

Extract from the article of Robert Storr,
“David Smith, the probity of his art”,
in “David Smith’s drawings,”
ENSBA, Paris 2003

...For Kirili this has led to forging rather than welding though Smith sometimes explored the technique as well and to a kind of drawing in space that exploits the complete range of molten metal’s temporary softness and pliability rather than the patching together of rigid shapes. Over the course of an artistic career that stretches back some thirty years, Kirili has expanded the horizons opened to him by this method of working, and thereby laid claim to his own territory within the still wider field of “Action Sculpture,” a territory which has incorporated the related use of terra-cotta, and, in recent years, a growing emphasis on performative sculpture in various materials, sometimes in collaboration with musicians.

Communion represents the latest phase of this steady evolution and of Kirili’s longstanding dialogue with Smith. In some regards it is akin to Smith’s totemic drawings in its alignment of hieratic forms, but the attenuation of each element, the hammered texturing of some, the pinched outlines of others, and the subtle play of leaden against rust-red color, matte against shiny patinas is unlike anything to be found in Smith’s oeuvre. Nor is the cage-support-in effect a hollow plinth from which each unit is suspended, and on which they almost seem to swing. In the background of Kirili’s work are the figures González had to reckon with, as did Smith-Brancusi of the rough-hewn monoliths and the “Endless Towers” and Picasso as every turn of his protean career as a sculptor, up to and including sculptures such as the Bathers (1954). Also present in mind are the examples of Alberto Giacometti and Barnett Newman, author of only a few sculptures but an indispensable radical in the medium nonetheless. Kirili’s writings on Newman and Giacometti and the larger issue of statuary that their work and that of other modernists raise are central to Kirili’s thinking and to his practice.

In sum, Kirili’s work generally and Communion in particular are informed by many dimensions of Rosenberg’s “Tradition of the New.” And to borrow Rosenberg’s criterion for quality in modern art they possess an individual “freshness” that holds that tradition at its proper distance. Of all the conversations Kirili has had with other artists past and present, those with Smith-whom he has championed since first encountering his work in 1965 and first visiting the United States that year to deepen his acquaintance with it-are the most important.