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"At Bridge Gardens, a perfect setting for sculpture"  
By Pat Rogers  
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## At Bridge Gardens, a perfect setting for sculpture



*"Tower" by Joel Perlman*

Seeking relief from the bustle of summer's final throes? Enjoy seeing sculpture in natural settings? Bridge Gardens offers a perfect place to do both.

Tucked between two busy streets in Bridgehampton, Bridge Gardens, the 20-year-old landscaping labor of love created by Jim Kilpatric and Harry Neyens, manages to channel tranquility. The cultivated botanic oasis includes four separate gardens: culinary, medicinal, textile and dye, and an herb plot. Hedgerows and careful plantings variously define intimate or wide open spaces.

Adding an extra layer of interest is the sculpture exhibition on view through Sunday, "**Uncommon Ground**," featuring 15 large pieces installed on five landscaped acres.

The artists and artworks were selected by **Cheryl Sokolow of C Fine Art**. The art is contemporary with most artists in mid or late career. Many have international exhibition credits. The lineup includes **Kevin Barrett, John Van Alstine, John Ruppert, Jim Henderson, Joel Perlman, Carol Ross, Win Knowlton, Naomi Teppich, Isobel Folb Sokolow (1934-2006)** and **James DeMartis**.

Some of the artwork was chosen with an eye to "organic" shapes that might have been inspired by those found in nature, said Ms. Sokolow. Other pieces go beyond suggestion and mimic nature directly.

For instance, "**River Jacks**" by **John Ruppert** resembles an assortment of large stones, though they are actually bronze sculptures that look like rocks. "**Octotillo Patch**" by **Naomi Teppich** and **Martin Springhetti** appears to be a series of sparse flowering shrubs set in a circle of stones. The sculpture of the desert plant is actually made from steel rebar, metal mesh, colored cement and paint.

"**Bronze Trees**" by **Jim Henderson** takes a step away from nature while keeping his subject identifiable. The trio of abstract trees is installed alongside a meandering line of real trees.

The artists selected have another quality in common: the "hand of the artist" is a part of the process and therefore part of the work, Ms. Sokolow said. Rooted in a traditional approach to making sculpture, the large-scale works started with sketches, were molded into maquettes by the artist and then translated to full scale. Some of the maquettes and tabletop sculpture form an auxiliary show available for viewing upon request of Bridge Gardens Manager Rick Bogusch.

All of the pieces in "**Uncommon Ground**" were carefully selected and positioned on the grounds in relation to the plants, trees and gardens, Mr. Bogusch said. Sometimes a single sculpture was installed to accentuate the intimacy of a small space. Other times, playfulness had its part. The chrome-like purple finish in **Kevin Barrett's "Swift II"** accentuates the lavender in the herb garden but also provides a striking contrast to the subtle natural forms of "**River Jacks**" beneath a nearby tree.

Sculptures were placed to contribute to the natural visual harmony of Bridge Gardens. They also inspire viewers to reflect on their own spatial relationship to the artwork, the connection to nature, and the interface between nature's creations and man-made ones, Ms. Sokolow said. The intersection of all three hints at the meaning of the exhibition title, "**Uncommon Ground**."

The sculpture show isn't the first time the Peconic Land Trust—stewards of Bridge Gardens—have married art and nature. In 2006, the organization formed a collaboration with Plein Air Peconic. Artist members realistically portray Peconic Land Trust properties and exhibit the artwork in group shows designed to heighten awareness and raise funds for the East End land preservation organization.

**"Uncommon Ground"** was offered in conjunction with a series of Friday night live concerts to serve a similar function, said John v. H. Halsey, president and founder of Peconic Land Trust. "Bridge Gardens is a very special place," he said. "The garden is beautiful on its own. But with art there, you see the garden in a different experience. The same is very apparent with the Plein Air Peconic collaboration. Art allows you to see through the eyes of another."

Plans are in the works for **C Fine Art** to curate a second sculpture show at Bridge Gardens next year. The company specializes in pairing large-scale sculpture with public spaces. The firm was responsible for installing the sculpture at the corner of Chase and Grand Avenue on Shelter Island. A second installation is planned for the fall.

**"Uncommon Ground"** remains on view weekends only through September 12 at Bridge Gardens, 36 Mitchell Lane, Bridgehampton. Admission is \$10 for adults or \$20 for families. For information, visit [PeconicLandTrust.org](http://PeconicLandTrust.org).

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