

# *UNTITLED* (c.1960), *UNTITLED* (c.1960), and *HANGING FORM NO. 3* (1963), Gerald Gladstone

This is the third stop on the Public Art, Nature and the City tour.

Born in Toronto in 1929, Gerald Gladstone was the sixth of his working-class, immigrant parents' nine children. Gladstone was interested in art in his youth and taught himself to paint at the age of fifteen. He married and had children at a young age, working in advertising to support his family. However, he still pursued drawing on his own, and taught himself how to weld. After seeing an exhibition of Gordon Rayner's work at the Toronto Art Gallery in 1956, he was compelled to make his first sculpture. The next year, he had his first big break as an artist when the gallery gave him a solo exhibition. In 1961, with a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts, Gladstone moved with his family to the United Kingdom, where he studied under Henry Moore at London's Royal College of Art.

As an art student, Gladstone had to find ways to be resourceful after the grant money ran out. Once, when he couldn't afford materials, he approached some welders repairing a fire escape. The workers gave him their scraps, which lent themselves to the forms of another early inspiration: constructivism.

Gladstone used industrial materials in his sculptural works, often working in steel like the works located here. With its industrial quality, his material vocabulary is comparable to many of his American minimalist contemporaries. However, his teacher, the sculptor Henry Moore, had a lasting influence. This is evident in many of his figurative works, which echo Moore's abstract style. Eric Newton of British newspaper *The Guardian* once wrote that "a Gladstone is like a beautifully constructed machine made in a Rolls-Royce factory of the future, for the performance of some function that has not yet been envisaged."

If you can, find a different view of these hanging sculptures. Reposition yourself up the staircases and escalator or take the elevator to the floors above to view or imagine the sculpture from a different vantage point. On the ground floor, try moving around the sculptures. Feel free to pause this audio guide.

Both the untitled works and *Hanging Form No. 3* are particularly evocative of large turbine jet engines. It's hard to imagine that these inventions weren't an inspiration for the artist, at least in part. However, there is also something quite organic about the repetitive radial forms of the work. They may remind us of the primula of a sunflower, or an amoeba. In some of the artist's related works on paper, the reference to ecological forms is even more apparent. The hard lines and angles — rendered here in steel — are replaced by softer, more organic and flowing ones.

There is a tension in these sculptures' references to both the natural and the built worlds, opening layers of form for you to discover.

Now that you've had a chance to explore these artworks for a few minutes, consider your initial impression of them. Does your perspective change as you continue to look at or imagine the work?

Gladstone became a public sculptor par excellence, especially during the 1960s and '70s. He won many impressive public art commissions from cities across Canada and the world, including Montreal, Toronto, Sydney, Los Angeles, London and others. During this period, *Maclean's* writer Robert Fulford even called him the "Cassius Clay" of Canadian art.

Unlike many of his other works, *Hanging Form No. 3* and the untitled sculptures were not constructed for a particular site. These artworks were made in different years and gifted to the university by three different donors. After becoming part of the permanent collection of the Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery in the 1970s, the artworks were in storage for many years, until the 2011 construction of the John Molson building. Now on a long-term loan from the Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery to the university, these works are installed for the Concordia community and the public to enjoy.

To continue this tour, click on *Nacelle* by Pierre Blanchette.