

Icarus 1975

Charles Ginnever (American, b. 1931)

welded Cor-Ten steel

Purchased by the Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park,

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Collection of the Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park

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Charles Ginnever came of age immediately after World War II. His education took him from his native California to France and Italy before he earned an MFA from Cornell University in 1959.

Icarus is one of a series of important works by Ginnever during the mid-1970s which use classical Greek sources for their titles. In this myth, Daedalus and his son Icarus are imprisoned on an island. Daedalus fashions two sets of wings from wax and feathers so they can make their escape high above the Aegean Sea. Icarus, enthralled by his newfound freedom and unwilling to acknowledge his vulnerability, ignores his father's warnings and flies too close to the sun, melting the wax and plummeting to his death. The story is a cautionary tale highlighting humankind's arrogance. It has been referenced many times by

artists as varied as Pieter Brueghel, Peter Paul Rubens, and Chicago Imagist Roger Brown.

This artwork is deceptively simple, one of a group of sculptures in which Ginnever deliberately challenged the dominance of 1970s Minimalism through dramatically angled compositions emphasizing an uneasy balance of visual and physical weight. The viewer's experience of **Icarus** shifts continuously. From observing the two triangles' relatively flat expanse of patinated steel balanced precariously one upon the other, the viewer can shift position slightly and suddenly catch the broad back of the work. The angle of intersection feels uncomfortably delicate. Ginnever's challenge is to make sense of his idiosyncratic geometry and, in the process, attain a heightened awareness of balance and form.