

Forms in Blue 1977

John Payne (American 1929-2004)

painted steel, wood, painted rock

Loan courtesy of the artist's estate

John Payne's career in the arts spanned four decades and dealt with a broad variety of issues in visual language. A 1959 graduate of Beloit College, he continued his education, earning an MS in Graphics, Painting, and Art History and eventually an MFA in Sculpture Research and 3-D Design from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he studied with Arne Jacobsen, a noted Danish Urban Designer. After attaining the rank of Associate Professor of Sculpture at Western Illinois University, he was offered and accepted a position at Governors State University, where he remained as the Visual Arts Program Coordinator until his retirement in 2002.

Payne monitored the progress of the Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park's development even as he established the sculpture program at the school. He proposed, designed, and oversaw the construction of a foundry capable of casting molten bronze.

This provided his students with a window on an ancient medium which continues to be used by artists throughout the world.

"The mind hungers. People need art, just like they need the sun. Without art, the world would be an ugly, gray place," was his appeal to students as he urged them to continue with their work.

Forms in Blue seems to be an exercise in arrested movement. The blue steel tubes seem to communicate the impression of a stop-action photograph, where the viewer can imagine a single tube twisting and falling on a single axis. The red stone acts as both a visual and physical counterweight to the cantilevered steel.