

NXTHVN WOMEN ARTIST REPS JON BUTCHER PAT ADAMS BABAROOSA

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The Gallery Issue

SCULPTURENOW AT THE MOUNT: CONTEMPORARY ART IN NATURESculptureNow + The Mount • Lenox, MA • sculpturennow.org • Through October 19, 2022

The world may be in perilous disorder, but despair has no foothold in SculptureNow's 22nd annual juried exhibition. Like its predecessors, it aims to showcase artistic achievement rather than advance a thematic point of view. More than half of the 30 artworks, culled from 124 applications, are first-time entrants.

Scattered about the sun-dappled landscape of The Mount, novelist Edith Wharton's former summer home, now a National Historic Landmark, the artworks range from punchy visual statements, to over-reaching narratives, to feats of technology.

The handful that acknowledge COVID's toll, climate change, or politics do so with benevolent metaphors. Linda Hoffman's bronze *Refuge*, for example, shows endangered wildlife acting as safety nets for humans. Cancer survivor Miller Opie plants flowers of deer and cow ribs in her stone-surfaced *Bone Furcraea Garden*.

Mary Taylor's *Imminence*, a mountain lion

fabricated of interwoven steel rods, looks alarmingly alive as its eyes follow us from the shadows. Robin Tost's mammoth sea serpent *Cecilia*, quilted in scrap metal as a pandemic-isolation project, swirls buoyantly across a lawn.

Lee Williams's intriguing *Irradiation 3*, a platoon of upright tree limbs studded with orange rods, marches up a wooded hillside bidding us to discover its ambiguous purpose.

Conversely, Philip Marshall's *Together*, lengths of stainless steel shaped to resemble a couple resting intimately against each other, is an eloquent and compelling manifestation of its title.

Textures and patterns are strong suits for Joseph Chirchirillo's concrete *Earth Arch*, rich with surface scratches, rubbings and stony incrustations that imply a storied past.



Joseph Chirchirillo, *Earth Arch*, concrete, pigment, 7'6" x 6'8" x 3'2", 1,600 lbs.
Photo: Ann Jon.

Less readable are Thomas Matsuda's *Five Elements: Earth, Air, Water, Fire, Space*, a wood-stone construction voiced primarily by a fire-charred totem pole, and William Bennett's *Omphalos V: The Mount*, a mound-shaped installation with a viewing stand that positions us to peer at pinpricks of light under a dark dome.

While open to political or cultural responses, nonprofit SculptureNow's founder/director Ann Jon says: "We prefer a show presenting many artists with variations on creativity."

Encyclopedic, thematic, or solo, outdoor exhibitions such as this break with conventional museum experience to bring art in nature closer to us all.

—Charles Bonenti