

# OUT AND ABOUT IN CT

## WAA SCULPTURE WALK



Nestled within the hills and dales of northwest Connecticut lies a world-class sculpture exhibit that envelops you into its bucolic setting. With pieces as diverse as a "giant tulip" that could have been transplanted from another planet to neo-classical nudes, the show presents bronze and marble figures as well as abstract, kinetic, whimsical, industrialized and thought-provoking works in stone, resin, glass and metal.

Officially titled the WAA (Washington Art Association) Sculpture Walk, the exhibit is located in Washington Depot, first settled in 1734 and traversed several times by George Washington. Anchored by the town hall and central plaza, the show is the result of the ambitious mission of town leaders to stimulate people to explore the nooks and crannies of the village "and look at it from a different perspective," says co-curator Barbara

Talbot. Sixty-three sculptures by more than 40 artists are featured, ranging from small pedestal mounts to 10 feet and larger: many of these works were created by recognized and acclaimed sculptors whose works have been displayed around the world, including Wendell Castle, Julian Schnabel and Hugh O'Donnell.

For those who believe art's purpose is to provoke, many pieces jolt our complacency, challenging our sense of entitlement and responsibility. This was part of the criteria in selecting pieces, said Talbot. "Given the disparity and divisiveness of the planet at the moment, bringing these disparate things together can create sort of a whole," she said.

Confronting our insularity, "Punch is Homeless," an imposing figure by Robert Taplin, mimics a familiar sight in cities around the world. Pushing his shopping cart overflowing with bags full of his lone

belongings, Punch's face is quite content despite his vagabond circumstances. "Punch is not looking for your pity," said Taplin. "He's not a pathetic figure. He's just going about his business."

Taplin's social consciousness inspired him to design a series of Punch sculptures in recent years that celebrate the dignity and resilience of the working class. Partly a spinoff of the puppets Punch and Judy, who "are sort of a degenerate derivative" from the Italian character Pulcinella, Talbot explained that the outward appearance of such characters, with their hunchbacks, hooknoses and protruding chins, may cast them as uncouth and dangerous. That obscures an underlying creativity and intelligence, he said. "He's like the outsider, the lord of misrule, who doesn't follow the rules. He's sort of a collection of things we are uncomfortable with."

With a deeply felt angst about the

### WANDERLUST

#### WAA SCULPTURE WALK

WASHINGTON ART ASSOCIATION  
4 BRYAN MEMORIAL PLAZA  
WASHINGTON DEPOT  
LITCHFIELD COUNTY  
CONNECTICUT  
THROUGH NOVEMBER 1

LEFT: Norman Sunshine, *Forgotten World II*, courtesy Washington Art Association

RIGHT: Tim Hochstetter, *Tertian Flora*, inflated stainless steel, electro-formed copper and blown glass, 5' high. Photograph by Tom Soboleski.



Tim Prentis, *Charlotte*, wire mesh, stainless steel and lead, 6'. Photograph by Tom Soboleski.

future of our planet, sculptor Timothy Hochstetter's work provokes, contemplating what future life forms might look like. "My spirit is tormented and torn and longs for our human species to take responsibility for evolutionary decisions," he said. Hochstetter is driven by envisioning "what's left after the anthropogenic phase [human-induced changes to earth's ecosystems] of human habitation has left this planet. It's like pushing the imagination into the future." But, he said, "what imagination does is bring you back to the present moment to reckon with what your responsibilities are."

One result of his fertile imagination is "Tertian Flora," a five-foot-high, tulip-like flower of inflated stainless steel, electro-formed copper and blown glass. It celebrates "the power of the flower" to survive and evolve and promote life through its "complex symbiotic relationship with insects and pollination," Hochstetter explained. Each of the little glass florets on "Tertian Flora" is a progeny generator. The glass/metal combination makes it a lasting, "durable factory of progeneration."

For traditionalists, "After the Bath" by Mary Adams is an exquisite bronze depiction of a bather toweleling herself. Other figurative works in a neoclassical style

include "Standing Figure Turning" by Michael Patterson, "Wilhelm" by Peter Muehlhaeuser and "Heather" by Philip Grausman.

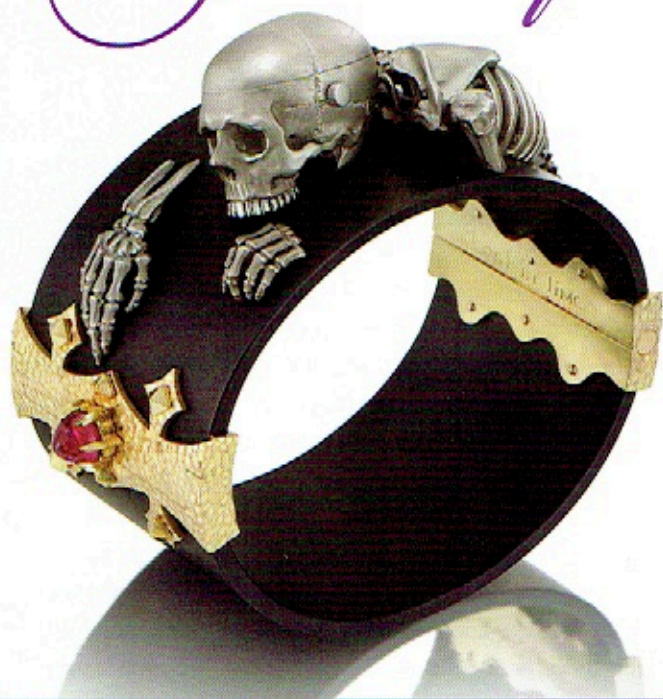
To amuse and enthrall, the kinetic creations of Tim Prentice capture the unpredictable energy of wind to create fascinating movements and sounds. The whimsical "Charlotte" is sure to delight young and old alike. A six-foot spider of wire mesh, stainless steel and lead, she dangles from a stately oak tree, twisting and spinning her web randomly in the breeze.

Along the bank of the rippling Shepaug River, another piece by Prentice, "Froghorn," "sounds like the forest primeval when the wind is up," he said. Constructed of plastic PVC pipes of varying lengths, "Froghorn" resembles a large marimba hanging from a branch. With the gentlest breeze, egg-shaped iron balls swivel at the top and tap the tubes, creating a deep, hollow, whispering sound.

Prentice's fascination with the wind stems from sailing and being a bombardier navigator in the Navy. He insisted that, "I'm not the artist, the wind is the artist. I just make a toy for the wind to play with."

In our increasingly hectic world, things that trigger us to slow down and

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Kim Liloi, *Lost in Time* (view 2, bracelet and watch), 18K and 14K gold, Rolex watch, iron, steel, Tamahagane (Japanese metal for swordmaking), Rubellite tourmaline, diamonds, urushi finish, 3" x 3" x 1.5"

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step back can get drowned out by the flaunting bravado that is so prevalent. That has spurred Joy Brown to develop a series of larger-than-life figures like "Kneeler," which Brown says, "pull you in. We need more stillness and quiet." Her monumental people present "an energy of stillness. That big figure is sitting there holding a stillness, a still point, in this very busy world we live in," she explained. There's his "big quiet face – kind of a peaceful, friendly face. He's kind of in a moment, aware and relaxed."

"Kneeler" is part of a family of more than a dozen bronze figures of the same character, 10' to 12' in size, standing, sitting or reclining in different poses. Nine of them recently came home to Kent, Connecticut from a nine-month exhibition along Broadway. "They're all approachable," Brown said, "and invite you to interact with them."

Brown's creative ideas mostly "come from a place in yourself. I'm trying to be more calm and unencumbered and in the moment and aware." With these influences as their core essence, the Kneeler family "are sort of like little ambassadors for a better way of living."

Without embarking on a better way of living, the risks Earth confronts are expressed in starker terms by Norman Sunshine, whose bronze sculpture "Forgotten World II" was originally created 12 years ago for a New York show themed "the challenge of order and chaos." Sunshine's lament that wrought this work was expressed in an essay that resonates with much more immediacy today. In "Forgotten World II," Earth is shown hanging in the balance, "totally corroded and ruined," Sunshine said. It is "showing something that's falling apart yet is held together. Sculptures are really more of a dire warning. Worlds do come and go," he says. "Many light years away worlds are born and die. Sculptures show how a golden blessed world can end up, literally hung up in a most precarious way, possibly to collapse, or to remain caught there for millions of years more."



Joy Brown, *Kneeler*, bronze. Photograph by Tom Soboleski

Although this show doesn't have a specific theme, and indeed presents a variety of styles from classic to contemporary, it's clear there are earnest cultural, environmental, and political feelings expressed in several of the pieces. Intentionally or not, Washington Depot, Connecticut may be the perfect place to juxtapose increasingly dire concerns about the direction we may be heading. In an idyllic village that's heavily steeped in our societal traditions and anchored with icons of our culture that includes an American Legion hall, a post office, a state trooper's residence, a bank and a stately town hall, the WAA Sculpture Walk scratches and gnaws to get under our skin and shake us out of our static complacency, screaming an urgent alarm that ignoring our responsibilities multiplies our peril.

The WAA Sculpture Walk is on display until November 1. Maps and a program are available in the WAA Gallery on Bryan Memorial Plaza. Set in a region of farm stands,


vineyards, antique shops and gurgling streams, it seems an ideal autumn destination. More information can be found at [waasculpturewalk.com](http://waasculpturewalk.com).

| Tom Soboleski

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Image: Kristina Estell, *How to recognize a ten-foot ladder*



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