

GEORGE RICKEY

South Bend 1907 – 2002 Saint Paul

Three Squares Vertical Diagonal II

stainless steel
1986
height 129 cm / 51 in.
each square 91.5 x 91.5 cm / 36 x 36 in.
numbered 1/3
only 2 sculptures were executed

Originally intended to be an edition of 3, but only two were executed. No. 1/3 was finished in 1986, no. 2/3 in 1988. 3/3 was never executed and according to Rickey's wishes never will be, since no sculptures can be made after his death.

There are two versions: *Three Squares Vertical Diagonal*, 1978 and *Three Squares Vertical Diagonal II*, 1986 (the present sculpture)

They differ in the dimensions: the squares of the earlier version measure 60 in./152.4 cm, those of the second version 36 in./91.4 cm.

Of the larger version, no. 2/3 is in East Chatham Estate, the artist's former studio. Another example of this large version has been at the Benesse Art Site in Naoshima, Japan since 1989.

No. 2/3 of the smaller version is in a private collection.

The George Rickey Workshop and the archive of the estate have certified the authenticity of the work and the provenance in writing.

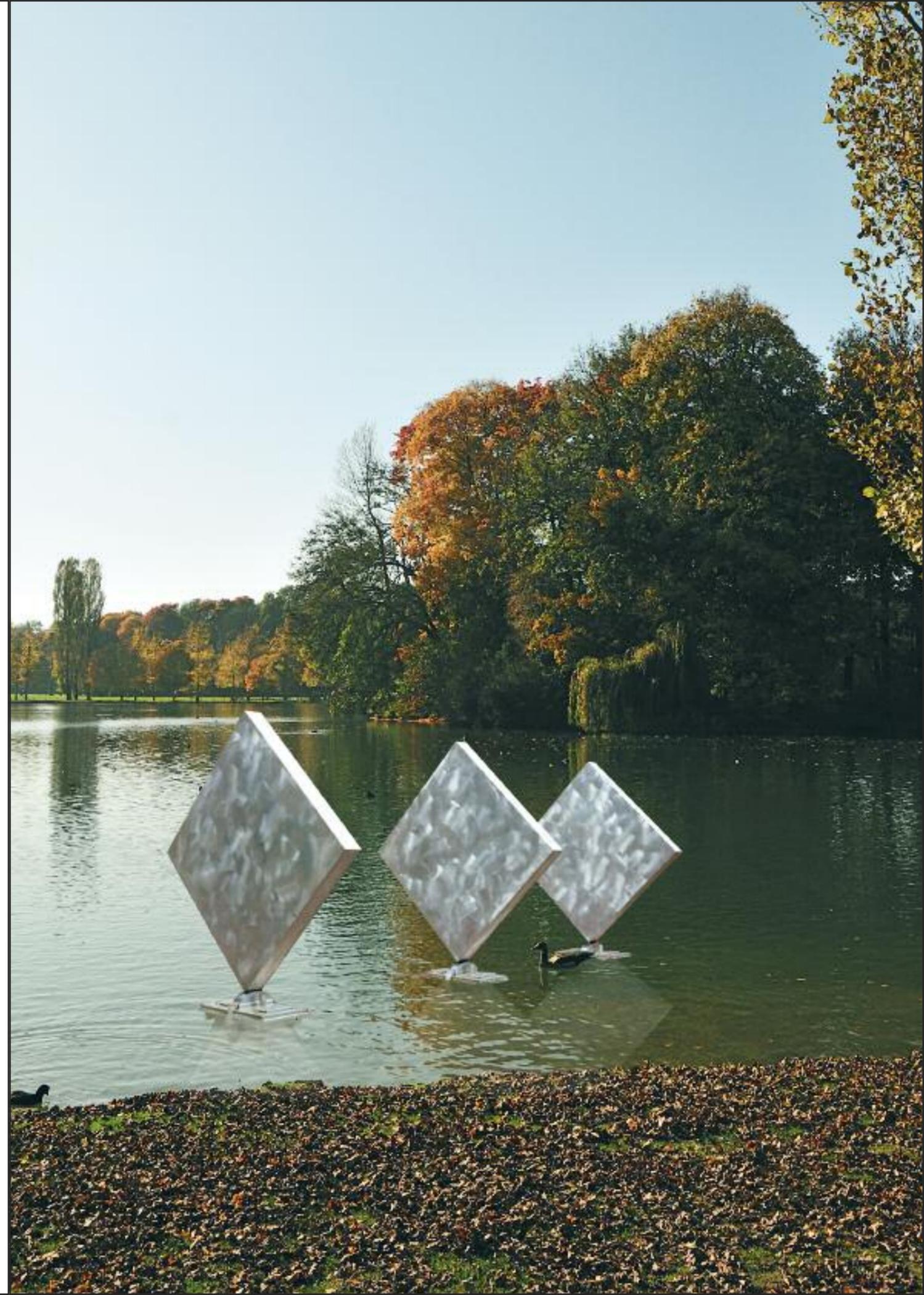
Provenance

- Studio of the artist
- Private collection (1986, acquired directly from the artist)

Literature

Other version:

- Art Center of South Bend. George Rickey in South Bend. South Bend 1985, p. 13, ill.
- Merkert, Jörn / Prinz, Ursula. George Rickey in Berlin 1967-1992, Die Sammlung der Berlinischen Galerie. Berlin 1992, p. 14, ill.



Motivated by David Smith's steel sculptures and Alexander Calder's mobiles, George Rickey turned his attention to kinetic objects in 1945. His training as an engineer strongly influenced the conception and, later, the execution of his works. The technical reduction combined with perfection has its origin in this background. Starting in the 1950s, Rickey worked mainly as a sculptor and became one of the most important artists of kinetic art.

In his works, George Rickey does not permit any indirect association or symbolism so that in this respect, his works are indebted one the one hand to the theory of concrete and constructivist art – in part also by purism while, on the other hand, they are genetically related to the sculptures of minimal art. Even in the titles, Rickey provides no additional information or literary allusions to what he might 'be meaning to say'. These are brief, matter-of-fact descriptions of the actual physically existing, visual relationship of the geometric forms that he uses to each other.

The entire poetry of his work is revealed in its appearance and its gentle motion, which is set off by only the slightest draught of air without a motor or any kind of drive. As the motion is initiated only by the natural influences currently present at the location of the sculpture, the observer always shares these with the work he is observing in his surroundings, so that depending on the individual situation (as also, of course, the way the light falls, which similarly can give rise to very differing perceptions of each individual sculpture) these [become] a constituent element in the experience of the work.

As the title indicates, *Three Squares Vertical Diagonal II* is the second version of this constellation that Rickey created. Three squares, each placed on a corner, are positioned in a row and mounted on a tilt mechanism, which is hidden from the sight of the observer. The stainless-steel squares have a technoid surface, which serves to further underline the impression of weight of the three squares. Positioning them on a tip, however, already foils the weight of the steel plates because of the balance and buoyancy that this position suggests, and this weight is completely negated when the three squares are set in a gentle, almost swaying motion by even a slight puff of air. Depending on its strength, the motion, which occasionally may be parallel, may suggest a dance or the steady rhythm of the waves of the sea. This organic, naturalistic motion of the squares contrasts with the mechanical outward appearance with its technical coolness.

Furthermore, Rickey integrated an imaginary geometry into his work, for when the squares are moving, they could easily be perceived as whole cubes; the boundary to the mysticism of numbers seems to also have been overstepped in spite of all the concrete soberness, for the perfect form of the square with four equal sides and the grouping as a threesome evokes the tradition of the most important mystic numbers – three plus four equals seven, and three times four is twelve – these are relationships of scale which play a major role in proportional aesthetics (and its symbolism). Rickey has skilfully condensed all these elements into a masterpiece that is as strongly focussed as it is lyrical.

