

Lin Emery



Lin Emery welding at the New York Sculpture Center, circa 1954,
from the archive of Lin Emery

- **Born:** New York in 1926
- Based in New Orleans, Louisiana since 1945
- **Studied:** From 1942 to 1945, she studied at Columbia University, Syracuse University, University of Mexico, the Goodman School of Drama in Chicago and the University of Chicago, Sorbonne, Paris, France, Ossip Zadkine sculpture studio, New York Sculpture Center (1950s)
- **Known for:** Kinetic sculpture, aquamobiles, public art sculptures
- Experimenting with motion, inspired by a spoon she was washing while doing the dishes, she began to create “aquamobiles”
- Charter member of the Orleans Gallery (New Orleans’ first collective, artist-run contemporary art space).
- *Maquette for Flowering* (1994) is a maquette for a monumental sculpture for Neiman Marcus in Short Hills, New Jersey.

“My sculpture is kinetic, meaning that it moves. The elements are derived from nature, and I borrow natural elements — wind, water, magnets — to set them in motion. The rhythms are influenced by infinite variables: the points of balance, the normal frequency of each form, the interruption of the counterpoise. I juggle, juxtapose, and adjust to achieve the dance or pantomime that I want. Then the sculpture takes over and invents a fillip of its own.”

-Lin Emery

Born in New York in 1926, Lin Emery is a sculptor based in New Orleans, Louisiana. Inspired by the forces of nature, her kinetic sculpture and public art is activated by water, magnets, motors and wind. Emery's Hungarian father died when she was three years old and her childhood was spent shuttling between the suburbs of New York City and Palm Beach, Florida, where her mother spent the winter season. From 1942 to 1945, she studied at Columbia University, Syracuse University, University of Mexico, the Goodman School of Drama in Chicago and the University of Chicago. She worked for the *Chicago Sun-Times* newspaper and later moved to New Orleans in 1945 to be a fashion copy writer. From 1947-1950, Emery continued her studies in Paris, France, where she attended the Sorbonne and studied sculpture at the studio of Ossip Zadkine and had an exhibition of her paintings at the Harwood Museum, Toas, New Mexico. She began to pursue sculpture in 1950 when she returned to New Orleans, working in clay and plaster, and enrolled at the New York Sculpture Center. She worked with clay and pewter alongside classmate Louise Nevelson and learned welding and casting, exhibiting with Herbert Ferwer and David Smith. From 1953 to 1956, she turned her New Orleans apartment in the French Quarter into a metal-working studio and became charter member of the Orleans Gallery, which was the city's first collective, artist-run contemporary art space.

Emery gained recognition for her early figurative work and was commissioned to create life-sized religious figures for churches. The welded armatures that supported her figures became more interesting to her and she transitioned into abstraction. A 1955 feature in *Art in America* magazine led to a traveling exhibition to museums throughout the South. This success encouraged Emery to push her vision by experimenting with motion. Inspired by a spoon she was washing while doing the dishes, she began to create "aquamobiles" using water as the driving force, which led to major commissions of twenty-foot bronze aquamobiles across the country. Later using magnets and wind to propel her sculptures into motion, her work was commissioned for public spaces throughout the United States, including the 1966 Morrison Memorial fountain at the New Orleans Civic Center, the 1984 World's Fair and venues in Hong Kong and Manila. While teaching at Tulane University School of Architecture in 1969-70, she received private instruction in the engineering department's water lab and machine shop. Emery's long list of accolades includes an Honorary Doctorate degree from Loyola University of the South (2004). The Leepa-Rattner Museum of Art organized *Sculpture in Motion: Lin Emery, A Retrospective* in 2010, which featured *Maquette for Flowering* (1994), a maquette for a monumental sculpture for Neiman Marcus in Short Hills, New Jersey.