transformed his original model into an expression of the common anguish and uncertainty of his time.

Seymour Lipton: METAL, the artist's second solo exhibition at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, is a survey of heroic metal forms from 1960 to 1980. Choosing metal for its visual simplicity, Lipton believed metal best exemplified universal heroism of the "everyman." In a 2005 essay Martica Sawin wrote, "Metal was the essential twentieth century material as marble was for the Greeks. Persevering experimenter that he was, Lipton managed, as the medieval alchemist could only dream of doing, to turn this industrial material into gold and to use it to give form to his all-encompassing view of the darker and brighter aspects of existence."

Born in New York City, Lipton grew up in the Bronx at a time when much of that borough was farmland. These rural surroundings enabled Lipton to explore the botanical forms that would later become sources for his adult work. Lipton's interest in the dialogue between artistic creation and natural phenomena was cultivated through numerous visits to New York's Museum of Natural History, its many botanical gardens and its zoos. In 1927, Lipton received a degree in dentistry from Columbia University that not only provided him with a lucrative career but also gave him a foundation for working with metal. His interest in sculpture came to fruition in the late 1920s, when he began to create clay portraits.

In the early 1930s, Lipton began to devote an increasing amount of time to his art, developing a direct wood carving style that afforded him a richly emotional visual vocabulary. In 1935, he exhibited an early wood sculpture at the John Reed Club Gallery in New York, and three years later, ACA Gallery mounted Lipton's first solo show. In 1940, Lipton began teaching sculpture at the New School for Social Research, a position he held until 1965.

In 1950, Lipton arrived at his mature style and began to develop a new technique of brazing on Monel metal. Abandoning for good his wood work, he now began to draw extensively, which allowed him to explore the automatism that Abstract Expressionist painters were boasting at the time. Like painterly contemporaries such as Jackson Pollock, Lipton was very much influenced by Carl Jung's work on the unconscious mind and the regenerative forces of nature. Lipton also looked to Freud for a greater understanding of the inner psyche. He translated these two-dimensional drawings into three-dimensional maquettes that enabled him to revise his ideas before creating the final sculpture. The forms that Lipton produced during this period were often zoomorphic, and they exemplified the tension between the souls of nature and the



Dance, 1980, nickel-silver on Monel metal, 37 1/2" x 32" x 21"

automatism of the machine. Lipton claims not to have been influenced by any particular artists group, but his exploration of man's "inner reality" mimics the discoveries of the Surrealists, while his fascination with the dystopian relationship between man, nature and machine is consistent with much of modernist art after 1918.

In the years following the 1950s, Lipton's optimism began to rise, and the size of his work grew in proportion. The invention of the oxyacetylene torch allowed Lipton to rework the surfaces of metal sculptures, thus eliminating some of the risks involved with producing large-scale finished works. As Lipton's sculpture was elevated to new heights, it also soared and expanded psychologically; the increased scale of his sculptures meant that Lipton was now better equipped to evoke the enormous heroism of the ordinary people who had survived through historically unprecedented horror. In 1958, Lipton was awarded a solo exhibition at the Venice Biennale and was thus internationally recognized as part of a small group of highly-regarded avant-garde constructivist sculptors.

Throughout the last two decades of his career until his death, Seymour Lipton consistently reworked his thematic interest in humanity's epic struggle. In 1960, he received a Guggenheim Award, which was followed by several prominent public commissions, including *Archangel*, currently residing in Lincoln Center's Avery Fischer Hall. Lipton's work is a part of the permanent collections of over fifty museums. **Michael Rosenfeld Gallery is the exclusive representative of the Estate of Seymour Lipton.**

Visuals available upon request. To view this exhibition in its entirety online, please visit www.michaelrosenfeldart.com.

Michael Rosenfeld Gallery is located at 24 West 57th Street, 7th Floor, New York City. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10AM-6PM. For additional information, please contact Marjorie Van Cura at 212.247.0082 or mv@michaelrosenfeldart.com.

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