On Campus

The Meaning Behind a Strange Campus Sculpture

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Len Small

Campus flâneurs often stop to look into the conical “eye” of *Life Force*, the seven-foot-tall bronze sculpture by David Bakalar, installed on Revson Plaza. Bakalar, who turned one hundred this year, was late to the art scene. The child of Russian-Jewish immigrants, he studied physics and metallurgy before founding one of America’s earliest semiconductor companies. He took up sculpture in his sixties. “I’ve always

been fascinated by the codes and molecules that are the Life Force," Bakalar once wrote. He says his Life Force series represents "the bonding forces — the birth force, the death force, the competitive force, and the nurturant force." The Columbia sculpture, fabricated in 1988, was donated anonymously to the Law School in 1992 to honor Ruth Goldman Schapiro '50LAW. Bakalar, whose own life force is an inspiration, still lives and works in Boston.

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