

AUGUST 4, 2022

## On the Road: The Mount, "SculptureNow" Finds its Way Home

The Mount, Lenox, MA

[www.sculpturennow.org](http://www.sculpturennow.org)

[www.edithwharton.org](http://www.edithwharton.org)

exhibit through October 19, 2022



Cecilia by Robin Tost

From a curtained bedroom window, looking out over the landscape of her home -- the pristine cut grass and shrubs, the square-shaped garden with fountain in the center, the little brook connecting one side of the dirt walkway to the other -- there is no doubt that author Edith Wharton found joy in what she viewed. Wharton, author of countless novels, short stories, poetry, and journals, titled her home "The Mount".

Photographs show that the large white mansion, horse carriage barn, and land looked just as it did 100+ years ago. The Mount has also been the home of SculptureNow for the past 10 years. I have no doubt that Mrs. Wharton would welcome the sculptors with their enormous-scale pieces of

ingenuity, perhaps sometimes with a quizzical look. These 30 art structures, each developed by a different professional artist, have found their way to The Mount for the next four months.

SculptureNow is a high-end exhibit. After some years trying to find its way in the process of selecting the perfect location in the Berkshires, The Mount and SculptureNow became an ideal match.

To carefully situate the sculptures throughout the property, it likely took the knowledge of an architect, arborist, landscaper, and meteorologist.



These 30 giant pieces of art had to be distanced from each other to consider visitor trailways, types of ground needed to construct on with heed certainly paid to the aesthetics. Per federal rules for historic buildings, such as The Mount, nothing on the property would change. Taking this mandate into consideration, just a few sculptures are placed nearby, but not on, the author's Pet Cemetery. Wharton probably loved her many dogs and buried each on a hill solely for her pets.

Why hire an arborist? So that the materials used in the creation of the sculpture would be conducive to the land, and for practical needs that the art would not sink into the ground.

Why need a meteorologist? So that materials which depended on light and movement of wind were exactly where they should be in order to showcase the art.

Ann Jon, Director of SculptureNow since the endeavor began is justifiably proud of her work, the vetting process, site specific placement of the art, and partnership with the staff at The Mount.

SculptureNow is no ordinary art show. An important part is the make up the Vetting Committee. With hundreds of slides and descriptions sent from throughout the U.S., the selection process is one that is taken extremely seriously. Very few artists are included a second time, unless invited; this way

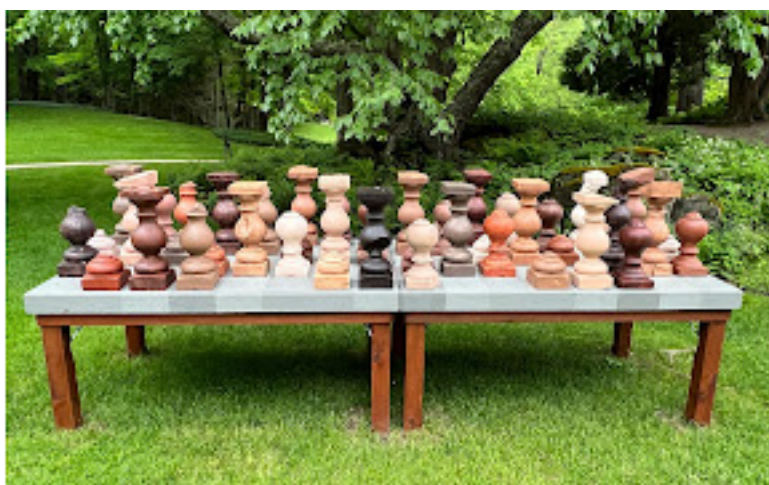
more sculptors are able to be highlighted. Board members from both The Mount and SculptureNow ultimately make the selections.

This year's selected subjects included the usual and expected materials to create these special forms of visual art: i.e., steel, pigment, granite, stone, fabric, wood, bamboo, bronze, and wire. Oftentimes, material has been recycled from other art. The components of some structures were surprising: pine needles, deer & cow bones, hypertufa (I had to look this up), and fire, air, water, and prayers.

One aspect differing from those in the past are the small lawn signs with the artist's name and title of piece. As in most shows of this ilk, the cost is stated. Not now. This was a purposeful omission so that visitors would not necessarily see dollar signs first rather than the art itself. The prices are not secret, as they are listed in the SculptureNow map.

Aside from the creativity of building the structures, comes the title. Some are named logically, exactly what they look like; Fainting Couch by artist Sarah Peters, reflects something akin to Cleopatra's lounge, Hugh Lassen's Rhino was hard to miss because of its large chunk of granite chiseled into the shape of the animal. Tomer Ben-Gal's A-Frame Bench was exactly that, and available for visitor seating.

No singular theme carried through the exhibit; just as each artist is unique, so are their styles and creations. Our tour guide, SculptureNow Director Ann Jon, has triple duty as curator of the show, installation coordinator, and tour guide. Ours was a special treat, as Ms. Jon zipped us along in a golf for the entire route of 30 enormous structures, describing the piece and artist of each.



One Family by Anthony Garner

It is obvious that Jon's heart is in The Mount's exhibit. I would guess that one of her paramount missions is to show off the work of the 30 expert visual artists to the public. Actually, Jon has another task, as she is a professional sculptor herself. Jon's work, called Bios44 was a mix of acrylic and mixed media with three sections under domes to represent the past, present, and future. I put a lot of

thought into Bios44, although I admit that I didn't quite "get" the symbols, nor did I "get" Michael Cochran's Dublin or Binney Meigs' Ocean Swimmer, and many more. That didn't matter. I studied the domes of Jon's composition and the detail in the others' magical and sometimes mammoth visual art. That was all that I wanted to take in, and that certainly was enough.

The beauty of SculptureNow, with its individual parts and as a whole, underscores work of exemplary sculptors each with different formats and messages to be appreciated by The Mount visitors. SculptureNow and The Mount make for a fine duo. No doubt that Edith Wharton is happy.

by Shera Cohen  
In the Spotlight