Arts & Humanities

Ann Gillen: Sculptor in the City

The artist, now in her late eighties, shares a few eye-catching works installed in the tristate area.

By
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Ann Gillen (Len Small)

Ann Gillen ’69SOA has been creating abstract sculptures and public-art installations for more than half a century. Now in her late eighties, the Brooklyn-born artist continues to live and work in the SoHo loft she moved into in 1973. Gillen’s geometric figures, which have been exhibited around the world, are inspired by the fluid relationship between moving bodies and urban spaces. “I’m always playing with different vantage points and how the sculpture interacts with the surrounding site,”

says the artist, who in late 2022 had her first solo show in twenty years. Here are just a few of Gillen's eye-catching works installed in the tristate area.

Wade Zimmerman / Ann Gillen / Artists Rights Society (ARS) NY

***Flying Red* (designed in 1973, fabricated and installed in 1987)**

"This aluminum sculpture outside 909 Third Avenue in Midtown Manhattan was inspired by a series on how groups of people move through space. As part of that collection, I had created a large-scale work based on the 1968 Columbia campus protests, which I participated in. This related piece recalls an array of figures that combine to form a body splitting apart."

Ann Gillen / Artists Rights Society (ARS) NY

Trenton Tower **(1988)**

“This installation, made from aluminum pipe and situated in the light-soaked atrium of the Community Affairs Building in Trenton, New Jersey, is three stories tall. It looks different from each floor, each direction, and at different times of day. When you do a public-art piece, you have to work within the limits of the space. The sculpture couldn’t block doors, and people had to be able to move by it swiftly. So I made the bottom narrow and connected the upper part to the ceiling for support."

Ann Gillen / Artists Rights Society (ARS) NY

***Line by Line* (2007)**

“The CUNY graduate school of journalism on West 40th Street is in the former building of the *New York Herald Tribune*, which stopped publishing in 1966. The wire ‘drawing’ on the wall brings to mind the scribble of a pen. I felt that these stairs, which once connected the newspaper’s offices to its pressroom, represented the heart of the school, so I made the walls red.”

Ann Gillen / Artists Rights Society (ARS) NY

***Reaching* (1987)**

“This piece sits next to a brick building in the playground of PS 12 in Woodside, Queens. I used red and yellow paint to bring out the color of the bricks and make the space look livelier. The figure reaches up to the sky, as children should do. Like many of my works, the sculpture is still but suggests movement.”

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