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Cover: BALANCE IN HALVES AND WHOLES 10"h x 20"w

MAQUETTES 1964 - 2002



Robert Kantor's touch with materials and his ability to tinge them with feeling are revealed in the delicate intimacy of his small copper and wire mobiles. The shapes hover for a moment of balanced insight, then morph to float like lily pads in a dappled stream of air. From time to time a figure seems to appear there in the lily-pad mind, as though that mind had incarnated into human form.

In 1964, while a student at New York University, Kantor saw a show of Alexander Calder's work at the Guggenheim Museum. Soon after this numinous experience, the young artist used his bed as a studio, cutting and twisting metal and wire to make his first work. *Don Quixote* features a warrior with spear and shield who dangles alone like a mythological hero in a field of possibilities. In a sense the tilter at windmills is out of control, hanging there at the end of his particular lane in a much bigger map. But in another sense, Quixote and Kantor are ready for the journey. The beginning for Kantor as an artist and as a young man recalls Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* and James Joyce's great novels, especially *The Artist as a Young Man*.

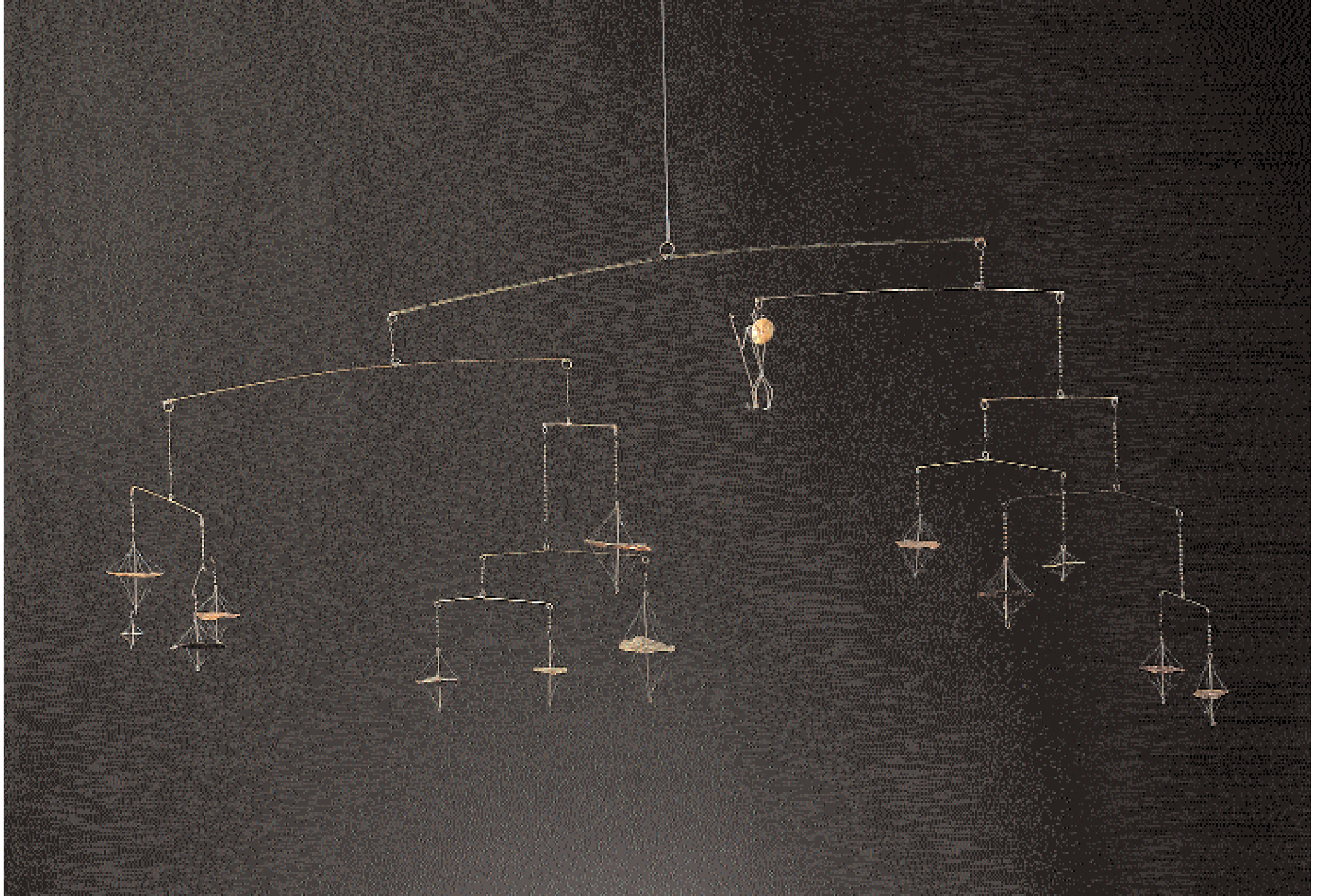
The expressiveness of wire and soft copper handled, modeled, and strung into a structure that both moves and balances is a marvelous precursor to the finely wrought pieces to follow. Repetitions of mirroring

objects and forms suggest familial gatherings or psy-chological recognition among the elements as they come together in moments of real time.

The maquettes, sculptural equivalents of drawings often meant to be studies for larger works, read as ephemeral interior flashes that arrive for a moment before dissolving back into their separate planes and stems.

The stretch of time from the young man as warrior to the mature one as seeker after completion arrives in another pivotal piece, *Balance in Halves and Wholes*. In minimal, strong shapes suggestive of essential mythological or archetypal energies that live in us all, yin and yang half circles strive towards the fullness of a whole that neither half can achieve on its own. The warmth of copper and the ability to move, display a fluid, air-born responsiveness among parts that are different in their reflections of high and low, up and down, spirit and matter. The supporting metal wires offer light grids or neural pathways along which the emblematic elements.

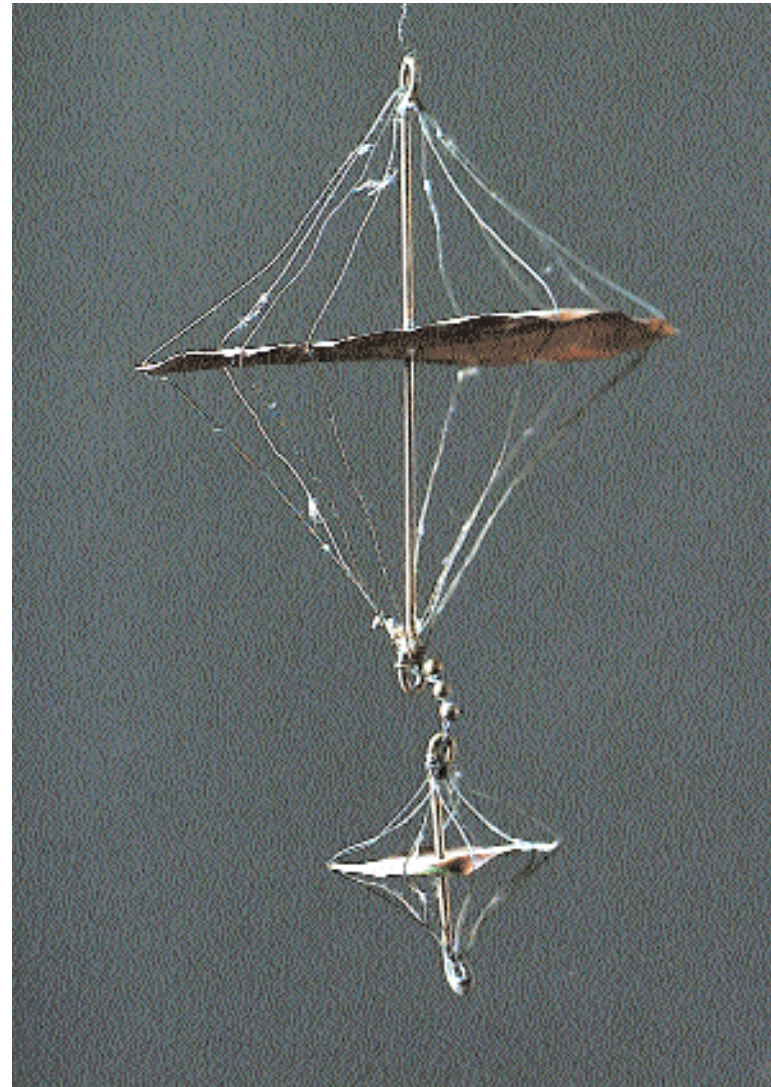
DON QUIXOTE
28"h x 81"w x 23"d



Though the artist sets the stage, his sculptures become and dissolve, dissolve and become, a series of attenuated events that change and reorganize without their maker. Yet these shapes may not be as free-floating as imagination at first implies, since they are attached like stations in a three-dimensional labyrinth of available options, a metaphor for both a human life and the evolutionary trends of all life.

How far can one progress in the time given? What can be accomplished in terms of a sense of personal resolution of the contemporary fragmentary self? How free and how fettered is the movement towards balance?

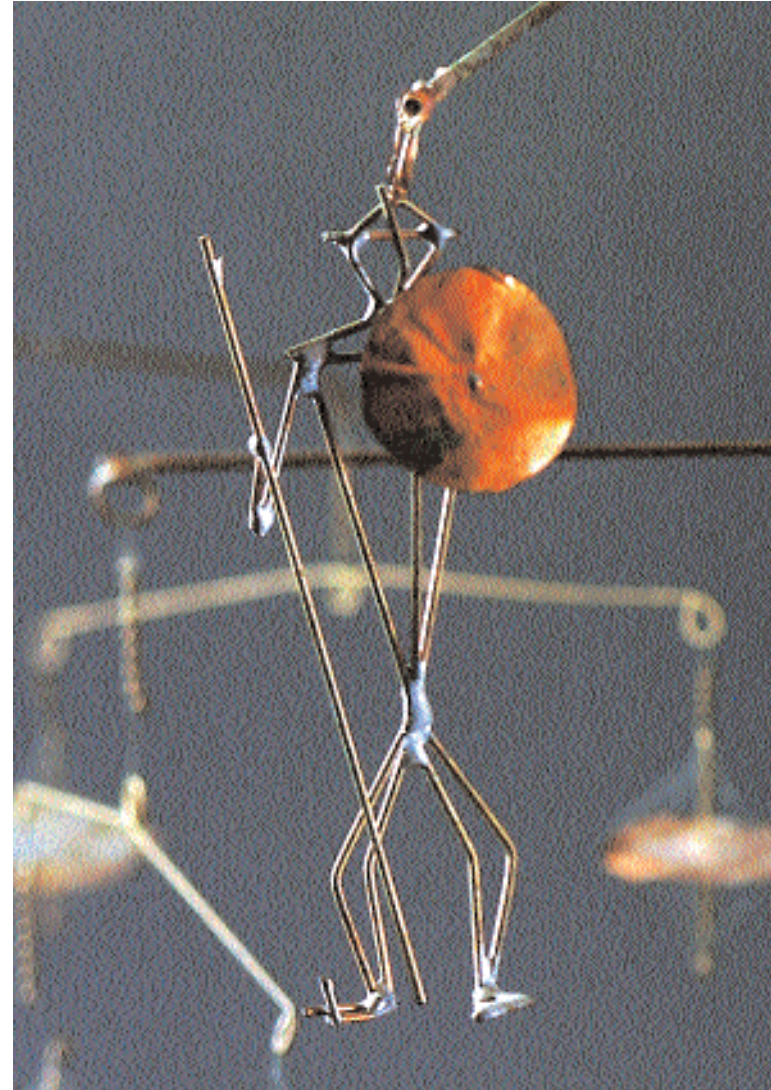
In *Twin Hearts*, Kantor's shapes have morphed into hearts, and then into a three-pronged heart shape that might be moving towards a hand or bird body with outstretched wings.



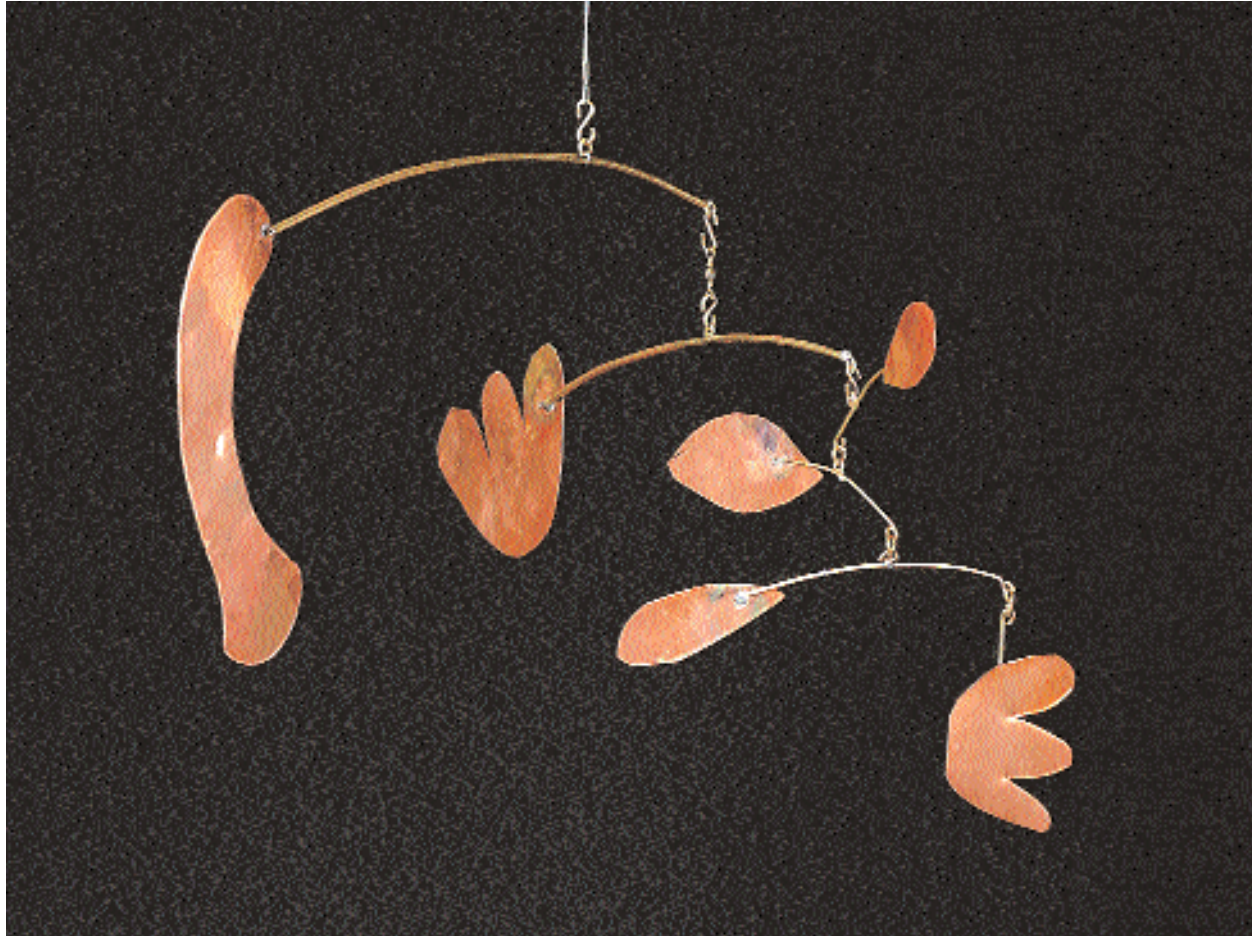
Detail: DON QUIXOTE

Moons and rocks and suns and wheels, flowers and birds and mountains and lakes, leaves and numerous references to the human body all are suspended in fields that seem sunny and remind a viewer of the exuberant cut-outs of Matisse's later work. The shapes of these mobiles are organic, influenced no doubt by the Idaho landscape of his home, but there is more to Kantor's choice of these forms than the equivalence of art and landscape. With their view of passing relationships that move in lightness and a subtle sense of humor, his mobiles are after the animating quality of life itself.

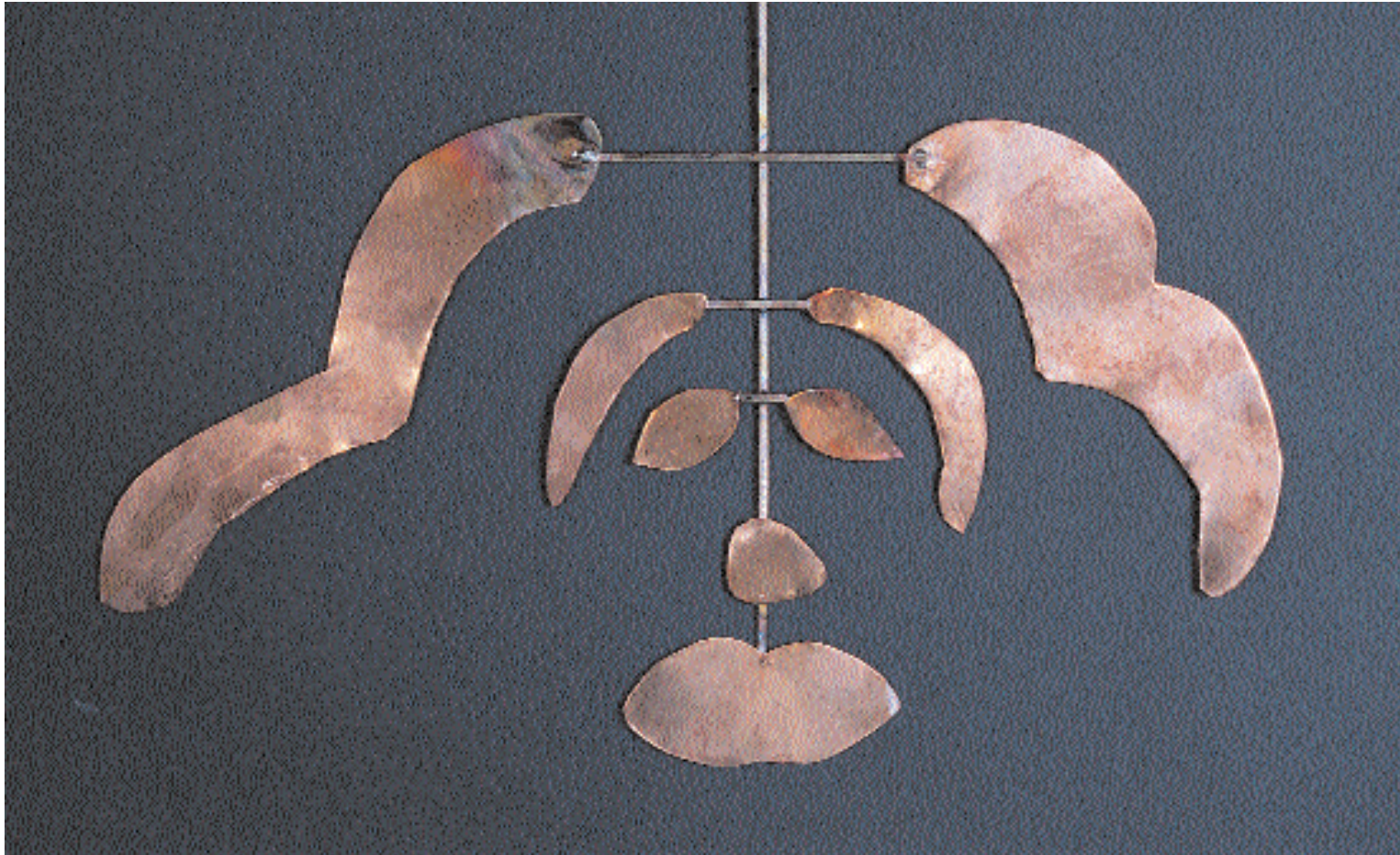
There is the play of a child and the prolonged searching of a man who would come to realization. That both of these time frames in his life exist simultaneously in Kantor's work is significant. As he holds the copper in his hands and finds the outreach and alignments of forms that refer to live objects, plant, bird, and human body as well are brought into the same continuum.



Detail: DON QUIXOTE



CATCH 12"h x 22"w



LADY 15½" h x 13¾" w



FLOATING FLOWER 21½" h x 20" w

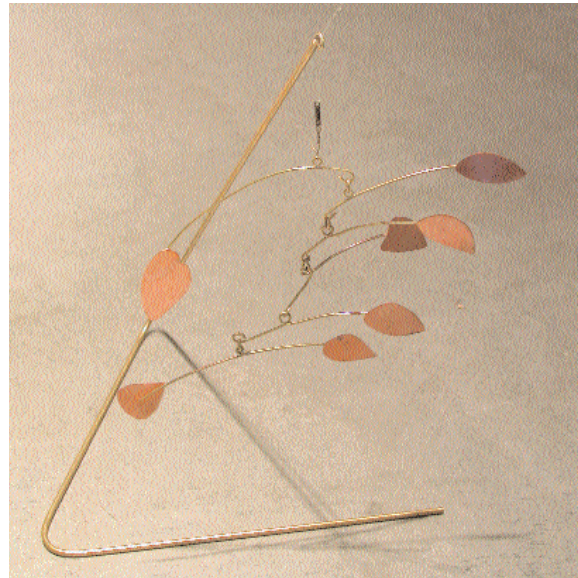




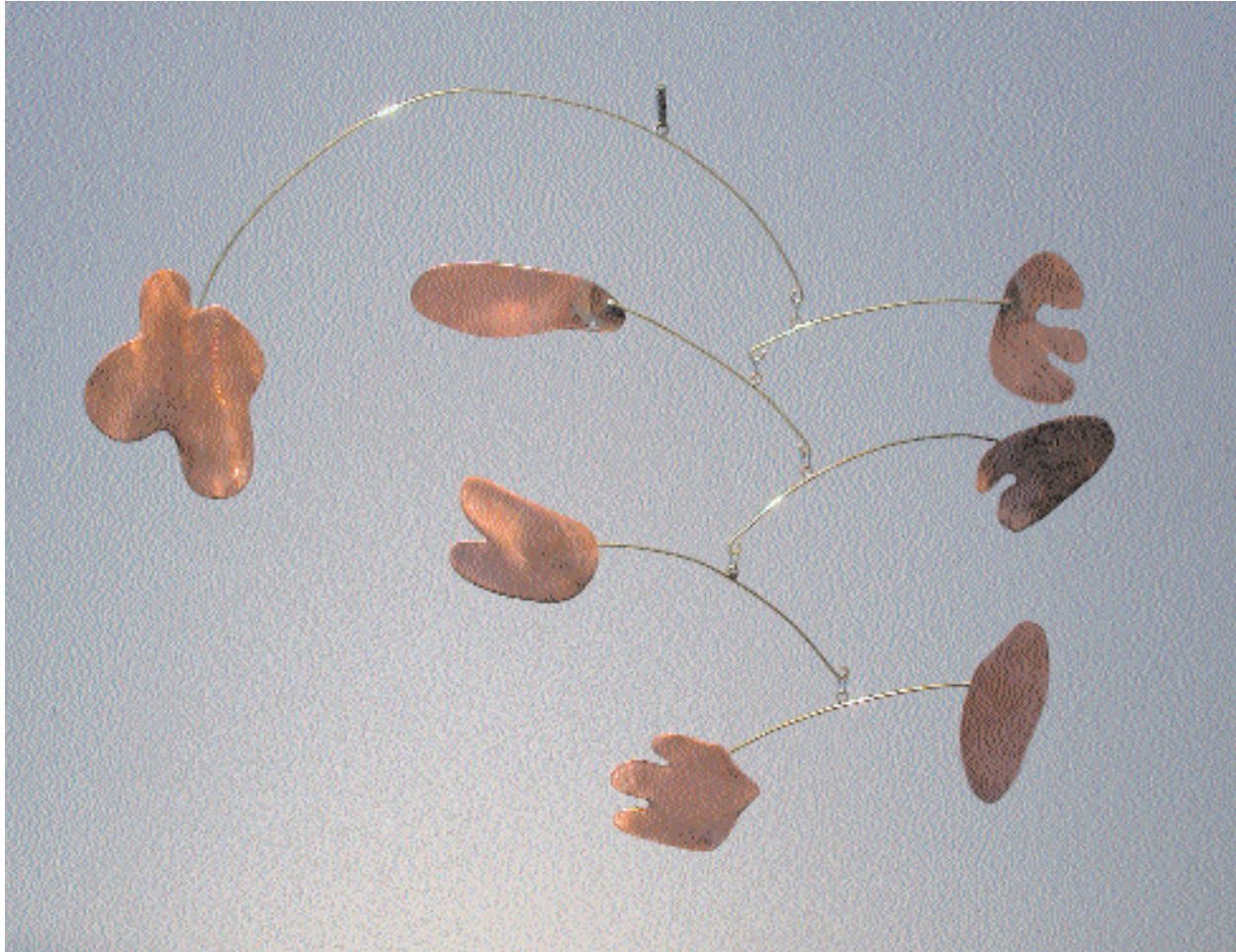
FLOATING HEART 12"h x 15"w



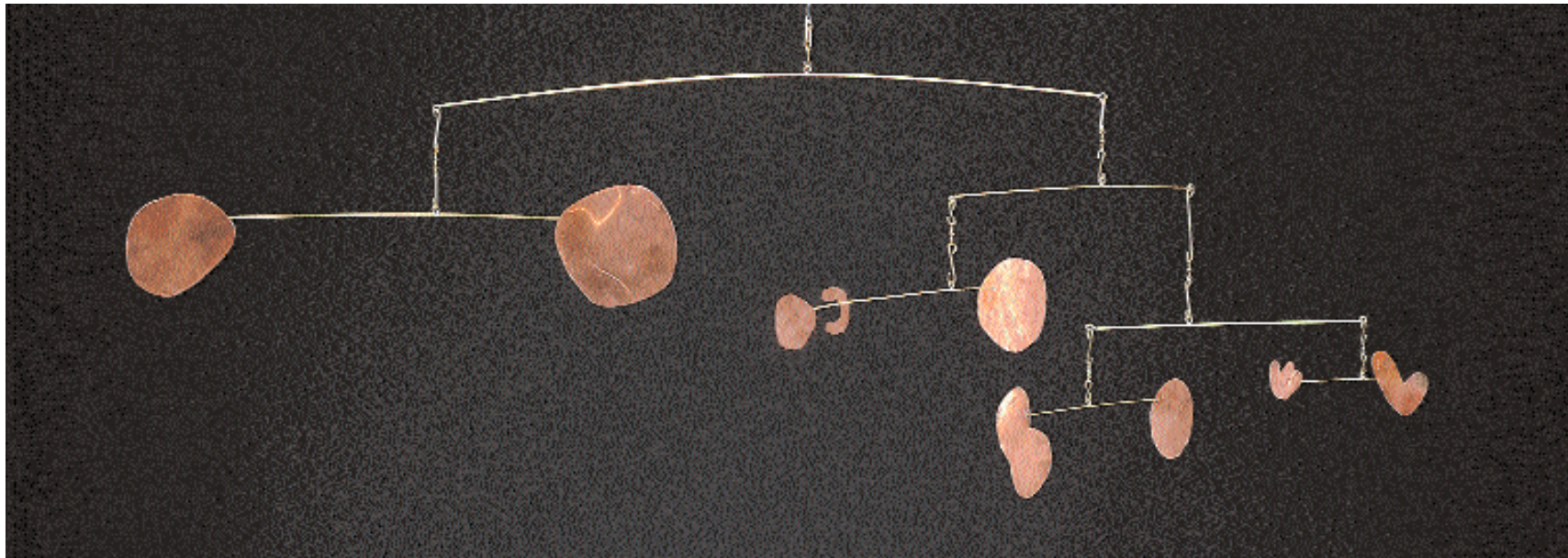
TWIN HEARTS 6½" h x 20" w



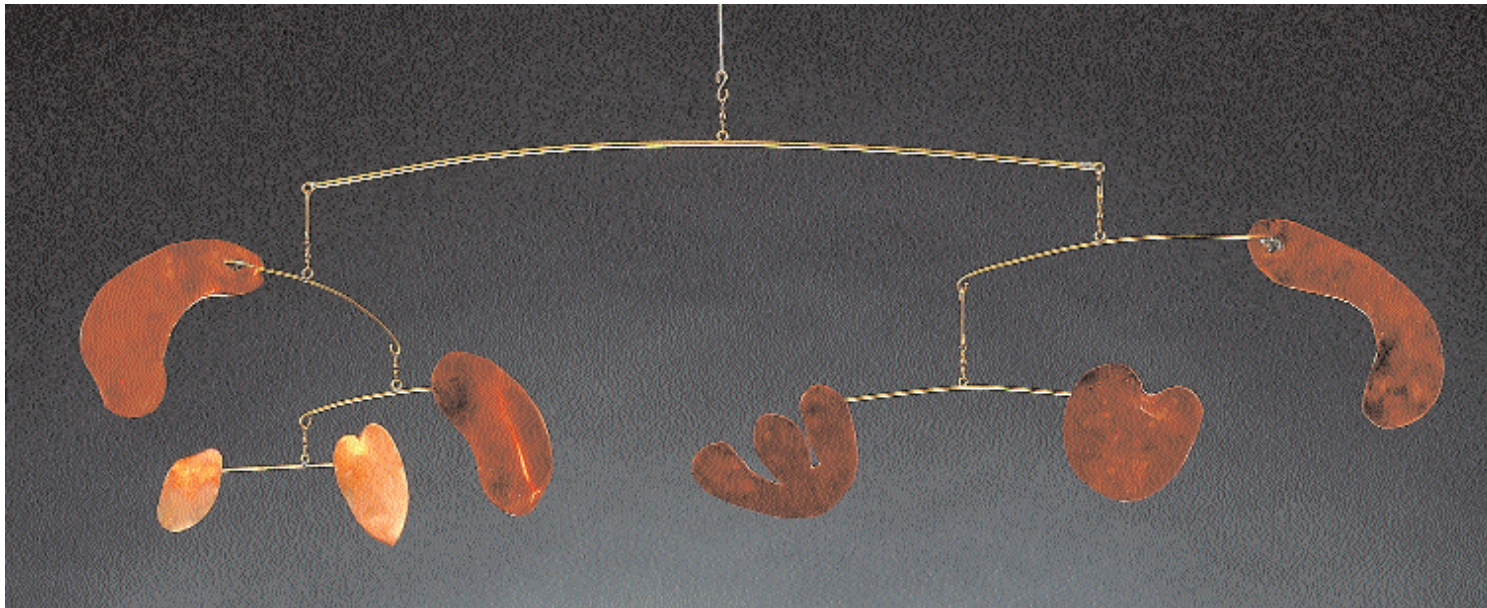
MOTHER'S 7"h x 10"w



HAPPY 13"h x 19"w



FISH 15½" h x 50" w



UNTITLED 10½" h x 33" w

The "mobiles," which are neither wholly alive nor wholly mechanical, and which always eventually return to their original form, may be likened to water grasses in the changing currents, or to the petals of the sensitive plant, or to gossamer caught in an updraft. In short, although "mobiles" do not seek to imitate anything because they do not "seek" any end whatever, unless it be to create scales and chords of hitherto unknown movements - they are nevertheless at once lyrical inventions, technical combinations of an almost mathematical quality, and sensitive symbols of Nature, of that profligate Nature which squanders pollen while unloosing a flight of a thousand butterflies; of that inscrutable Nature which refuses to reveal to us whether it is a blind succession of causes and effects, --
Jean-Paul Sartre



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