

**Flying Saucer** 1977

Jene Highstein (American, b. 1942)

painted concrete over steel frame

Commissioned by the Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park, GSU Foundation

Collection of the Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park  
1980.01

Jene Highstein was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and educated in New York, at the University of Chicago, as well as in London, England. He makes his home in Salem, New York.

While Highstein's sculpture may have affinities to Minimalism in its simplicity, there are significant differences between his post-Minimalist works and Minimalism's severe formalism. Artists steeped in that aesthetic often emphasized geometry, machined edge, and pristine surface. Highstein applies and manipulates materials by hand to create what seem to be organic, fundamental forms. He has worked variously with wood, stone, glass, and concrete over the past 30 years.

**Flying Saucer** grew out of a group of works created between 1976-77. Large spherical sculptures were made by hand-troweling concrete

over an armature of wood or steel. All were painted black. An untitled example of these works remains in front of the student union at the University of Chicago in Hyde Park.

Comparing the formal elements of **Flying Saucer** with its companion on this path, Edvins Strautmanis' **Phoenix**, can be instructive: **Phoenix** is an open, hard-edged and primarily linear form which defines space more through its negative presence and color than anything else. **Flying Saucer** is a hulking, massive shape that, by contrast, connotes black holes of space or a huge, organic, living thing. The comparison of these two objects highlights the essential difference between the artists: the geometric approach of Strautmanis and the biomorphism championed by Highstein. Finally, a visitor can simply enjoy the lumpy friendliness of this benign "alien visitor."