

George Rickey (1907-2002)



George Rickey was born on June 6, 1907, in South Bend, Indiana, where his father, trained as an engineer at MIT, had been sent as assistant plant manager to the Singer Company. His mother was the daughter of a judge in Schenectady, and an early graduate of Smith College, his grandfather the clockmaker in Athol, Massachusetts, where George spent several winter months that remained vivid in his memory. It was where he first took apart a clock and was frustrated that he could not reassemble it. The third of six children, and only boy, he and his family moved to Scotland in 1913, when his father was made managing director of the Singer Company in Glasgow. The family lived in Helensburgh, a stone throw from the river Clyde, where George watched the ebb and flow from his window. He spent his formative years at Glenalmond, a boarding school near Perth. He always attributed his love for learning to his years there, and on graduation was accepted at Oxford where he studied Modern History at Balliol College, with frequent visits to the Ruskin School of Drawing. Following his heart, and against the advice of his father, upon graduating he spent the following year in Paris, studying at Académie L'Hôte and Académie Moderne, while earning his keep as an English instructor at the Gardiner School. In Paris he

met Endicott Peabody, Rector at Groton School, Massachusetts, who offered him a job as history teacher at Groton, where he remained for three years after his return to the States in 1930. He maintained an art studio in New York from 1934 to 1942, when he was drafted. In 1947 he married Edith (Edie) Leighton (died 1995); they had two sons: Stuart, b. 1953, and Philip, b. 1959. Rickey's interest in things mechanical re-awakened during his wartime work in aircraft and gunnery systems research and maintenance. After the war, although trained as a painter, he turned from painting to sculpture in 1949. His first sculpture was shown in New York in 1951 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's group show "American Sculpture 1951", and in Europe in 1957, and he is extensively represented in public and private collections. His sculptures can be seen in major museums in the US and around the world, among them at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, who in 1965 purchased his seminal *Two Lines Temporal I*, after Alfred Barr, MoMA's then Director, had seen it at the exhibition *Documenta III* in Kassel, Germany, the year before. Rickey has exhibited his work in major cities in the US and in most European capitals, as well as in Asia and the Antipodes; in institutions as close by as the Albany Institute of History and Art, who owns a large hanging sculpture, *The Etoile*, and as far away as Auckland City Art Gallery, New Zealand. During this time he received numerous Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees, and wrote a book "Constructivism - origins and evolution", published in 1967 by George Braziller, Inc., New York.

In 1961, after leaving New Orleans, where he had taught for several years at Tulane

University, he and his family moved to an old farmhouse in East Chatham, New York, which remained his main residence and studio. From 1961 to 1966 he taught 3 dimensional fundamentals to first year architecture students at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy. In 1966 he gave up teaching to fully devote his time to the making of sculpture. George's choice of living in Columbia County came through a colleague at Tulane who, one summer, lent George a house she owned there. The family had decided that they were not going to spend another summer in the hot and humid New Orleans and looked around for a house to buy. They found an old farmhouse, with a Shaker staircase, and never regretted their choice to live and work in the country.

However, they had not given up city life. They owned an apartment in New York City, and every winter they went to Berlin, Germany, where George in 1968 had received a stipend from Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (a German Academic Exchange Service),

which was renewed in 1969. That year George established a small studio and living space in Berlin, to which city they returned throughout the winter months for the next two decades. The time was spent constructing sculpture and preparing for exhibitions in Europe. In Rickey's words the city was like a "cocoon" in the middle of communist Germany, with a lively and advanced social and cultural life which they partook in fully. Since spring comes early in Germany, and as they returned to the US in mid May, they felt that each year they experienced two springs. Later on, when he had given up Berlin, he and Edie established a small studio and home in Santa Barbara, California, "their nest in the west", in Edie's words, where they wintered and worked. In the last year of Rickey's life, he moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, where he maintained a small studio and returned to the easel. This move made it possible for him to be near his son Philip and wife Mary and their two small children. He died in St. Paul on July 17, 2002.

Public Art

Public art creates a vibrant community and forms a unique identity for Albany's metropolitan area. Produced by the world renowned kinetic sculptor, George Rickey, these awe-inspiring pieces catch your attention when they begin to sway with the wind!

This year's exhibition features five of George Rickey's kinetic sculptures. The tour includes a piece at the State University of New York Plaza and winds through the streets of downtown Albany. The tour map includes the location of other Rickey pieces that are in close proximity with the District. Tours of the exhibition and downtown may be arranged through the Albany Aqua Ducks and Trolleys. For information call 518.462.3825 or visit www.albanyaquadducks.com.

The arts are integral to downtown Albany. The impressive 92-piece Empire State Plaza Art Collection, assembled by then Governor Nelson Rockefeller has been called "the most important State collection of modern art in the country" and is home to the George Rickey piece, *Two Lines Oblique*. With numerous historical statues and monuments in Albany's parks and public spaces, our rich environment invites you to discover 400 years of creativity.



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With support from the City of Albany and the Sculpture in the Streets Committee.

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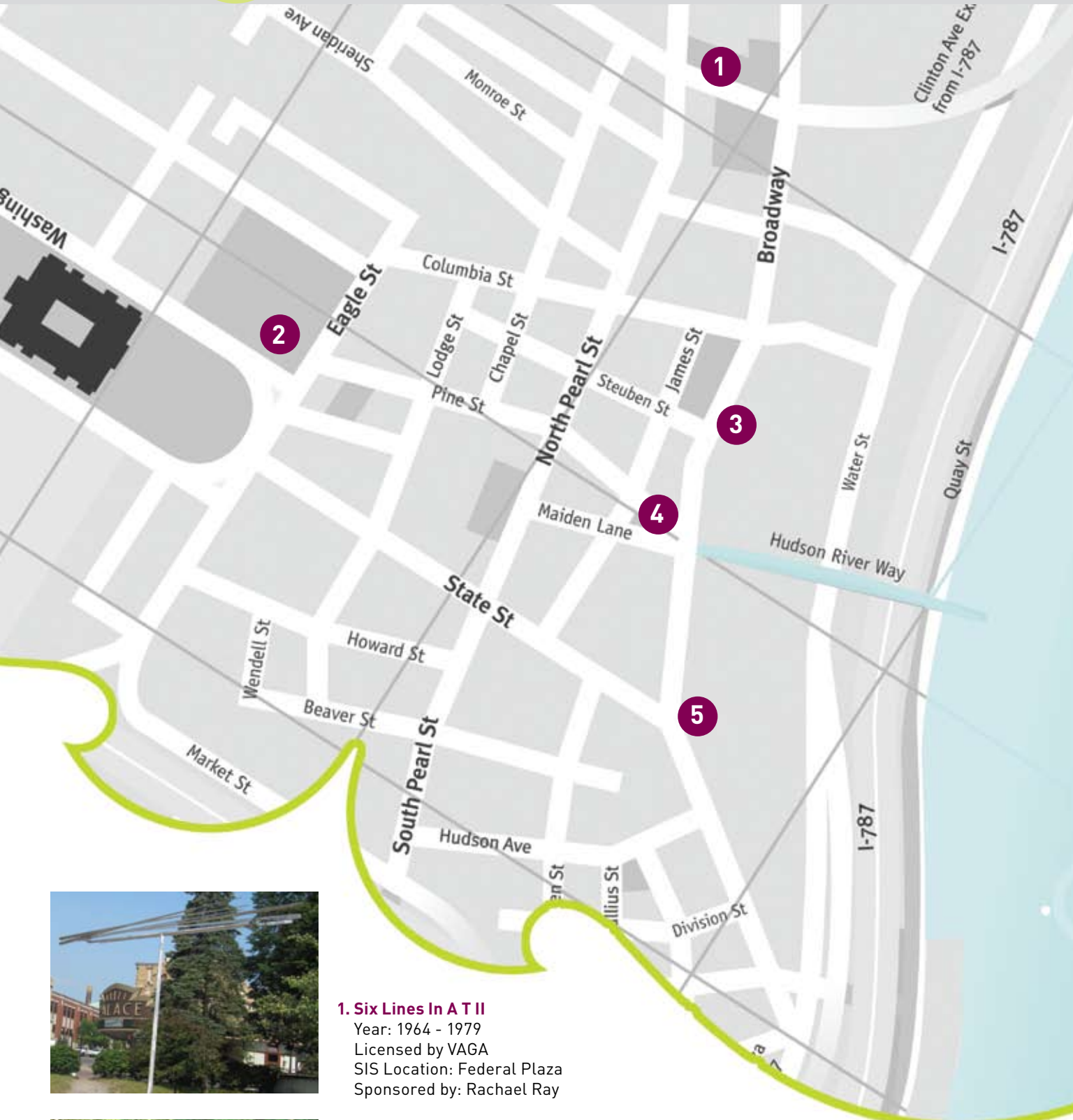


Sculpture in the Streets

June 2011 - March 2012

DOWNTOWN ALBANY
Business Improvement District
downtownalbany.org

Public Art Exhibition & Walking Tour
ALBANY, NEW YORK



1. Six Lines In A T II
Year: 1964 - 1979
Licensed by VAGA
SIS Location: Federal Plaza
Sponsored by: Rachael Ray



2. Two Conical Segments Gyrotory Gyrotory II
Year: 1979
Licensed by VAGA
SIS Location: Academy Park
Sponsored by: 80 State Street, LLC.



3. Three Squares Gyrotory I
Year: 1971
Licensed by VAGA
SIS Location: Kiernan Plaza
Sponsored by: Omni Development Company, Inc. & Capitalize Albany Corporation



4. Rectangles Horizontal Jointed, Big, Thin, Small
Year: 1990
Licensed by VAGA
SIS Location: Maiden Lane Park
Sponsored by: Downtown Albany Business Improvement District



5. Column of Four Squares Excentric Gyrotory III, Var. II
Year: 1990
Licensed by VAGA
SIS Location: SUNY Plaza
Sponsored by: Matthew Bender IV & Charles M. Liddle III

Vist Other George Rickey Sculptures in the Albany Area



Receive 50% off admission to the Albany Institute of History and Art by showing your Sculpture in the Streets map.

6. Etoile Variation V
Year: 1978
Licensed by VAGA
Location: Albany Institute of History and Art - 125 Washington Ave.



7. Two Lines Oblique
Year: 1971
Licensed by VAGA
Location: Empire State Plaza
NYS Empire State Plaza Art Collection - State St.



8. Six Random Lines Excentric
Year: 1993
Licensed by VAGA
Location: In front of Greene Building on RPI Campus, Troy, NY
Photo Credit: Rensselaer/Gary Gold

9. Four Triangles Hanging
Year: 1974
Location: Albany International Airport beyond security check point, Concourse B, second floor.