



# Christopher Wilmarth: Light and Gravity

*Steven Henry Madoff*

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Christopher Wilmarth delighted the world with light-filled sculptures of glass and steel that were deeply poetic in their moods and extraordinarily rich in their modernist heritage. But in 1987, at the peak of his career, a long struggle with depression ended tragically for Wilmarth. The internationally acclaimed artist committed suicide at age 44, and his work largely fell from the public view.

Now, Wilmarth's legacy is recaptured in this beautifully written, richly illustrated book by art critic, historian, and poet Steven Henry Madoff. The first in-depth look at Wilmarth's extraordinary life as an artist, the book explores both the light and the darkness that underlie his work. Madoff offers a critical overview of the artist's career, examining the sculptor's response not only to historical masters such as Cézanne, Brancusi, Matisse, and Giacometti, but also to the art world of his times--particularly the dominant influence of Minimalism. Using the newly created Wilmarth archive at Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum, Madoff anchors this moving interpretation with the sculptor's own writings unearthed from journals, student notebooks, artist sketchbooks, and letters.

Madoff draws as well from interviews, articles, and poems that Wilmarth published in his lifetime, along with the body of criticism covering Wilmarth's development over the years. Acclaimed biographer Nancy Milford contributes a poignant memoir of her years of friendship with the artist, and Fogg associate curator Edward Saywell offers a powerful selection of Wilmarth's writings. The sculptor's romantic outlook, his gorgeously light-infused art, and his dramatic decline into work of harrowing darkness are sensitively examined in a book that reintroduces Christopher Wilmarth's sculptures and graphics to the contemporary art audience.

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