

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

CYRIL

LIXENBERG

AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY





Cyril Lixenberg: an Artist's Journey
August 23 through November 1, 2013

*This exhibition program is supported by a generous gift from
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Kingdom of the Netherlands

naaf

welcome

One reason I enjoy leading Grand Valley State University is the opportunity to work in a liberal arts environment enriched by art at every turn and in virtually every space on our campuses. Classrooms, laboratories, libraries and even residence halls function as a university-wide museum in support of our academic mission.

More than twelve thousand works of art are preserved by this university—hailing from every settled continent, reflecting the culture of many nations, and created by talented artists, both known and anonymous. This year we celebrate the work of one artist from the Netherlands who is very well known to us at Grand Valley. His work, gifts and presence among us have enriched students, faculty, staff and campus visitors alike. Cyril Lixenberg is an accomplished contemporary sculptor and graphic artist who, while working primarily in Amsterdam, has enjoyed a special relationship with West Michigan for the last quarter century. His archives and life's artistic work from 1950 to the present day are explored in the [Fall Arts Celebration 2013](#) exhibition *Cyril Lixenberg: an Artist's Journey* and in this accompanying catalog.

Cyril has mentored Grand Valley students, critiqued student portfolios, judged art competitions, hosted students traveling abroad and also inspired young K–12 students through art programs in coordination with Grand Valley State University's charter schools. His creativity challenges and inspires us daily—both on our walls and displayed outside on our grounds and plazas. Collaborating West Michigan institutions in Grand Rapids, Muskegon, Holland and Saugatuck will showcase Lixenberg's works this fall as well. These exhibitions explore and celebrate his unique artistic legacy.



THOMAS J. HAAS

President
Grand Valley State University
2006–present

welkom

Een reden waarom ik zoveel plezier beleef aan het leiding geven aan de Grand Valley State University is de kans om in een creatieve omgeving te werken, die op zoveel plekken op onze campussen verrijkt is door kunstwerken. Collegezalen, laboratoria, bibliotheken en zelfs onze woonruimtes voor studenten fungeren als een universiteitsmuseum ter ondersteuning van onze academische missie.

Deze universiteit onderhoudt meer dan twaalfduizend kunstwerken—uit ieder bewoond continent, waarin de culturen van vele landen worden weerspiegeld, gecreëerd door getalenteerde kunstenaars, zowel bekend als anoniem. Dit jaar vieren wij het werk van een kunstenaar uit Nederland die zeer bekend is in Grand Valley. Zijn werk, schenkingen en aanwezigheid hebben zowel studenten als leden van de faculteit, universiteitsmedewerkers en bezoekers aan de campus verrijkt. Cyril Lixenberg is een begaafde hedendaagse beeldhouwer en grafisch kunstenaar die, terwijl hij hoofdzakelijk in Amsterdam werkt, de afgelopen 25 jaar een speciale band heeft onderhouden met West-Michigan. Zijn archieven en artistieke levenswerk vanaf 1950 tot heden worden onderzocht in de tentoonstelling [Fall Arts Celebration 2013](#) *Cyril Lixenberg: an Artist's Journey* en in deze bijbehorende catalogus.

Cyril heeft studenten van Grand Valley begeleid, studentenportfolio's herzien, kunstwedstrijden gejureerd, studenten op buitenlandse reizen onderdak verleend en hij heeft ook jonge leerlingen geïnspireerd door middel van kunstprogramma's in samenwerking met de charter schools van Grand Valley State University. Zijn creativiteit zorgt iedere dag voor een inspiratie en uitdaging voor ons—zowel op onze muren als buiten onze campusterreinen. Samenwerkende instituten in West Michigan, in Grand Rapids, Muskegon, Holland en Saugatuck laten deze herfst ook werken van Lixenburg zien. Deze tentoonstellingen onderzoeken en vierten zijn unieke artistieke erfenis.



THOMAS J. HAAS

President
Grand Valley State University
2006–heden

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Cyril Lixenberg
ca. 1970
Photographer Unknown

GVSU Lixenberg Archival
Collection

Shape inspired by
[Vierkanteling II](#)

BACK COVER
Cyril Lixenberg
2013
Photo by Dana Lixenberg

Shape inspired by
[Vierkanteling I](#)

PRESIDENT'S LETTER
Cyril Lixenberg
ca. 1970
Photo by Mattheus Engel

GVSU Lixenberg Archival
Collection

Cyril Lixenberg: an Artist's Journey
[Grand Valley State University](#)
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*Unless otherwise noted,
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Lixenberg Family in memory
of Saskia Lixenberg.*

Designed by [Plenty.](#)

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HENRY A. MATTHEWS
Director of Galleries and Collections
Grand Valley State University

introduction

Grand Valley State University's Art Gallery is charged with collaborating with faculty and staff to collect, preserve and display a diverse collection of art that augments and strengthens interdisciplinary learning. For decades, the university's facilities and grounds have been graced by thousands of works of art that contribute to the "campus as gallery" atmosphere that enriches our entire community.

The exhibition *Cyril Lixenberg: an Artist's Journey* and this accompanying catalog have been organized by the Art Gallery to inaugurate this year's [Fall Arts Celebration](#). Both explore and celebrate 81 years of the life and work of the popular contemporary Dutch artist Cyril Lixenberg, whose monumental sculpture and eye-popping, colorful screen prints are exhibited throughout GVSU's buildings and campuses. This exhibition is made possible by the artist's recent gift of his early work, which, when combined with GVSU's existing holdings of his art, inspired and enabled the university to organize this retrospective exhibition of his entire career. It will feature new gifts of paintings and works on paper,

including drawings, monoprints, print editions, small sculptures and archival material spanning his early career as a struggling and evolving artist in the early 1950s to his current successful presence in the contemporary art world. Multiple exhibition venues across West Michigan will simultaneously focus on particular aspects of Lixenberg's art, including the Grand Rapids Art Museum, Calvin College's Center Art Gallery, the Muskegon Museum of Art and the Saugatuck Center for the Arts.

During the commencement exercises that will be held in December of this year, I will be privileged to confer an honorary doctoral degree upon Cyril Lixenberg in recognition of his extraordinary creative achievements as an artist, both in his native Netherlands as well as here in West Michigan.

In doing so, we celebrate his many contributions to our university community in the last quarter century, both through his gifts of art, and also through his nurturing and mentoring of our students with wisdom, humor and grace.

Gayle R. Davis

GAYLE R. DAVIS

Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs
Grand Valley State University

inleiding

De Kunstgalerie van Grand Valley State University legt zich toe op de samenwerking met de faculteiten en universitaire medewerkers voor het verzamelen, behouden, en tentoonstellen van een gevarieerde kunstcollectie, die zorgt voor een vergroting en versterking van het interdisciplinair onderwijs. Sinds tientallen jaren zijn de gebouwen en terreinen van de universiteit verrijkt door duizenden kunstwerken die bijdragen aan een 'campus als galerie', waardoor onze hele gemeenschap verrijkt wordt.

De tentoonstelling *Cyril Lixenberg: an Artist's Journey* en deze bijbehorende catalogus zijn georganiseerd door de Kunstgalerie, ter inwijding van de [Fall Arts Celebration](#) van dit jaar. Beiden onderzoeken en vieren de 81 jaar van het leven en werk van de populaire hedendaagse Nederlandse kunstenaar Cyril Lixenberg, wiens monumentale sculpturen en in het oog springende, kleurrijke zeefdrukken zijn tentoongesteld in de gebouwen en campus-terreinen van GVSU. Deze tentoonstelling wordt mogelijk gemaakt door de recente schenking door de kunstenaar van zijn vroege werk, dat, samen met de bestaande collectie van GVSU van zijn werken, de universiteit inspireerde en in staat stelde om dit retrospectief over zijn gehele carrière te organiseren. Hierin zijn nieuwe schenkingen van schilderen en werken op papier te zien, waaronder tekeningen, monochroom-

drukken, drukedities, kleine sculpturen en archiefmateriaal over het begin van zijn carrière als opkomende en voor zijn carrière vechtende kunstenaar in het begin van de jaren vijftig, tot zijn succesvolle rol in de hedendaagse kunstwereld. Meerdere tentoonstellingslocaties in West-Michigan zullen zich tegelijkertijd richten op specifieke aspecten van de kunstwerken van Lixenberg, waaronder het Grand Rapids Arts Museum, Calvin College's Center Art Gallery, het Muskegon Museum of Art en het Saugatuck Center for the Arts.

Tijdens de openingsactiviteiten in december van dit jaar heb ik het voorrecht om een eredoctoraat te overhandigen aan Cyril Lixenberg, als erkenning voor zijn bijzondere creatieve prestaties als kunstenaar, zowel in zijn moederland Nederland als hier in West-Michigan.

Hiermee vieren wij zijn vele bijdragen aan onze universiteitsgemeenschap gedurende de afgelopen 25 jaar, zowel door zijn creatieve werk, als zijn werk in het begeleiden van onze studenten met wijsheid, humor en stijl.

Gayle R. Davis

GAYLE R. DAVIS

Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs
Grand Valley State University





ten visual thoughts

BY TIMOTHY J. CHESTER

01

who is the artist, cyril lixenberg?

It was a self-assigned question tackled by a young undergraduate student at Grand Valley State University about 10 years ago. She had been given an assignment by Professor of Writing and Poet-in-Residence Patricia Clark to select one of the thousands of works of art that are displayed throughout the university's campuses and, after studying it, use it as a basis for writing an original poem.

Her question became her subject following her selection of a monumental steel, abstract sculpture painted a brilliant yellow entitled *Amaranth*. Completed in 2002, it was installed on its own plaza outside the entryway of Mackinac Hall, one of her classroom buildings.

She passed the sculpture every day on her way to and from class, but until now, had given it little thought. It was simply a signpost that marked the building entrance—something to navigate around as you made your way in. Maddeningly, the bronze label provided her with little information other than the title, date, the artist's name, *Cyril Lixenberg*, and his Dutch nationality. A few other related works of art—colorful silk-screen prints by the same artist bearing the same title—hung in frames in the hallway just inside the plaza entrance. She resigned herself to the necessity of confronting the work and slowly developed her own interpretation.

PREVIOUS PAGE

Cyril Lixenberg in his studio at
Oudezijds Achterburgwal 171
Amsterdam, April 7, 1965
Photo by Anton Haakman
GVSU Lixenberg Archival Collection

OPPOSITE PAGE

Installing solo exhibition
De Bilt, the Netherlands, 2001
Photo by Ineke v.d. Dever
GVSU Lixenberg Archival Collection



The assignment was a brilliant one, designed to help train budding writers to slow down and really observe a subject, and to draw it out in carefully considered creative writing. In the end, the student cleverly decided to make her frustrations her subject. Her poem accosted the sculpture and its maker with many direct questions, and, with her demands unanswered, she filled in the silence with her own suppositions and speculations. Professor Clark was very pleased with the resulting poem's creative energy and composition, and she resolved to share it with her friend Lixenberg on his next campus visit.

Lixenberg was busy commuting between West Michigan and Amsterdam with more frequency than usual in those days. At the request of GVSU's Director of Galleries and Collections Henry Matthews, Cyril Lixenberg, along with his adult children Dana and Onno, made a decision to donate more than 300 of his works of graphic art on paper in memory of the artist's late wife, Saskia. The collection chronicled the artist's output of the previous 40 years. An exhibition with a title inspired by those years of creativity entitled *Cyril Lixenberg 4x10+* would be presented in the university's Art Gallery in the fall of 2002, and within the year, examples of Lixenberg's work began to appear on walls throughout GVSU's



OPPOSITE PAGE

Amaranth

Painted Steel, 2002
15' x 5' x 5'

*Photo by GVSU News
and Information Services*

several campuses. In fact, there are few places where GVSU students are not confronted by his iconic geometric abstractions. His art infuses campus life and it seems to many people to be both at one and at home there.

Ten years later, and again at Matthews' prodding, Lixenberg invited the Art Gallery's team into his Amsterdam studio to document some of his unsold early work, created between 1950 and 1970. This prompted an additional gift of nearly 85 paintings, mixed media prints and monoprints that accompanied previous donations of small models, sculptures, catalogs, posters and exhibition announcements amassed during his long career. Archival quality crates were constructed, and the gifts were carefully packed for shipment back to Allendale, Michigan. As a result, Grand Valley State University now preserves [the largest collection of Lixenberg's work anywhere](#), a fact that seems to fill the artist with content.

Why Michigan? Grand Rapids and its neighboring cities of Holland, Saugatuck and Muskegon have in fact been a second home to Lixenberg since the mid-1980s, when a series of chance encounters first brought him to Muskegon for a one-man exhibition at the Muskegon Museum of Art. An essay in this catalog by the arts administrator Jason Kalajainen outlines the many ties that bind Lixenberg to West Michigan and which have made him a vital part of the regional art scene.

Henry Matthews is very pleased to have the collection as a learning resource for the university. "Born in London, Lixenberg has lived in the Netherlands for most of his life, where he continues to be a prolific contributor to the contemporary

art scene, with examples of his work found in many public, corporate, and private collections. Not only does his work represent an important collection of a major Dutch artist working in the second half of the 20th century, it is preserved here with sufficient depth and breadth to allow students and scholars to better understand the growth of a particular artist over time in a way that is very hard and rare to experience. The Lixenberg gifts made over the last decade are an extraordinary resource for both teaching and learning."

One year after having made the writing assignment, Dr. Clark was finally successful in connecting Lixenberg with her budding poet, who was both surprised and delighted to meet the artist of her speculations. The artist, in his turn, delighted in her poetic demands of his work, and the two drifted away to listen to each other and converse about the possible meanings of his art. Upon parting, he accepted her poem, and gifted her with a small signed giclée print from his *Amaranth* suite. In this small way, the engagement of audience so valued by the artist, and the opportunity for authentic encounters and learning sought by both students and faculty alike, had its beginning.

1932

July 5, Cyril born in Stepney, East End of London, England, to Annie (Sussman) and Morris Lixenberg, 7th of 12 children

1939

Age 7, Operation Pied Piper commences evacuating children from London

1940

Age 8, September bombing of London begins, continuing through May 1941

02

childhood and war

1941

Cyril goes with brother to live with a family near Market Harborough

Family reunited in Market Harborough, England

1945

Cyril turns 13, VE Day on May 8 marks end of WWII in Europe

1946

Age 14 ½, Cyril apprenticed to Fishberg Jewelry, earning 1 pound per week

Cyril is seated in the darkened Meijer Regency Room of GVSU's DeVos Center in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan, surrounded by lights and cameras, participating in the collection of his own oral history. On this bright September day in 2012, Mary Isca Pirkola, of the university's News and Information Services office, is interviewing him on videotape, in preparation for a Grand Valley Magazine article in advance of the exhibition. Mary has taken Cyril back to his roots, and with his usual sense of humor, he's taking her on a rollicking ride down his memory lane.

The seventh child of Annie (Sussman) and Morris Lixenberg was born in London's East End on July 5, 1932, and given the name Cyril along with the Hebrew name Shalom. The family lived in a ghetto of Orthodox Ashkenazy Judaism in keeping with their faith, and eked out a modest living as best they could in those economically depressed years. "I think (my parents) had little expectations; they were too busy just surviving. I am one of 12 kids and that was really a lot of work for my parents with a minimal income. They were very kind, very gentle people and they managed somehow—I don't ever remember being hungry. There were always the clothes that were passed down from my older brothers to the younger ones, so that was part of living. Everybody helped each other, also the neighbors," Cyril remembers. "I was the seventh kid and I remember that just after the war someone asked me how my parents coped with all these kids? When the war had finished in 1945, I went off to a jamboree, a Jewish youth group camping event. I went on Friday morning (I wasn't allowed to go Friday evening because of the Sabbath) and I came back Sunday evening full of stories of what had happened. My mother didn't even know I was gone!"

The bombing of London during World War II disrupted the continuity of Lixenberg's childhood and education. Like many English children, Cyril and a brother were evacuated from the dangers of London as part of Operation Pied Piper, and sent away to live with strangers. Cyril explains that, "London was heavily bombed by the Germans. In 1941, the idea was to save the kids, because we were on the East End that was really being bombed—I remember these bombs—and we were often in a

temporary shelter behind our house. It was a hut made of corrugated iron, you know, and they were standard. We were the largest family in the neighborhood, and so we had two of these in the garden. Our biggest worry, the biggest disaster in the war for us, was if we had to go in there with Bubbe, our grandmother. Because if you had to go in the shelter with her, and, of course, we were fighting not to, you had to sit and read the holy books whilst rocking and praying, and that's the last thing you wanted to do when you could be watching the searchlights and maybe see if some of the German planes were hit. Later in 1941, the entire family was reunited in the town of Market Harborough, where we had a house until the end of the war. And then we went back to London, to Hackney—a working-class area that I was proud of." Cyril's father hoped that one of his sons would become a rabbi, so a religious education was pursued, but it was not, as Cyril puts it, "my cup of tea." At age 14 he was apprenticed to a gold and silversmith named Fishberg, "learning my trade as a diamond mounter. I made the rings for the stones. Then I discovered that I had the right to go to this art school to learn my trade and the boss was very nice, great guy, and he supported it." Lixenberg remembers several years of combining work with instruction at the London Central School of Arts & Crafts. At some point in his education, he drifted from his craft-focused training into the school's painting and graphic art studios, from which he never looked back. He remembers touring the National Gallery in London as part of his required art history studies. It was there that an encounter with a painting by the Dutch post impressionist painter Vincent Van Gogh changed everything and set Cyril's determination to be an artist.



Black Lion Yard, East End, London
Etching and Aquatint on Paper, ca. 1951
15 5/8" x 11 1/4"

A print produced by Cyril in school survives from this period—an urban street scene of Black Lion Yard in London's East End that would have been familiar to Cyril in his youth. The 1951 work was produced as an exercise in copper plate printing, with elements of etching and aquatint. The composition is a study in contrasts, with dramatic shadowing and use of light. It prefigures an ongoing preoccupation in Lixenberg's work—a delight in exploring opposites, of white and black, open and closed, both familiar and foreboding.

1947

Begins to use Hebrew name of Shalom in place of "Cyril"

1949

Left home at age 17 to attend Central School of Arts & Crafts, London, first in jewelry making, then painting



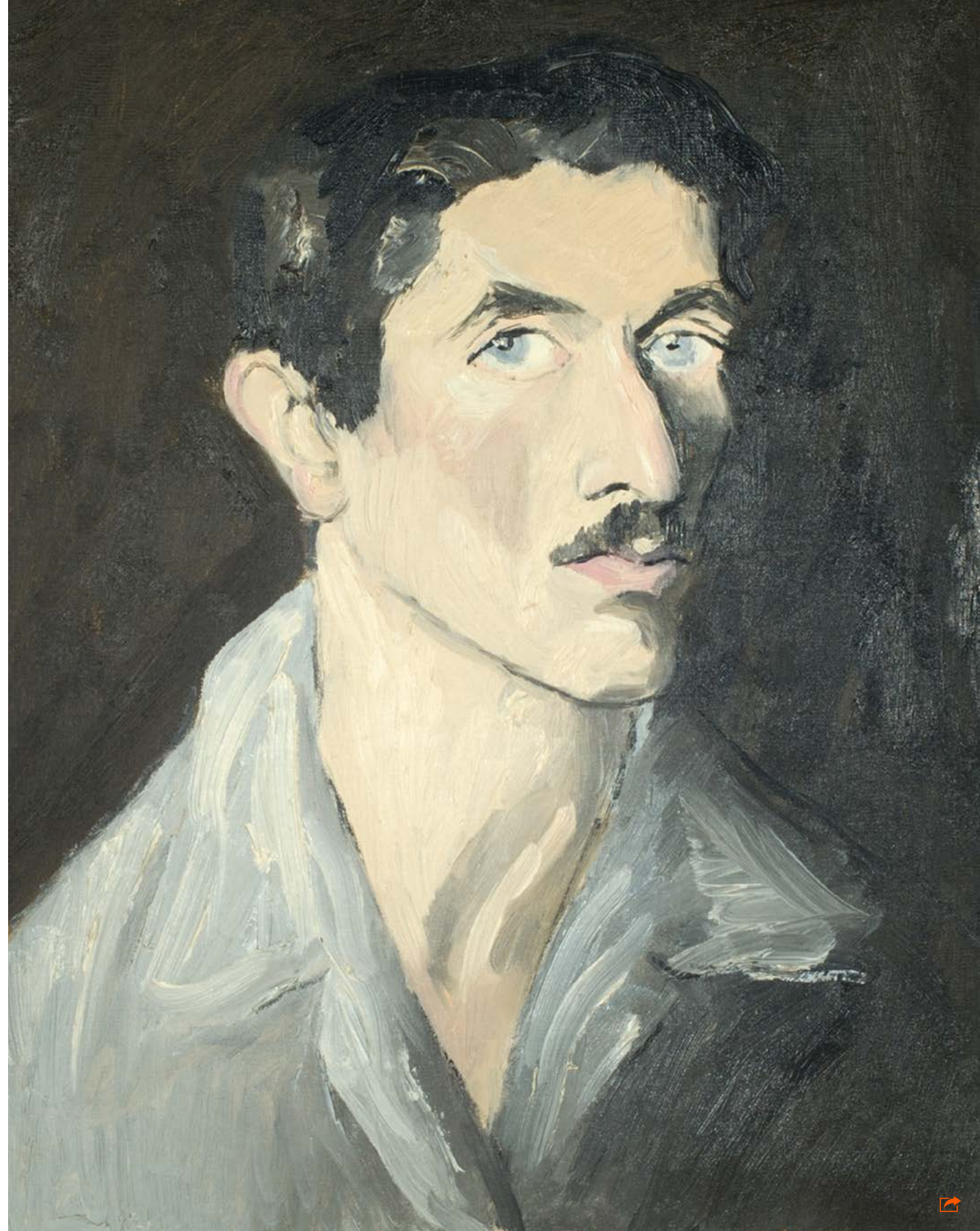
Around the Table

Ink, Ink Wash, and Graphite on Paper, ca. 1956
8 1/2" x 7 1/4"

OPPOSITE PAGE

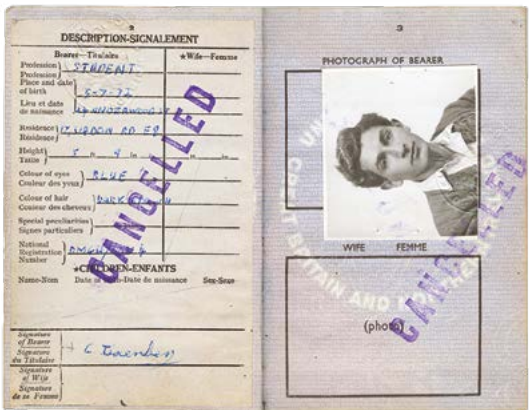
Self Portrait of the Artist

Oil on Canvas, ca. 1960
17 7/8" x 14 3/4"



03

the canvas really scared me



OPPOSITE PAGE

Pages from the artist's
British passport, 1950–1965



At age 21, after working and studying for three years, Cyril recollects that he “spent four years bumming Europe, literally hitchhiking everywhere.” He even journeyed to Arles in the south of France to paint the same bridge that his hero Van Gogh had previously captured on canvas. “One of the good things about coming from a poor family is that you know they can’t help—they would if they could, but they couldn’t. I found my own way. I worked at nighttime. I worked during the day. I worked in factories. I disappeared for a couple of months just to work, and that was accepted. It was an exciting period. I kept going back to Amsterdam. I just loved the city and it became my base. I got homesick not for London, but for Amsterdam.” His growing consciousness of his Jewish heritage and identity was sparked by observing the ruins of World War II and the realities of the Holocaust. He responded by using his Hebrew name, Shalom, in everyday life and to sign his work.

During this period of travel, Lixenberg concentrated on painting portraits and landscapes. He spent a lot of time sketching people from life as he saw them in cafés and on the street. In 1956 he attempted a period of formal study at École des Beaux Arts in Paris, but he found the academic formalism stifling, and he left to return to his self education, alternating periods of painting and working with travel. Israel called to him in 1956, and so he sailed there from France for a brief visit. Four summer months of 1957 were spent in Torremolimos near Málaga, Spain, producing some memorable portraits that captured a new bright palette that replaced the darker colors of his earlier work. “At that time, I’m doing portraits, which I loved. I painted a portrait of my own wife when I met her the first time. When I first went to Holland, I was painting with oil paint on canvases. But I also had very little money, so I would go to the flea market to buy supplies. Once, I bought a huge theatre décor, a theatre canvas in huge pieces. I cut it up, cleaned it up, and painted on it. But my thing is that I never complained that I had no money. You just have to do whatever you have to do. I have painted drawings on cheap paper that has become so terrible and disintegrated, but I did the drawings anyway.”

1950
First passport at 18; is an unsuccessful stowaway on ship to Haifa via Marseilles

1953
Age 21, travels to the Netherlands and begins exploring Europe

1956
Studies briefly at École des Beaux Arts in Paris beginning February 9; visits Israel

1957
In Spain painting near Gibraltar for four months in summer

1958
Worked on French Pavilion at Expo 58, the Brussels World's Fair; again in Israel

Reading

Sepia Ink Wash on Paper
ca. 1958
5 1/8" x 4 3/4"

OPPOSITE PAGE

Two Men Seated

Ink on Paper
ca. 1958
10" x 12"



After working on the construction crew that completed the [French Pavilion at Expo 58](#), the Brussels World's Fair, he used his wages to again visit Israel, sketching quick and masterful studies that capture the street and café life of Jerusalem on scraps of paper and in a composition book that survives in the university's archives.

"In those days I was just busy painting," recalls Lixenberg. "When I left school, I had what I call the 'white canvas syndrome.' You're leaving the academy,

you have no commissions. They don't tell you, 'Do this now,' a certain motif. I was really a little nervous. The canvas really scared me. So I spent a period doing a lot of drawings, which I loved. In 1958 I was in Israel for one of my visits, and I would draw people sitting in the Arab cafés. My first genre was pretty much portraits. They were always expressionistic."



04

developing an expressive vision

Lixenberg loved Amsterdam for its casual qualities and for the active art world that he found there in the late 1950s. But he was increasingly drawn to something else—the attentions, the influences and his love for Saskia Thomas, whom he would marry in 1964.

The art scene in Amsterdam was active and vivid when Lixenberg arrived in 1958. The postwar Cobra movement was on the wane as an active group of artists, but the effect of its tenets would have influence for many years. Taking its name from the home cities of its founders, **Cobra (or CoBrA)** was an art movement emanating from Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam that took its artistic cues and license from the immediate qualities of drawings by children, and from the freedom from academic Western forms that could be seen in so-called “primitive art” as the term was used then. An opposing school of geometric abstraction also reigned in Amsterdam, based in a resurgence of interest in the 1920s constructivist art of **de Stijl**. While Lixenberg would eventually be drawn to this latter school as his artistic vision developed, he still resists being defined as indicative of any particular style. For a time, his work looked to the Fauves, while the expressive brush of the Cobra artists also inspired his quick gestural images of the 1960s.

24

1958

Back to Amsterdam to live—address/studio at Oudezijds Achterburgwal 171

1959

First solo exhibition, held at Galerie H. Larsen in Copenhagen

1964

Begins receiving state support “Contraprestatie” through Gemeentelijke Dienst voor Sociaal Zaher and Plaatselijke Commissie voor Sociaal Kunstopdrachten

May 13, marries Saskia Henriette Maria Thomas

Daughter, Dana, born September 15

OPPOSITE PAGE

Model (Tineke) in the Artist's Studio at Oudezijds Achterburgwal 171, Amsterdam, 1959
Photograph by Maria Austria
GVSU Lixenberg Archival Collection

His first years in Amsterdam are those of a young artist working feverishly to refine and develop his vision. Careful looking at his work from this period shows that he was studying works by the masters Van Gogh, Picasso and Modigliani. By his own admission, he was drawn to the work of other artists of the previous generation such as Jules Pascin (1885–1930) whose brothel paintings charmed him as well as Chaim Soutine (1893–1943) a French painter who, like Lixenberg, came from eastern European Jewish origins. Lixenberg also admired the work of the German designer Max Bill (1908–1994) and Lucio Fontana (1899–1968), an Argentine artist of Italian descent who became well known for his slashed canvases that sought to introduce spatial qualities to heretofore flat paintings. Fontana, like many other artists of the postwar generation, found it difficult to ignore the horrors of the conflict only to return to the canons of art that flourished in the past. From each and every one of these artists, Lixenberg saw and absorbed, noting each expressive trend while moving toward the development of his own expressive vision.

Lixenberg also developed his eye through active and even compulsive collecting. When he first found a studio on the edge of Amsterdam's Red Light district at Oudezijds Achterburgwal 171, he began to collect prints and graphic art portfolios, both by trading art with his contemporaries and also buying at auctions. Soon, this was followed by acquisitions of African and Polynesian tribal art, with which he surrounds





OPPOSITE PAGE

***View of the Zuiderkerk,
Amsterdam***

Oil on Canvas, ca. 1964
20 3/4" x 17 3/8"

himself to this day. Grand Valley State University was the beneficiary of this collecting impulse when the Brooks family of Holland underwrote the purchase of nearly 500 works on paper by contemporary Dutch artists that were housed in Lixenberg's studio.

"My first one-man exhibition was in 1959 in Copenhagen, I'll never forget it," remembers Cyril. "I went on a train with bundles of canvases, incredible. When you have no money you have to find another way. That was in 1959 at the Henning Larsen Gallery in Bredgade, opposite the ferry. But then I did sell my art to the embassy, I sold a lot of paintings here, a couple of paintings there."

His early exhibited work took the form of landscapes, amidst occasional portraits and nude studies. "I just love the landscape," says Lixenberg, "even when I was going toward abstraction. It's a very Dutch influence—the huge sky and the horizon—I've done a fair amount of those paintings. In some of my first graphic prints, there was a horizon, a line and the sky. That continues to very much be some inspiration which I use—a constant theme in my background."

Lixenberg recalls that his work and his lifestyle slowly became more stable financially. "Slowly but surely, I found support through grants. There was one from De Swann Foundation, and then later a Ministry of Culture grant from the Prins Bernhard Fonds. It wasn't much, like 200 guilders, I don't know, 150 a month. But I could do things with that. I began to have to buy materials and later I got into a Dutch system which supported artists. In those days it was called 'Contraprestatie' and it hasn't existed now for 50 years—it's gone.

I was very grateful for it. I used that for about four years until I could make my own way and I began to get commissions, but that was the first time I could really buy good materials, canvases. You'll see the difference in my work over that time. Someone once asked me, 'Why is it you've suddenly got red on the canvas?' Well, I had money to buy red, and red is more expensive than black or white. That's not a reason to make art, I know, I know.

"When I did start earning money is when I started getting commissions. One of my first commissions was for a wijkcentrum, a community center in Geuzenweld, a neighborhood of Amsterdam. I did two big canvases, pretty much my last canvases. Then I got into the silk-screen prints, and I got a commission for a silk-screen print for a social workplace for big prints, huge, large-size prints, large-size graphics. I had periods where in some years I had like four or five commissions, so I began to earn well, which was very pleasing."

By 1972 Cyril and his family were settled into a 17th century canal house he would later purchase and restore. Life was more stable, and he was morphing from an Englishman into a Dutchman. He recalls, "In the old days people used to ask me what language I dreamed in when I first moved to the Netherlands and I spoke the language. I think very much it was English then, but now I'm convinced it's Dutch. Absolutely convinced. I don't think in English anymore."



Increasingly, Cyril Lixenberg found it harder to paint benign subjects like landscapes. His growing understanding of what the war of his youth entailed and its cost to the Jewish people troubled him. It occupied his mind and eventually his painting.

"I had a whole period when I had my expression through landscape. But there was an aggressiveness coming into them; in the sky there were birds coming down, and the birds became very violent. One of my themes came from the stories I liked as a kid, especially the Golem, the monster of clay that the Jews (of Prague) made to defend themselves. I liked that story, so in some of my work I have the Golem striding through the landscape, attacking. There's a certain amount of aggressiveness in my work from this time.

"It's never something that you consciously know you are working through—it had something very much to do with the war. I hardly ever speak about it because it sounds like exaggerated emotions. You know, what have I got to do with the war? But it was part of the background of life, and maybe that's part of what an artist can do. My anger merged with Vietnam, the Holocaust. I discovered these empty houses in the area of my studio in Amsterdam. The Judenbreestraat, literally 'Jewish Wide Street' is what it's called, and there was nobody left there after the war! Holland lost, percentage-wise, the most Jews of all of Europe. So with all of the talk about how Holland helped the Jews—it did after the war, but ... Anyway, so that's part of my anger, and it's got its own emotional energy. Then once you start painting—I don't paint just one, I'm not an illustrator in that sense—so you paint a series, a period in your life, and you're not aware that you're going through it, you just do it."

05

anger, emotion, then clarity

This was a time of great transition in Lixenberg's work. He was increasingly frustrated by what he called the "muddiness" of his paintings, both visually and in terms of their content. He sought greater clarity, and he found it initially by making monoprints, and then eventually in hard-edged silk-screen prints. This transition was mirrored by a shift from gestural abstract expressionism, to a pure form of geometric abstraction, made unique by consistently playing and experimenting with contrasting opposites. His monoprints were made on aluminum and zinc plates, using etching inks, waxes and acids, and then running the image through a printer's mangle, transferring the image onto a single sheet of etching paper.

These one-of-a-kind monoprints led to experimentation through the addition of cut-out stencils into the mix. In 1968, one of these monoprints was used by INELCO for its artwork on a release poster for the hit RCA single [MacArthur Park](#), written by Jimmy Webb and performed by Richard Harris. Cyril Lixenberg had arrived! He returned to the regular use of his given name to sign his work, and began producing his first geometric abstract silk-screen prints.

1966

A 1964 mixed media painting by Lixenberg in the collection of the Netherlands Trade Union is published

1968

Short art films "Portrait of the Artist" and "The Artist's Struggle" made of and by Cyril working with photographer Anton Haarkman using name Liryc Grebnexil

Possible date for Lixenberg graphic art poster for [MacArthur Park](#) hit single release

Eddie Adams AP photo of Vietcong prisoner executed inspires [Vietnam](#) painting

OPPOSITE PAGE

[Vietnam](#)

Oil on Canvas, ca. 1968
55 1/8" x 43 1/2"



Golem

Oil on Canvas, ca. 1965
43 1/4" x 35 1/2"



MacArthur Park

Offset Lithograph, ca. 1968
11" x 15"

GVSU Lixenberg Archival Collection

1969
First American exhibition
at Kravetz Gallery,
Rochester, NY

1970
Stops signing work as
"Shalom" and returns
to "Cyril"

06

collaboration and exhibitions

1970
Participates in the
50x50 project: 50 artists
exhibiting their prints in
50 cities in honor of the
Queen Mother Juliana

1971
Commission for Schiphol
Airport, Amsterdam

1972
Son, Onno, born July 14

1977
Traveling exhibitions in
Franeker and Haarlem

1980
Traveling exhibition in
Venlo, Almere, and
Apeldoorn

Lixenberg had a huge break when he received a commission for an employee canteen at the new Schiphol airport in Amsterdam in 1971. He recalls, "I had a commission from the Ministry of Civil Aviation and that was where they controlled the air traffic, a big tower. For me, it was one of the biggest commissions that I had, and there was really a lot of money available. I had to take a risk because I had to work alongside the architect, with whom I got along very well. I hadn't yet got the commission; it wasn't OK'd yet, so he was saying 'Cyril, if you start working now you'll have to do it. If you don't get the commission you're going to lose out.' I said, 'Well, that's my risk.' I had to make a lot of drawings of my designs, which were to be integrated into the building on certain walls, and in the canteen's floor. I did that and I got the commission!"

OPPOSITE PAGE

Untitled Abstraction
Mixed Media Print on Paper, ca. 1968
25 5/8" x 19 10/16"

The 1970s proved to be a period of extraordinary productivity for Lixenberg. Commissions for art in new buildings were obtained that built upon his previous experience collaborating with architects. Lixenberg's designs began to become very architectural in nature, produced in structural steel, poured concrete and even in earthworks that manipulated the landscape. It was from these creative encounters that Lixenberg's graphic work began to translate into both small scale and monumental sculpture that embraced new materials like plexiglas, stainless steel and COR-TEN steel. He developed a practice of both painting his steel sculptures black, yellow and blue, but also allowing them to develop a protective and highly colorful and rich coating of rust.

Important exhibitions ensued that were not only accompanied by illustrated catalogs, but which traveled to multiple cities and museums in the Netherlands. 1977 saw Lixenberg exhibiting in Franeker and Haarlem, and in 1980, his work was seen in Venlo, Almere and Apeldoorn. A beautifully produced, hardbound text simply entitled *Lixenberg* was produced in 1988 with a foreward by Renée Waale, Curator of Amsterdam's influential Jewish Historical Museum and with an influential and comprehensive essay by art historian Frans Duister and photographs by Jan Snoek and Cyril's daughter, Dana Lixenberg.





GVSU's Director of Galleries and Collections Henry Matthews remembers that he first met Cyril Lixenberg when the artist was installing a solo exhibition of his own small-scale sculptures, enameled metal plates and related colorful prints in Ann Arbor. "That 1984 show at the University of Michigan Museum of Art impressed me with its expressive range and depth reached with a limited visual vocabulary, consisting almost exclusively of basic geometric shapes: circles, squares and triangles," Matthews recalls.

Lixenberg recounts his process for creating his sculptures. "For every major monumental sculpture I make a model. I really always want a scale model. I had this nice exhibition in Holland, Michigan, in 2003 at the Holland Area Arts Council on 8th Street called *Leading to Monumental Sculpture* that explored this process. Literally, I crumpled paper up, and then tore up paper in the way I work, and then I made sketches, and finally I made a model—a small model of what I want—and that was very important for the steel firms that I work with to fabricate sculpture. They know more or less what I want. And that's how it still works. Often, I make small multiples in addition to these models and I love doing that. And what I often make large of COR-TEN steel, or rusting iron—for the small sizes I like it in stainless steel—a more aesthetic material."

OPPOSITE PAGE

Artist in studio with daughter, Dana, 1969
Photograph by Dolf Toussaint
GVSU Lixenberg Archival Collection

07

the commission of a lifetime

Two extraordinary events took shape slowly through the 1980s and 1990s that added an environmental dimension to Lixenberg's art. He continued his trend of breaking out of museum galleries and into outdoor public spaces with an installation project presented as part of an exhibition entitled *Symbols and Forms* held in Breda in 1983. The art historian Frans Duister describes the work as "three steel objects, placed in the central verge of the road leading into the centre of Breda. They were placed in line with some distance between them. Together, they embodied Lixenberg's approach to three-dimensional art. A square, a circle and a triangle, which, viewed from the passing cars, were moving in a relationship to each other depending on the speed of the cars, and so continually resulting in a different combination." The three sculptures, Duister observed, supported Lixenberg's contention "that a great deal can be achieved using only the most simple shapes as a starting point."

1983
In NYC with wife, Saskia;
invited to lecture in
Ann Arbor, Michigan

1984
One-man exhibition at
University of Michigan
Museum of Art

1985
Meets Henry Matthews

1987
Famous dijk/
landschapproject on
Kettelmeer Dike,
Dronten, Flevoland

1988
One-man exhibition at
Muskegon Museum of Art

1991
Purchases 17th century
canal house at Leliegracht
24, Amsterdam

1998
Produces outdoor
exhibition of 26 sculptures
for town of Dronten,
Flevoland

Zuil C and Zuil D

Dronten 25+1 Project

Painted Steel, 1997

8' x 15 3/4" x 9 1/2"

OPPOSITE PAGE

From the exhibition

Symbols and Forms

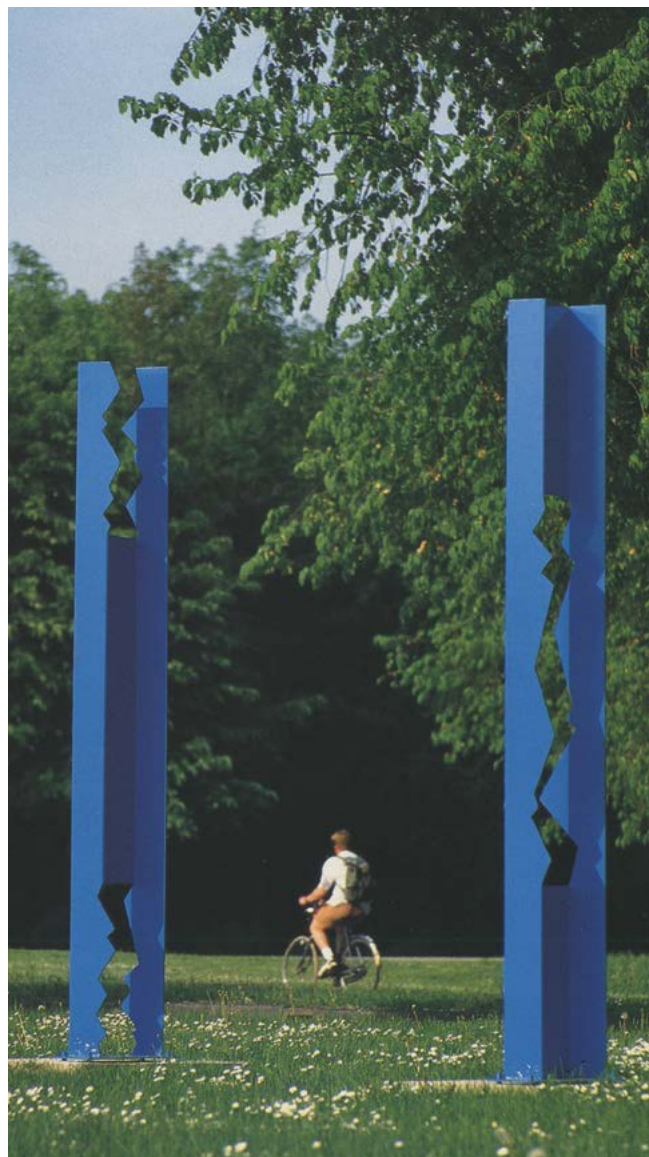
Breda, 1983

Photographer Unknown

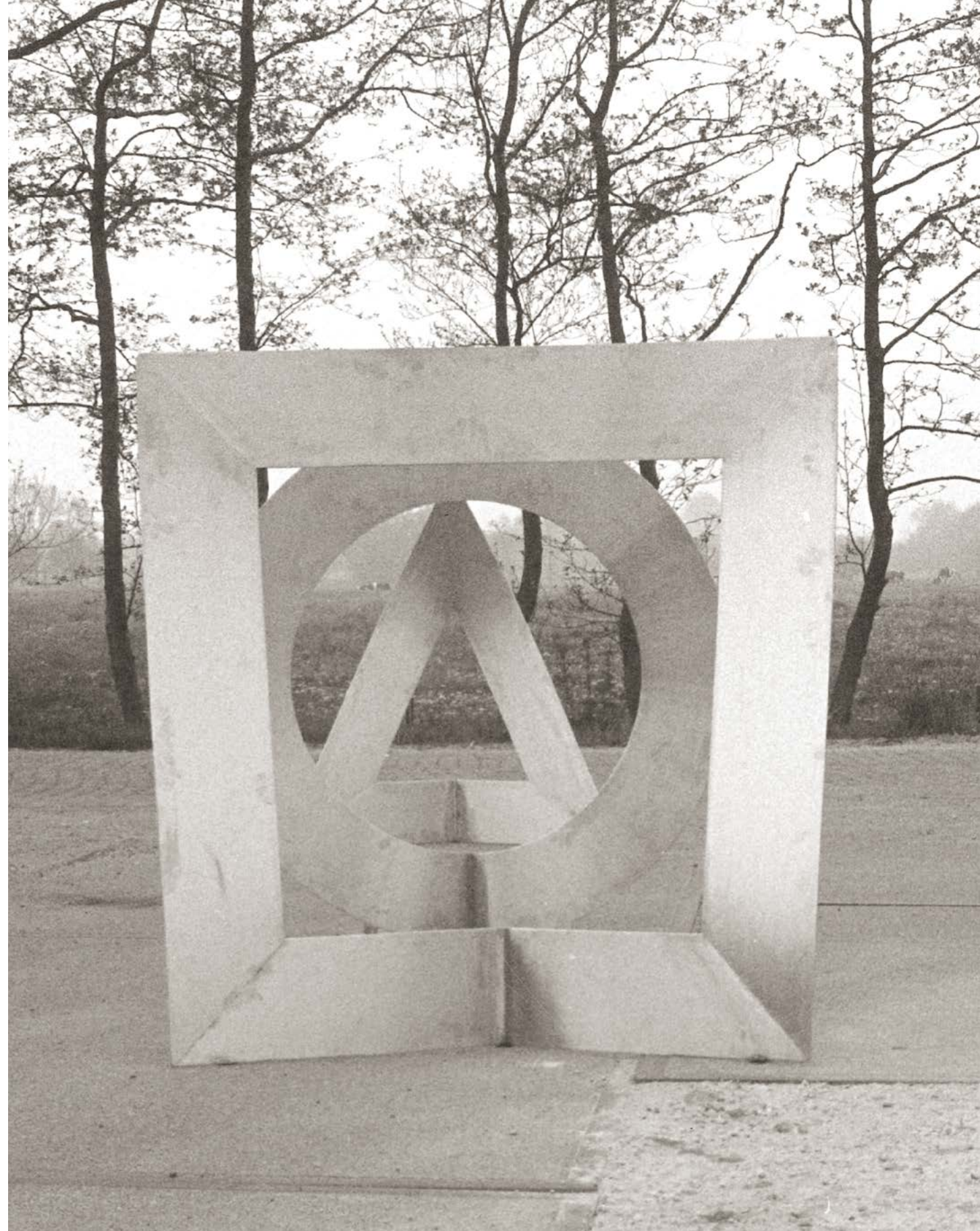
GVSU Lixenberg Archival Collection

In 1987, this same series went on to be installed in a [*Beelden op de dijk/ Sculpture on the dike*](#) project alongside the road atop the Ketelmeer Dike in Dronten, in the province of Flevoland, where they remain highly regarded as one of Lixenberg's most iconic sculptural installations.

The success of this project led to another extraordinary undertaking, also in Dronten, that culminated with the creation over 10 years of 26 sculptures placed in and around the relatively new town. Flevoland is literally a "new land"—a polder slowly reclaimed from what was once the Zuiderzee and then platted for settlement. Working with architects and urban planners when the town was only 25 years old, and still sparsely settled, Lixenberg populated the avenues, squares and traffic rotaries of the new town with his sculptural visions based on his "cultural policy of the capricious," as he referred to it. The resulting permanent [*open-air exhibition of his work*](#) also functioned as a sort of gallery, exposing his designs to thousands of prospective clients.



The inauguration of *Kijken met Lixenberg/ Looking with Lixenberg* took place in September 1998, accompanied by another comprehensive art publication, *Cyril Lixenberg 25+1, Grafiek, Sculptuur, Multiples*. It was, as Lixenberg noted, "the commission of a lifetime!"



08

experiments in light and environment

38

1999

Ontmoeting commissioned by Holland Hospital, Holland, Michigan

2000

Wife Saskia dies of cancer

2002

Donates his graphic work to GVSU, produces sculpture *Amaranth* for GVSU

2007

Steel Water dedicated September in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan

Amaranth, created in 2002 for a new addition to Grand Valley State University's Mackinac Hall, reflects a subtle shift that occurred in Lixenberg's work as the 21st century dawned. His strict use of geometric forms was never rigid or dogmatic, but his new work began to include natural, organic and even sinuous lines that pushed his exploration of polar opposites in new, more emotional directions. The shimmering visual subtleties that change with each passing hour of daylight, as seen in his 2007 work *Steel Water*, signal new experiments with both light and the environment of his works.

"*Steel Water* in 2007 was a major commission," recounts Lixenberg, telling the story of this monumental sculpture which marks the Grand Rapids riverfront with distinction in the heart of its downtown.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Cyril during the fabrication of *Steel Water* at Leitelt Iron Works in Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2007
Photo by Brian Kelly Photography

"The first story I heard about the opportunity is that three artists were to be selected to make a proposal and it was to commemorate that Grand Rapids was the first city in the world to add fluoride to its water. In Grand Rapids they did it in 1945. We think we're very advanced in the Netherlands and we only did it in the '60s. In the old days, kids would be leaving secondary school with false teeth. Suddenly there was fluoride, which literally saved the kids' teeth. The idea was that they wanted the sculpture to have nothing to do directly with dentistry, just to commemorate that date, that innovation. They didn't want a rotten tooth hanging. That's why I think the JW Marriott Hotel joined in sponsoring this project because they didn't want to end up with a rotten tooth next to their wonderful hotel. That was an exciting project.

"I'll never forget the day we had to submit our designs, we also had to talk about our designs to a public audience. I remember I was warned by friends to not make any dentist jokes. I managed to control myself until after our formalities. A facet of my work is that I love to relate to a commission in my own way. For me, the idea of *Steel Water*, and of dentistry and oral health, is very much based on water. And the site was by the river, the Grand River, and that's a wonderful situation to be given to be creative with. The river was literally the inspiration to make this *Steel Water*.





Magela-S was made for ArtPrize 2010 and was exhibited on the grounds of the Fulton Street side of GVSU's Pew Campus in downtown Grand Rapids. Lixenberg was pleased that he was able to convince the steel firms with which he had worked on other commissions in Grand Rapids and elsewhere in West Michigan to sponsor it. He explains, "It was all sponsored. It was a lot of work for everybody, but I enjoyed it. It was a great opportunity to make one large sculpture I think six meters high to the memory of my wife, Saskia, who died in 2000. It's called *Magela-S* and it's based on the classic story that's thousands of years old of when Queen Esther saved the Jewish people."

The sculpture's form, that of two vertical tablet or scroll forms, has its basis in the biblical story of Queen Esther, which is traditionally recorded in scroll form and read in synagogues in early spring on the Jewish holiday of [Purim](#). The story is often read from illuminated scrolls that have meaning when read both horizontally and vertically. The Jewish holiday of Purim commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish citizens of Persia from their annihilation as plotted by the king's vizier, Haman, in the fifth century BCE.

organic surprises

09

OPPOSITE PAGE

Magela-S

COR-TEN Steel, 2010
211" x 96"

His plan was foiled by the Persian queen, Esther, who was Jewish, and by her uncle, Mordecai. In addition to the reading of the story of Queen Esther in synagogues, the holiday is further celebrated by feasting, exchanging gifts of food with friends and by giving alms to the poor.

Cyril explains the deep meaning the sculpture holds for him: "Although I'd created memorial sculptures previously, I was unable to do so when my wife, Saskia, died 10 years ago—it was too close to me then. But a few years ago, whilst working on new work for an exhibition, I got the inspiration to finally create a tribute to my wife. *Magela* (sometimes spelled *megillah*) is a Yiddish and Hebrew word that also indicates a long, detailed story or account.

"Although in a literal sense, this two-part sculpture is unreadable in its detail, it is nevertheless my story of and for Saskia, both vertically and horizontally. It is an abstract text. Nobody can read it, I can't read it. *Megillah* literally in Hebrew means story, but *S* stands not for Esther, but for Saskia. So it's like a combination of actual history and my history. Throughout my career as an artist, I've sometimes used biblical names for my titles, because I was brought up with the Old Testament."

2010

Participates in ArtPrize, produces *Magela-S* in memory of late wife, Saskia

2012

Invited to design a proposed monument for visitor center for the [UNESCO Heritage Site Defense Line of Amsterdam](#) (1874–1963) (Stelling van Amsterdam)

Donates early paintings, prints, drawings and archives to GVSU

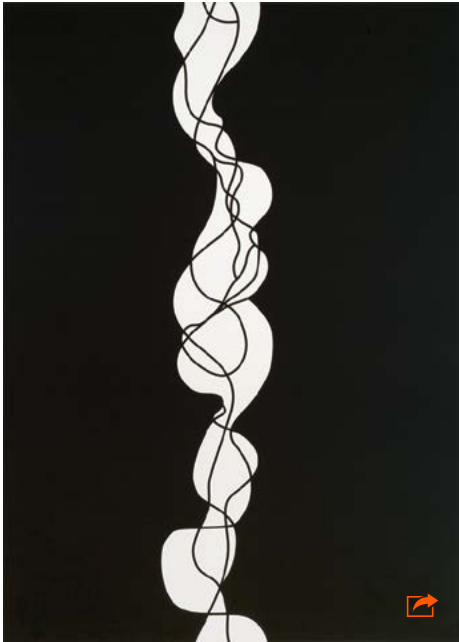
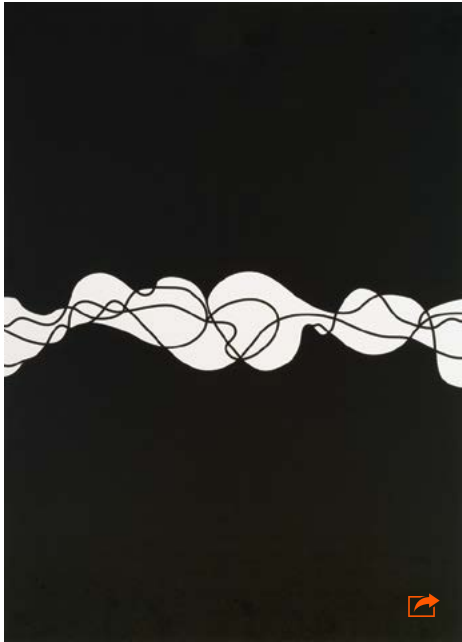
Magela-S
Silkscreen, 2007
27 1/2" x 19 3/4"

Magela-S
Silkscreen, 2007
27 1/2" x 19 3/4"

OPPOSITE PAGE

Artist with sculpture,
Magela-S, 2012

Photo by GVSU News
and Information
Services



Henry Matthews wrote in 2010 that, "Lixenberg has continued to develop a visually expressive and emotional language within his geometric constraints with remarkable range and subtlety. This artist/communicator is always articulate and precise. Surprisingly, his unique oeuvre is embedded with a gentle, humanizing sense of humor. Cold and academic in lesser hands, primary geometric forms become highly expressive with Lixenberg. His recent work continues to extract organic surprises as can be seen in his recent monumental sculpture in Grand Rapids, Michigan, entitled *Steel Water*. The impeccable craftsman in this artist insists on the highest standards of his art, always remaining in complete control over the smallest detail. The remarkable resulting works of art are embedded with a seemingly effortless visual control."

Noting the new directions of Lixenberg's recent work, Matthews observed, "His new and innovative geometric point and counterpoint work infused with a playful organic quality has recently grown in exposure through a series of exhibitions and group shows throughout Europe and the United States. These new creations are eagerly anticipated by all who have been touched by this prolific, tireless artist."

That exposure has increased dramatically in recent years as Lixenberg has exhibited in places like Naples, southern France, Germany and in the Netherlands, The Hague. In 2010, he was invited to exhibit in a group show entitled *Monumental and Intimate Art* at the [MADI Museum of Geometric and MADI Art](#) in Dallas, Texas, from October 8, 2010, through January 2, 2011.



10

i've never been 80 before ...

44

Lixenberg is curiously energized and engaged by the planning and organizing of the exhibition *Cyril Lixenberg: an Artist's Journey*. It has involved a disruption of his Amsterdam home, attic and studio for almost 20 months. He explains that, "It's an exciting project. The university was interested in making a retrospective of my work, including my older work. What I was surprised about is that I saved so many of these old paintings and these works on paper, which I haven't seen for so many years, and I became very excited. That was the beginning of my relationship to this project. So I made the decision to donate many of the older works to add to the existing collection. It's great that [Grand Valley State University would have the largest collection of my work ever](#), so of course I like it, and I like that it will be used."

2013

River Avenue monumental sculpture design selected for City of Holland, Michigan

December 7, Cyril is awarded Doctor of Human Letters degree honoris causa by Grand Valley State University

OPPOSITE PAGE

Formed Landscape

Mixed Media on Paper, ca. 1961

8 3/4" x 12 1/2"

Lixenberg's 2013 concept for a monumental sculpture project for River Avenue in Holland, Michigan has its roots in the design ideas of this work on paper executed in 1961.

I still like the idea of making new work. Of course, it's different than in the old days. I don't lift and carry the work myself anymore. I work with firms. So, I sit there in the steel firm while I'm making it and I'm normally there for every bend, like when *Steel Water* was being fabricated. I remember that in Holland, Michigan, once, I was working on a big steel commission, and someone, one of the workers, remarked to me while I was sitting there saying, 'Now I think you have to bend it a little more.' He said, 'Mr. Lixenberg, have you ever actually worked?' I said, 'Yeah, three years ago on a Wednesday afternoon, I really worked like mad.' So, I do work.

"From here on out? That's a wonderful question. I have no answer, but I hope I remain capable. You know, I have this new commission now in Holland, Michigan. And I was also approached in the Netherlands for a huge commission for a sculpture connected with the [Stelling van Amsterdam](#), a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is the old defense fortifications that ring the city. I eventually got it, but they have to get funds raised first. In America it's much more normal to do that, but in the Netherlands it's a little more complicated.

"I don't want to say, 'Oh yes, my work is changing just because I'm getting older.' I don't know what the consequences are of getting older.

"I've never been 80 before. It's a one-time thing," he observes with a huge grin.



45



lixenberg in context

BY ELLEN E. ADAMS, PH.D.

48

Examining Cyril Lixenberg’s oeuvre is like browsing through a modern-art collection. His career arc closely tracks consecutive postwar modernist styles and moves through gestural abstraction and figural painting—spurred on by movements such as [Cobra](#) and [Art Informel](#)—geometric abstraction, and finally monumental public art. While Amsterdam has been his home for 50 years, it also served as the home base from which the young itinerant artist, a self-proclaimed “hitchhiker,” explored Europe. Wide-ranging in his interests, subjects and style, Lixenberg’s artistic and intellectual education combined formal and informal training, a healthy dose of museum study and a very curious eye.

Artists of Lixenberg’s era customarily pursued at least some formal instruction in European art academies. And many of them, like Lixenberg, found the atmosphere suffocating. [Corneille](#), a founding member of Cobra, recalled young artists’ attitudes toward academic preparation: “When they try to impose a certain type of education on you and ... you turn it down, that sharpens your character, you take a stand as an individual. To act against the established rules. In the [Academy](#) they continued

OPPOSITE PAGE

Karel Appel
Two Heads (Deux Têtes)
Oil on Canvas, 1953
78 3/4" × 29 1/2" (200 x 75 cm)
Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum, New York
53.1363

to teach in an incredibly classical way. What good does it do to forever draw from plaster casts? We were wasting our time drawing incredibly boring Greek or Roman plaster casts.” It might seem that, by rejecting the Academy, artists simply opted for an alternate means of learning. What they ultimately challenged, however, was the entire Western tradition of art. Academic artistic training dates to the Middle Ages when craft guilds gained prominence. Renaissance sculptors, painters and architects honed their physical skills and developed their humanist minds (understood at the time as separate endeavors) in Florentine and Roman academies. The French Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, established during the reign of Louis XIV, presented a new model for artistic development that brought all aspects of art-making under centralized control. The Academy codified the hierarchy of genres (historical and sacramental subjects reigned supreme), emphasized convention over experimentation, and turned to nature as a means to the ideal. While much had changed in the 20th century, most notably the inclusion of female artists, the reliance on convention and a strict adherence to drawing from nature remained.

49







PREVIOUS SPREAD

Cyril Lixenberg
Cave Painting
 Oil on Canvas, 1961
 24 3/4" × 15 3/4"

OPPOSITE PAGE

Hans Hartung
T. 1956-14
 Oil on Canvas, 1956
 70 7/8" × 53 1/2"
*The Centre Pompidou,
 Paris, France
 National Museum of
 Modern Art/Industrial
 Design Centre
 AM 1977–550*

From the Impressionists to the Surrealists, generations of artists already rejected academic ideals and principles, but the assault on classical aesthetics seen in the aftermath of World War II involved what art historian Hal Foster has termed a "calculated deskillings of the tableau," a conscious and in some cases brutal disorderliness. [Karel Appel's *Two Heads*](#) demonstrates this disruptive painterly style. Here, Appel applies pigment in the willfully childlike and coarse manner embraced by Cobra and displays his interest in a crude form of tribal art. The experimental nature of Cobra, with its seemingly spontaneous and expressionistic facture and varied sources, was embraced by a wide-ranging group of artists who for three short years worked to oppose, in the words of its founding manifesto, "all sterile and dogmatic theories." Academic painting became anathema, as did the artists' reliance purely on Western sources for inspiration.

Like Lixenberg, the artists associated with Cobra were internationalist in background and outlook. Born in Paris in 1948, Cobra nonetheless rejected the strictures of the French capital in favor of viewpoints and models drawn from the histories and home cities of its members: Copenhagen ([Carl-Henning Pedersen](#) and [Asger Jorn](#), members of the Danish Experimental Group); Brussels (the Centre Surréaliste révolutionnaire de Belgique, which included [Christian Dotremont](#) and [Joseph Noiret](#)); and Amsterdam (Appel, Constant, and Corneille, who comprised the Dutch Experimental Group). Intensely collective, activist, and ultimately ephemeral, the group profoundly impacted the postwar avant-garde. Following the example of interwar artist groups,

Cobra published its own journal (*Cobra*, 10 issues); produced statements and manifestos; and organized collective events, such as exhibitions, group meetings and seminars. Also akin to earlier avant-garde groups, Cobra counted artists, poets and writers among its members, who often collaborated on books and works of art. Ideas proliferated widely, and the influence of Cobra lingered far beyond the three years of its organized activities.

Amsterdam's modern and contemporary art museum, the [Stedelijk](#), showcased Cobra in a major exhibition in 1949 and amassed a large collection of Cobra art, which ensured that its effects remained palpable. The museum's holdings blossomed during the late 1940s and 1950s after the lean years of the war to include [German Expressionism](#), [de Stijl](#), [Russian Constructivism](#) and contemporary Dutch art. The Stedelijk thus provided an institutional context for the flourishing artistic community in Amsterdam that welcomed Lixenberg in 1958. Led by the pioneering designer [Willem Sandberg](#), the museum allowed artists working in the Netherlands to experience global trends in art firsthand. Sandberg envisioned a museum that played a key role in the cultural and intellectual life of the city, and with the addition of the "New Wing" in 1954, the institution offered the Dutch capital an open, democratic and interactive site. The director also organized international exhibitions during his tenure, including the Cobra show, a survey of *de Stijl* (1951) and "Bauen und Formen in Holland, 1920 bis Heute," a highly didactic exhibition that examined the complex interplay between Dutch architecture and design (1958).

By exhibiting the more expressionistic Cobra works as well as rational, mathematical architectural design and de Stijl, the Stedelijk participated in the postwar debates on artistic form that permeated a range of European art centers. Across the continent, both abstract and figurative artists employed expressionist visual vocabularies that refer back to early twentieth century modes. Movements such as [Art Brut](#), with its rough treatment of materials, and Art Informel, which employed an almost calligraphic application of paint, demonstrated variations of these styles. [T. 1956–14](#), by Hans Hartung, a German-born artist working in France, exemplifies the expressive qualities of Art Informel. Thin layers of opaque black paint, applied over a pale blue background, congregate at the center of the canvas. The gestural lines seem like simple ink marks writ large, and indeed in his works of the '50s, the artist translated smaller-size, spontaneous pen-and-ink drawings into grander paintings.

The use of expressionist facture resulted from more than just formal artistic needs. Larger historical exigencies also shaped the life and art of painters and sculptors returning to their craft after the war. Lixenberg settled in the Netherlands just as that nation was starting to come to terms with its contribution to the plight of its Jewish citizens during World War II, a reckoning that would gain acute traction in Europe during the Israeli and German trials of the early '60s, most prominently that of [Adolf Eichmann](#). Lixenberg's own Jewish heritage, coupled with visits to Israel in 1956 and 1958, contributed to an awareness (called a "[pain of knowledge](#)" elsewhere) that the artist ultimately addressed through artistic expression. This overarching grief and consciousness

of conflict colored postwar art created throughout Europe, from Englishman [Francis Bacon's](#) silently screaming visages to [Georg Baselitz's](#) distorted figures in Germany to the violently slashed canvases of the Italian [Lucio Fontana](#). Such artists found in expressionism a potent language to communicate not specific events but rather to respond to the brutal conditions of the time. With a comparable fervor, Lixenberg again turned to expressionist facture to work through the mind-numbing violence later wrought in Vietnam.

At the same time that postwar expressionists were transmitting abstract and energetic marks onto canvas, hard-edged, geometric methods descended from Russian Constructivism and de Stijl also enjoyed a renewed vigor. Artists from the interwar period such as [Piet Mondrian](#), [Vasily Kandinsky](#), [Jean Arp](#) and [Antoine Pevsner](#) influenced the geometric tendencies of postwar abstraction, like those promoted by [Art Concret](#) ("Concrete Art"), which had its roots in the 1930s. Based on a Constructivist utopian ideal, Art Concret narrowly defined abstract art as non figurative, that is, art that emanates from the mind of the creator, rather than evolving from natural forms. Art Concret had its champion in Swiss designer and theorist [Max Bill](#) who broadcast his ideas in a review—*Abstrakt/Konkret*, which ran for 12 issues in the mid-1940s—and organized exhibitions including "Concrete Art: 50 Years of Development," held in Zurich in 1960, which proved key in establishing Art Concret as an international style. Bill's works, which encompassed print graphics, industrial and small-scale product design, and freestanding sculpture, adhered to Art Concret principles.



Max Bill
Unit of Three Elements
 Granite, 1965
 31" × 51 1/2" × 38"
 Photo by Ralph Lieberman
 Storm King Art Center,
 Mountainville, New York

Lixenberg's embrace of a harder-edged, geometric approach that produced both two-dimensional and larger-scale three-dimensional works coincided roughly with his winning public art commissions from Dutch municipalities. His public works of art, mostly sculpture, contributed to a long-standing practice. Art has occupied the civic domain since ancient Egypt and spans the entirety of genres. Public funds historically enriched architecture (think of Pericles raiding Delian League funds to construct the Acropolis),

sculpture (the humanist call to beautify public spaces partially explains Michelangelo's David, which has dominated one of the most important squares in Florence since its completion) and painting (the former [Soviet Union often commissioned murals](#) for the sides of buildings, which both employed artists and communicated Socialist ideals). Twentieth century capitalist societies also invested in art for public spaces, from the Depression-era [Works Progress Administration](#), the General

OPPOSITE PAGE

Cyril Lixenberg
**Concept for
 Monumental
 Sculpture Project**
 COR-TEN Steel
 2013, 35'
 City of Holland,
 Michigan

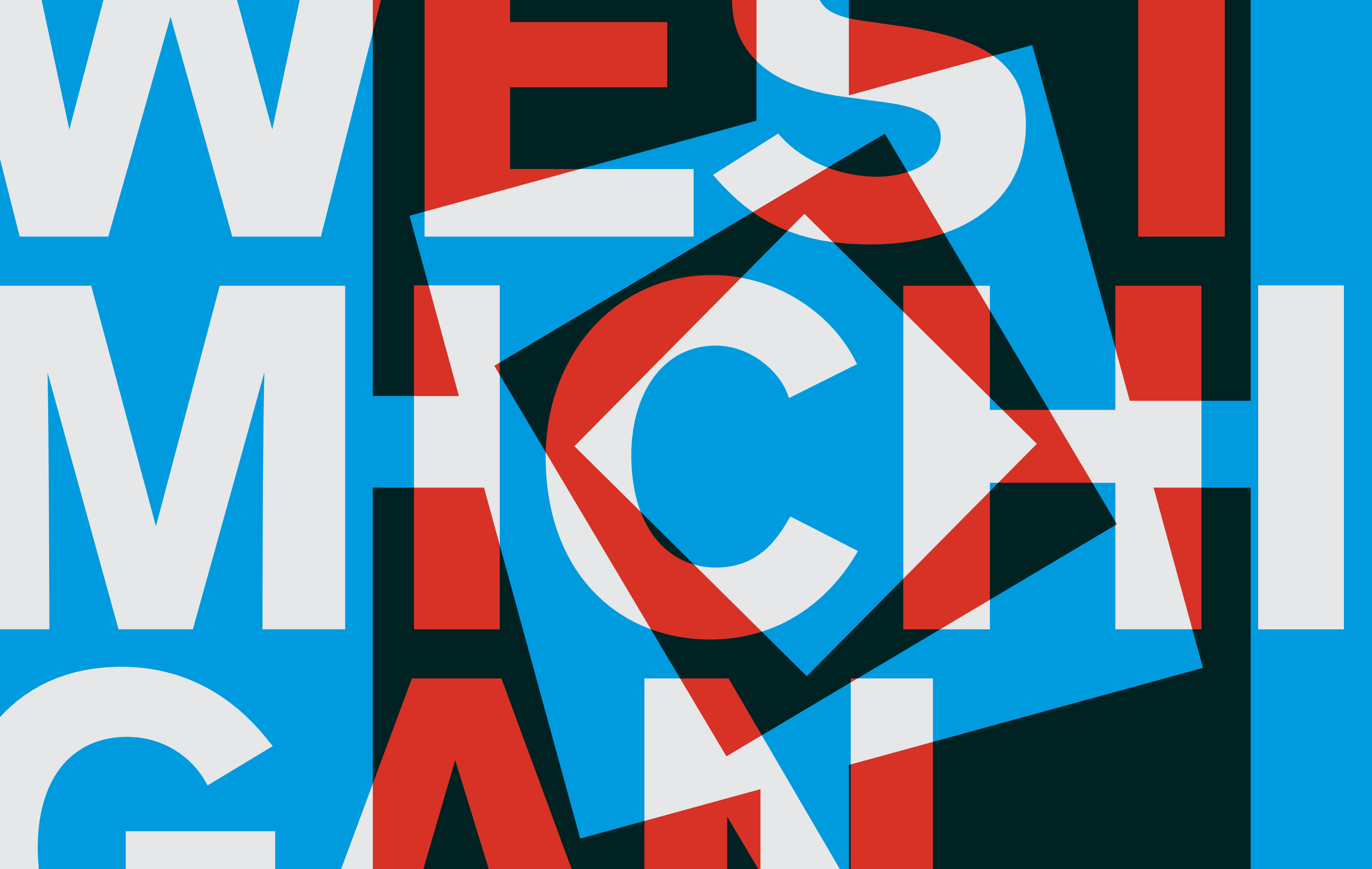


Services Administration and the National Endowment for the Arts in the United States to percent-for-art projects in cities and countries throughout the world. For example, France and Germany mandate that government building projects assign one percent of their budget for public art; such programs also exist in some U.S. localities. The Netherlands, where Lixenberg created his first public sculptures, has been particularly progressive on this front, with public funding in place for art since the late 19th century. More recently, outlays for public art often involve a combination of public funds with private support or the generosity of a single, private benefactor.

Cyril Lixenberg's contribution to public art in the United States includes several sculpture projects in West Michigan, most notably Grand Rapids' *Steel/Water*, dedicated in 2007, and his current commission in Holland. His work adds an international element to a rich tradition of American public art that has taken on a variety of forms. Monuments and memorials comprise a large portion of art in the public sphere, dotting town squares as well as national outdoor stages. The style of these works varies nearly as much as the sites, from representational sculpture (for example, Ed Dwight's *monument to Rosa Parks* in Grand Rapids, dedicated in 2010) to abstract (such as Maya Lin's groundbreaking *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* inaugurated in 1982 on the Mall in Washington, D.C.). Sculpture may be installed in public after the architecture and space have been determined, like Alexander Calder's *La grande vitesse*, one of Grand Rapids' most well-known symbols of civic pride, or it may be site-specific, in which case the artist assesses the surrounding space and creates a work of art that becomes an integral part of that site.

Modern public sculpture can be a tricky venture, since rarely does a work of art find universal consensus and approval. In some public art cases, debates over public taste and artistic integrity have resulted in the removal of works of art (Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* being the most notorious example). Challenging but thoughtful art, however, can play an important civic role. As philosopher Hilde Hein has argued, "[a]rtists, despite their professed asocial status, are as deeply engaged in the public sphere as those whose civic function is ordained by definition ... Sometimes and somehow they break through ordinary expectation and cause people to venture upon new perspectives. This is not because they have made an orbital leap from private to public, but because their insightful expression ignites response." The best public art thus serves a number of related functions: It effectively enhances the physical community while at the same time it draws members of that community into intelligent dialogue and debate.

Cyril Lixenberg's own work reveals years of perceptive artistic conversations, ecumenical collecting and intense observation. Historical circumstances and the history of art each play important roles in the twists and turns of Lixenberg's career, but neither can completely explain his artistic choices. Ultimately, the artist's vision, flexibility and deeply felt interest in the world and people around him enact a profound effect on the painting and sculpture that come out of his studio.



influence in west michigan

BY JASON KALAJAINEN

60

Shortly after moving to West Michigan 13 years ago to lead the Holland Area Arts Council, I found myself invited to a barrage of dinner parties and social events throughout the region. Strangely, from the start, I vividly remember being asked whether I knew the Dutch artist Cyril Lixenberg. His name was mentioned a good deal in the midst of conversation. Had my art professors and exploration of the art world failed me? Who was Cyril Lixenberg, and how had he created such a presence and garnered such a fan base six thousand miles from his home city of Amsterdam? Fortunately, it would not take long for me to meet him and understand the infectious nature of his personality.

Soon after meeting Cyril, one is struck by his openness to new people, ideas and exploration. If a door opens, he is likely to peek around the corner and then walk through it enthusiastically. Raised in an orthodox Jewish family in London, England, Cyril stepped out of the box from the onset and was driven to pursue the arts. Erratic school attendance during the World War II years made his education chaotic and disjointed. He remarks that his real education began when he left school. He headed to the library and “read like mad.” He also

traveled in order to expand his understanding of the world and its people. Upon his first visit to Amsterdam, he was enamored, first by the city and its canals, and then by Saskia Thomas, the woman who would become his wife. Saskia taught Cyril to speak Dutch when they connected and, based upon the way his face lights up when he talks about her, it’s probably a safe guess that he learned a great many other good things from her as well.

Cyril and Saskia would have two children—a daughter, Dana, and a son, Onno. While their daughter was working as an au pair in New York City, the Lixenbergs visited her there in 1983 and Cyril began to build a network of American admirers. One of the first opportunities stemming from these contacts was a speaking engagement at the University of Michigan Museum of Art that same year. Cyril’s initial connection with West Michigan was really one of coincidence that began 30 years ago based on that initial lecture. He was invited to return the following year by then-Director Evan Maurer to exhibit his work at UMMA. During his visits to Ann Arbor he made a variety of connections, including meeting Jack Wilson, an art history professor at Hope





PREVIOUS PAGE

Steel Water

Painted Steel
2007, 33'

Photo by Dr. James
Wieland, DDS
JW Marriott,
Grand Rapids, Michigan

OPPOSITE PAGE

Steel Water (VB)

Silkscreen, 2007
27 1/2" x 19 5/8"

College, and also Henry Matthews, who at that time was working at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Cyril visited the DIA and connected with Matthews who gave him a personal tour of the collections. This would lead to a strong professional and personal relationship that continues to enrich both of their lives to the present day. After becoming curator and then director at the Muskegon Museum of Art, Matthews invited Lixenberg to exhibit there in a one-man show in 1988. This led to a plethora of meaningful relationships along the Lake Michigan shore, including Jack Wilson's invitation to visit and exhibit at Hope College's De Pree Gallery the following year. These initial exhibitions served as fertile ground for the three decades of friendships, projects and collaborations that continue to this day and in many ways culminate in the exhibition for which this essay is written. As is apparent in viewing the GVSU Art Gallery exhibition, Cyril's work has seen a long process of transformation and growth. From the figurative paintings of his early years, to the geometric abstraction and large-scale sculptural commissions with which he has been engaged over the last several decades, his work has seen a significant evolution. However, there are forms and themes that consistently pervade his work. Likewise, his interest in engaging with community and working with young artists has remained steadfast.

Relatively soon after venturing to West Michigan, Cyril began to inject his work into its communities, with commissions awarded and exhibitions presented in Muskegon, Grand Haven and Holland. A prime example is *Interlocking*, a sculptural installation which hangs in the atrium of Holland Hospital.

Cyril remembers receiving the commission and then working through details of the work with the selection committee. He chuckles when he recalls one of the committee members protesting the inclusion of the color red in the design because it might remind patients or their families of blood. Even with this constraint, he created a piece that, while sophisticated, brings a sense of playfulness to the space. Cyril smiles as he remembers a local newspaper reporter dubbing the piece a "canopy of color." Years later, in a strange twist of fate while visiting West Michigan, it would be at Holland Hospital where Cyril's beloved Saskia would be diagnosed with terminal cancer.

In Muskegon, Cyril established his presence at the Muskegon Museum of Art where Henry Mathews had become curator and later director. Today, among the first works of art a visitor to the museum encounters are *Torn Disc* and *Torn Square*. These companion sculptures stand outside the west entryway welcoming everyone and reminding people that this is, indeed, a museum. Executive Director Judith Hayner and Senior Curator Jane Connell note, "We delight in Cyril's characteristic bold, vivid colors; sharp, strong edges; and formal and spontaneous effects. The Muskegon Museum of Art boasts ten Lixenbergs in its permanent collection, including the sculptures *Torn Disk* and *Torn Square*—newly repainted in Cyril's signature bright blue, the result of collaboration between the artist and the MMA. That these sculptures welcome visitors daily at the entrance to the museum attests to Cyril's indelible mark on our community."

In Grand Rapids, the selection committee charged with the task of commissioning a sculpture to commemorate the city's pioneering role in public health by fluoridating its water supply had some specific ideas about what they wanted and what they didn't want. They wanted a piece that was well suited for the selected location on the Grand River's downtown banks and they didn't want a piece that directly related to dentistry or to representations of teeth. Cyril conceived and submitted designs for *Steel Water*. Cyril studied the future site for the sculpture and felt that creating a work that conveyed movement and was connected with the river was very important. *Steel Water* received the commission in 2007 and it stands in celebration of one of our region's innovations and also continues Cyril's tradition of forming meaningful connections.

After decades of participating in our cultural community as an artist, Cyril made a major impact as an art collector and a supporter of collections. In 2001, he decided to support Grand Valley State University's growing collection of art with a major gift, in memory of his late wife, of more than 300 of his own works of art on paper created over the last 40 years. This pioneering donation triggered the creation of a Print and Drawing Cabinet at GVSU that has attracted other significant gifts. In the 2002–03 academic year, the university celebrated a generous donation by the Brooks Family of Holland, Michigan, which facilitated the acquisition of a major collection of contemporary Dutch prints that Cyril had amassed from other artists through purchase and trading, beginning in 1958. As a result, GVSU now owns approximately 500 works of graphic art by a variety of prominent artists of different nationalities, all of whom were

working in the Netherlands in the second half of the 20th century.

Through this gift and acquisition, Jim and Donna Brooks had the opportunity to get to know Cyril. Jim Brooks is happy to share that "Cyril Lixenberg is a world-class creator of monumental sculptures made of rugged steel; yet his personality is just the opposite: humble, soft and gentle with a wry Dutch sense of humor." Jim comments that "Cyril has expanded our community's understanding of Dutch art. Many in West Michigan think of the Dutch culture in 17th century tradition of Tulip Time, Dutch costumes and the 17th century Dutch master painters. But the Netherlands is also famous for its modern art. Cyril's sculptures exemplify the finest of modern design which we in West Michigan are privileged to enjoy with increasing frequency."

Apart from creating his own work, Cyril relishes the opportunity to support other artists in their creative endeavors, especially when they are students. Perhaps because his own education was so splintered or simply through his generous spirit, Cyril has been quick to sign on to projects whereby his talent, skills and experience can impact, inform and encourage students.

A few years ago while serving as executive director of Ox-Bow School of Art and Artists' Residency, I invited Cyril to participate as a visiting artist. These mentors are charged with giving a presentation of their work, providing critiques to interested students, visiting classes and injecting Ox-Bow's campus with another layer of creative energy. Cyril was perfect in this role. His ability to connect with people quickly through his humor and general good nature made

him incredibly approachable. When not in the studio meeting with artists, Cyril was happy to tend the fire and "hold court" with the campus community as it made its way through the dining room. Soon, it seemed as though Cyril had been at Ox-Bow all season and might just stay.

In 2011, Cyril signed on to be the master artist for a special art project at Black River Charter School in Holland, Michigan, funded by the GVSU Office of Charter Schools and supported by Grand Valley State University Art Gallery. The project was also spearheaded by West Michigan sculptor Cynthia McKean. Cynthia led high-school art students from Black River in person while Cyril tele-commuted from his Amsterdam studio via Skype to be part of the creative process from the onset. The students then worked on designing their work over several weeks. The project culminated with Cyril's arrival and the students, Cynthia, and Cyril working together in Ox-Bow's sculpture studio to create their finished work. When talking about the project and working with students in general, Cyril notes that "I care very much about kids and, while I joke with them and want to have fun, I take them seriously." Cynthia simply states "They absolutely loved him. He's a sage ... They would chat with him, walk through the woods with him, and talk about art." Cynthia is quick to point out that Cyril wasn't only an inspiration to the students but to her as well. "The first time I met Cyril we were both showing on Grand Valley State University's campus during ArtPrize 2010 and I was so enthralled with this man in his 70s who had been passionate about making art since he was 17. I wanted to know how he got from there to here."

Over the past 30 years, few foreign artists have had as significant and as broad of an impact as Cyril Lixenberg on our region. Whether exhibiting or guest teaching at one of our area colleges or universities, hosting West Michigan college students at his Amsterdam studio, working on a large scale public installation, placing work at a museum, jurying exhibitions, mentoring students or spreading his energy and enthusiasm for art and life, West Michigan is richer, thanks to Cyril's many gifts and contributions. He has made our corner of the world a bit bigger, more interesting and I would argue a better place. Cyril helps us to think globally and embrace opportunities far beyond our local communities and simultaneously illustrates how those opportunities can enhance our daily lives here at home.



related exhibitions

Grand Valley State University Art Gallery

Cyril Lixenberg: an Artist's Journey

08/23–11/01

1121 Performing Arts Center

Allendale, Michigan

gvsu.edu/artgallery

Calvin College, Center Art Gallery

Dissected Geometry: The Interaction of Forms in the Work of Cyril Lixenberg

09/03–10/19

1795 Knollcrest Circle SE

Grand Rapids, Michigan

calvin.edu/centerartgallery

Grand Rapids Art Museum

Cyril Lixenberg: The Story of Steel Water

08/16–10/27

101 Monroe Center St NW

Grand Rapids, Michigan

artmuseumgr.org

Muskegon Museum of Art

Contemporary Showcase: Prints by Cyril Lixenberg

08/23–11/01

296 West Webster Avenue

Muskegon, Michigan

muskegonartmuseum.org

Saugatuck Center for the Arts

Point Counterpoint: Cyril Lixenberg Screen Prints

08/24–11/09

400 Culver Street

Saugatuck, Michigan

sc4a.org



gvsu exhibition art list

cyril lixenberg: an artist's journey



**BLACK LION
YARD, EAST END,
LONDON**
Etching and Aquatint on
Paper
ca. 1951
15 5/8" x 11 1/4"
2013.15.83



**STILL LIFE WITH
VESSEL**
Oil on Canvas
ca. 1953–1954
19 5/8" x 23 3/4"
2013.15.18



**AROUND THE
TABLE**
Ink, Ink Wash, and
Graphite on Paper
1956
8 1/2" x 7 1/4"
2013.15.62



**DUTCH
LANDSCAPE**
Oil on Canvas
ca. 1956
18" x 23 1/2"
2013.15.27



MAN IN PROFILE
Sepia Ink Wash on
Paper
ca. 1956
4 9/16" x 3 3/8"
2013.15.57



**PORTRAIT OF BOY
IN BLUE, SPAIN**
Oil on Canvas
ca. 1957
28 3/4" x 20 3/4"
2013.15.23



**TWO MEN
SEATED**
Ink on Paper
ca. 1958
10" x 12"
2013.15.59



READING
Sepia Ink Wash on
Paper
ca. 1958
5 1/8" x 4 3/4"
2013.15.56



**LANDSCAPE WITH
VILLAGE**
Oil on Canvas
ca. 1958–1959
18 1/8" x 23 1/4"
2013.15.20



RECLINING NUDE
Oil on Canvas
ca. 1958–1959
23 5/8" x 31 1/2"
2013.15.7



**THE BLESSING
OF THE KOHANIM**
Oil on Canvas
ca. 1958–1959
31 1/2" x 37 3/4"
2013.15.11



**AMSTERDAM
HARBOR**
Ink Wash on Paper
ca. 1958
7 3/4" x 10 1/4"
2013.15.58



**FARMING
LANDSCAPE**
Oil on Canvas
1959
31 3/8" x 25 1/2"
2013.15.3



**SELF PORTRAIT
OF THE ARTIST**
Oil on Canvas
ca. 1960
17 7/8" x 14 3/4"
2013.15.25



CAVE PAINTING
Oil on Canvas
1961
24 3/4" x 15 3/4"
2013.15.1



FORMED LANDSCAPE
Mixed Media on Paper
ca. 1961
8 3/4" x 12 1/2"
2013.15.64



HUMAN APE
Oil on Canvas
1961
23 5/8" x 21 7/8"
2013.15.17



VIEW OF THE ZUIDERKERK, AMSTERDAM
Oil on Canvas
ca. 1964
20 3/4" x 17 3/8"
2013.15.21



GOLEM
Oil on Canvas
ca. 1965
43 1/4" x 35 1/2"
2013.15.9



VORTEX
Mixed Media on Paper
1965
8 1/4" x 12 1/2"
2013.15.71



ATTACK FROM HEAVEN
Mixed Media on Paper
1966
16 3/8" x 11 5/8"
2013.15.70



BIRD OF PREY
Mixed Media Monoprint on Paper
1966
19 3/4" x 13 1/2"
2013.15.17



DEAD AND DYING
Mixed Media on Paper
1966
16 3/8" x 11 5/8"
2013.15.69



DOG OF WAR
Etching on Paper
1966
24 1/4" x 19 3/4"
2013.15.40



LANDSCAPE AND ANIMAL
Etching on Paper
ca. 1966
12 3/4" x 19 1/2"
2013.15.52



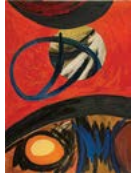
THE TIME BETWEEN
Oil and Caparol on Canvas
1966
43 3/8" x 35 3/4"
2013.15.10



UNTITLED
Monoprint on Paper
1966
19 3/4" x 13"
2013.15.38



UPWARD FLOW
Mixed Media on Paper
ca. 1966
16 3/8" x 11 5/8"
2013.15.68



TUSSENDOR: BETWEEN TIME
Oil on Canvas
ca. 1967
55" x 39 1/2"
2013.15.15



MACARTHUR PARK
Off-set Lithograph
ca. 1968
11" x 15"

GVSU Lixenberg Archival Collection



UNTITLED ABSTRACTION
Mixed Media Print on Paper
ca. 1968
25 5/8" x 19 10/16"
2013.15.50



VIETNAM
Oil on Canvas
ca. 1968
55 1/8" x 43 1/2"
2013.15.14



ZONDER TITEL
Silkscreen
1970
25 1/2" x 34"
2001.502.1



INFUSION
Silkscreen
1988
16" x 16"
2003.001.1B



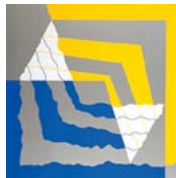
INFUSION
Silkscreen
1988
16" x 16"
2003.002.1B



INFUSION
Silkscreen
1988
16" x 16"
2003.003.1B



FIVE TO THE SQUARE A AND B
Painted Steel
1996
12" x 12" x 11"
2004.038.1A-B



DEFORMING CUBE
Silkscreen
1997
23 1/2" x 23 1/2"
2001.0398.1



MAGELA-S
Silkscreen
2007
27 1/2" x 19 3/4"
2008.299.1A



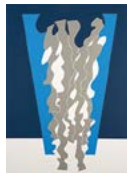
MAGELA-S
Silkscreen
2007
27 1/2" x 19 3/4"
2008.299.1B



MAGELA-S
Silkscreen
2007
27 1/2" x 19 3/4"
2008.299.1C



MAGELA-S
Silkscreen
2007
27 1/2" x 19 3/4"
2008.299.1D



STEEL WATER (VB)
Silkscreen
2007
27 1/2" x 19 5/8"
2007.257.1



MAGELA SASKIA
Photo Gravure
2012
15 3/4" x 22 1/4"
2012.53.1



MAGELA SASKIA
Photo Gravure Print in Black and Rust with Hand Stenciling
2012
15 1/2" x 22 1/2"
2012.53.2

acknowledgements

As the Grand Valley State University Art Gallery staff prepares to open the exhibition *Cyril Lixenberg: an Artist's Journey* as the inaugural event of the university's 2013 Fall Arts Celebration, I wish to extend my appreciation to President Thomas J. Haas and Provost Gayle R. Davis for their encouragement and support as well as for the provision of introductory thoughts for this catalog. Thanks are also due to Special Assistant to the President Teri Losey and GVSU's Community Relations Director Patricia Waring for their ongoing support and attention to countless details in bringing the Fall Arts Celebration to our community.

This exhibition and accompanying printed and online catalog were conceived as an important means of showcasing and celebrating the university's comprehensive holdings of the creative life work of the Dutch artist Cyril Lixenberg, well known both in the Netherlands and West Michigan for his graphic art and monumental sculpture.

I wish to thank the artist for his generosity and long-standing friendship. His most recent gift of his early paintings, drawings, prints, monoprints and personal archives dating from 1951 augment his many previous gifts of sculpture and works on paper presented to GVSU over the past 14 years. Lixenberg has not only been a donor, but he has shared freely of himself during his numerous visits to our region and also of the hospitality of his Amsterdam home and studio with students, faculty and staff. I also want to recognize the help and warmth of his late wife, Saskia, and of his family members including his daughter, Dana,

son, Onno, daughter-in-law, Tamar and young grandson, Jaïr, who have enriched all of our lives.

I would particularly like to thank and acknowledge the Art Gallery's staff and consultants beginning with Guest Curator Timothy Chester for countless hours of interviewing Lixenberg, sorting through art and archival materials at the artist's home and studio, curating the exhibition and writing an insightful essay and timeline. This work, together with his editing, is the basis for a catalog which will be a definitive overview of Lixenberg's artistic output for decades to come. I also wish to thank Jason Kalajainen for his personal insight into Lixenberg's work in Michigan and to Visiting Assistant Professor Ellen E. Adams for placing the age of post World War II Dutch art into a historical context.

The Art Gallery's staff journeyed to Amsterdam to document, sort, pack and photograph works of art in the artist's historic Spinhuissteeg studio, including Exhibits Designer Paris Tennenhouse, Collections Manager Nathan Kemler and Curator of the GVSU Print and Drawing Cabinet David Keister. They also have a long history of installing Lixenberg's art throughout many GVSU campuses. In Amsterdam they were ably assisted by art handler Erik Oegema and photographer Rianne Randeraad. In Allendale, Alison Christensen coordinated matting and framing of works of art and her creativity brought about the exhibition's design and installation, ably assisted by preparators Jonathan Kloote and Dru King. Special thanks are owed to Mary Pirkola, Bill Cuppy, Jeremy Knickerbocker and Hayley Van Oeveren of GVSU's News

and Information Services for their thorough documentation of oral interviews with Lixenberg in September 2012. University Archivist Nancy Richard has scanned documents and begun the work of making the Lixenberg archives cataloged and accessible. Assistant Gallery Director Cathy Marashi ably administered the exhibition, and Office Coordinators Jenniffer Eckert and Barb Farah kept project meetings and expenditures in line, while Gallery Receptionist Colleen Bazuin provided security and hospitality.

Satellite exhibitions of specific aspects of Lixenberg's art have been mounted at sister institutions across West Michigan, taking place in communities where Cyril Lixenberg has a history of participating and being actively involved since 1985. GVSU expresses deep appreciation to our colleagues who helped to make this a truly regional celebration. They include Director of Exhibitions Joel Zwart at Calvin College's Center Art Gallery; Director Dana Friis-Hansen, Associate Curator Cindy Buckner, and Curatorial Assistant Julie Burgess at the Grand Rapids Art Museum; Director Judy Hayner, Curator Jane Connell, and Associate Curator Art Martin at the Muskegon Museum of Art and Director Kirsten Armstrong at the Saugatuck Center for the Arts.

Gwen O'Brien, Dottie Rhodes and Nicole La Fave, the amazing and talented members of the design firm Plenty provided a highly innovative design for both the printed exhibition catalog and the online version, which Lixenberg loved from their first presentation.

Finally, I'd like to thank the project's major underwriters Larry and Elaine Rutowski Shay, Alumna 2012, of Grand Rapids. Their generous participation and gracious support as friends of the artist is particularly appreciated. Grand Valley State University is also pleased to acknowledge that this program is supported, in part, by public funds from the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York, and through funding provided by a grant from the Netherland-America Foundation.

I am most fortunate to be able to bring art to the many campuses of GVSU, a tradition begun with President Emeritus Don Lubbers who envisioned art throughout the university which was continued by his successor, Mark Murray, and which continues to this day due to the unwavering support of President Thomas J. Haas and Provost Gayle R. Davis. More than twelve thousand works of art have been acquired by the university for its permanent collection, of which Lixenberg's art is an important part. It has been both fascinating and a rewarding task for all who have worked to make it happen.



HENRY A. MATTHEWS

Director of Galleries and Collections
Grand Valley State University

NEXT PAGE

Cyril and Saskia on their wedding day, 1964
Photographer Unknown



Dedicated in loving memory to Saskia



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