

Richard X. Zawitz Art Biography

Richard X. Zawitz, proponent of peace and creativity is a Zen Sculptor and the inventor of Infinity Art. His collection consists of a series of stone sculptures as well as his well –known, stainless steel, Statue of Infinity.

Born in the town of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Richard always felt this innate calling to a higher life purpose that would draw him outside the industrial , steel town he grew up in. Little did he know about his own *Tao* at the time, which means ‘path’ or ‘way’ and how his own experience of Tao would shape and influence his greatest life works.

An important aspect of Tao is its state of perpetual motion, “that all things as they come into being and develop, progress through a series of changes moving persistently to a return to the state of non-being, the primal unity and source of all things.” It is this aspect that illustrates the circular, complete and perpetual source of Tao that would be at the core foundation for Zawitz’s monumental Statue of Infinity, which has no beginning and no end, and is unceasing through to infinity.

Zawitz’s real path to creativity and his passion for sculpture began with his studies in Asian philosophy and art in Pittsburgh, with scholar, teacher, and mentor, Chan Wing Tsit. From Chan he learned about Chinese philosophy and was convinced by Chan to further his studies at the University of Hawaii.

While in Hawaii, Zawitz studied with Prithwish Neogy, a renowned scholar of Asian art and aesthetics. Neogy’s mentoring, along with the influence of philosopher Jacques Maritain and Sigfried Giedion drove Zawitz to develop his own philosophical pluralism, drawing on primitive art, Taoism, Zen Buddhism, tantric art, Indian aesthetics and comparative philosophy to help articulate his understanding of the fundamental underlying principles of art and creativity.

When studying essential energy forms, it was Zawitz’s goal to create a work of art with universal/cosmic energy. He had discovered heliocentric forms (spiral) in the art of most cultures of the world and in particles of mass. In 1972, when graduating from University of Hawaii, Zawitz used this heliocentric idea along with all of the knowledge acquired from his great mentors to complete a stone carving called *First Twist*, alongside a thesis titled *Taoism and the Experience of Art*.

In his graduation work, *The First Twist*, a cylinder of white marble rises from a trapezoid wooden base, and at about half its height, the cylinder bends sideways and turns up over itself, completing one full turn. At its apex, the cylinder tapers and ends in a roughly spherical shape. A remarkably allusive work, it suggests at times an Indian figure in a pronounced tribbanga pose (where the figure is

oppositely bent at waist and neck to form an “S” shape) or a Tang dynasty figurine of a woman with her hair piled characteristically high.

In his later works, Zawitz continues to explore the nexus between being and nothingness. In works such as *Flying Stone*, *Mind Over Matter*, and *Cosmic Stone*, he uses stone to capture the fizz and spark of effervescence – the moment of transition when gas is freed from an aqueous solution. These works appear like rafts of bubbles, held together by surface tension. In fact they have been laboriously carved out of alabaster.

Their combination of spherical forms allude to the problems of space, just as bubbles have the smallest possible surface area for any given volume and will always find the smallest surface area between points and edges. They capture temporary, transitional, ephemeral moments- the instant of time between one state of being and another- which is after all a metaphor for life.

Upon graduation, Zawitz’s curiosity and interest in a four dimensional energy form led him to the Far East and Kyoto, where he studied wood and stone carving in the ancient traditions. It was during his travels that he came across the Tibetan infinite knot, containing a pattern of interwoven lines with no beginning and no end that symbolizes infinite life and creation. It was this symbol that captivated and inspired him artistically and ultimately bore the creation of one of Richard’s major works: *Statue of Infinity*. The statue is a magnificent, stainless steel sculpture, made of 20 sections of 8 inch diameter tubing that vertically rise into a series of endless twisted turns and curves.

The twists and turns of his sculpture have an organic quality and seem to reflect the inner connectedness of all things, even bearing striking resemblance to the double helix and artistically representing both the building block of life and the cosmic spiral form of the galaxy and life beyond. Although he has a distinct vision of what the statue incorporates, he believes everyone is an artist and has the opportunity to determine the form of the tangle according to their own personal aesthetic.

It was while watching visitors to his exhibition find great pleasure in manipulating his art piece that Zawitz realized his calling to provide this gift of empowering others to create art from this piece and call it their own, and to make this object of art accessible to “every man, woman, and child on this planet.” From there, Tangles were born and in 1982 Zawitz patented his work and began manufacturing and distributing them commercially. Known and sold as “Tangles,” over 100 million editions of his work can be found in homes, offices, institutions, playgrounds and schools all over the world.