

Northforker

"Dramatic new sculpture display at Bridge Gardens is an ideal Hamptons day trip"

By Cailin Riley

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Bill Barrett's "Musketeer" at Bridge Gardens. (Photo Credit: Cheryl Sokolow)

They've come from as close as Sagaponack and Water Mill, and as far afield as Santa Fe, New Mexico. On June 23, under sunny skies with a light breeze, the gentle tones of wind chimes traded off with the steady, rhythmic mechanical sounds of flatbed trucks and cranes carefully placing several large-scale sculptures throughout the grounds of the five-acre Bridge Gardens on Mitchell Lane in Bridgehampton. It was one of the final installation days for the exhibit "Uncommon Ground IV," which will feature the work of 14 internationally recognized sculptors from June 26 through Labor Day weekend of 2022.

The exhibition is a collaborative partnership between John v.H. Halsey, president of Peconic Land Trust, Garden Manager Rick Bogusch, and curator Cheryl Sokolwo of C Fine Art. Bridge Gardens is open daily to the public from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm with free admission. On Fridays in summer the gardens are open until dusk. (Sculpture are also offered for sale, with a portion of the proceeds going to Bridge Gardens.)

The presence of the collection of contemporary, large-scale outdoor sculptures on the picturesque grounds—which includes carefully cultivated herb and perennial gardens, vegetable beds, native plants, community garden plots, and an array of trees and shrubs spread out across an undulating and inviting landscape—gives potential visitors an added incentive to make a trip. Entering the grounds feel like being transported to another time and place, where there is an interplay between the elements of natural, organic growth, and a more cultivated aesthetic.

Cheryl Sokolow had that balance in mind when she originally curated the exhibit, which had its first iteration back in 2011. Sokolow, the owner and principal of C Fine Art, founded the Uncommon Ground exhibition series as a way to make large-scale sculpture more accessible to the community.

That goal has certainly been achieved, and both Sokolow and Bridge Gardens Outreach Director Kathy Kennedy were excited about the exhibit's return to the gardens, which are affiliated with Peconic Land Trust. Bridge



"Guided Spirit" by Kevin Barrett



"Sundance" by Kevin Barrett

Gardens is a stewardship project of the trust, which works to conserve working farms and historically important national lands on Long Island. In addition to hosting the Uncommon Ground exhibit several times, the Gardens regularly serve as a multi-purpose outdoor classroom, and also have a demonstration garden, two features that make it a valuable community resource.

Sokolow spoke about the process of curating the exhibit on June 23, strolling around the grounds alongside Kennedy, while keeping a close eye on the work that was being done to put the final pieces in place.

“The work focuses on the kind of sculpture I’d consider organic and naturalistic in some way, rather than narrative,” she said, while standing near Kevin Barrett’s work, *Guided Spirit*, a large brushed stainless steel sculpture on an elevated black base that was created for the exhibit.

Barrett, like most of the sculptors involved in the exhibit, has worked with Sokolow for many years, and has been part of Uncommon Ground since its inception. This year, for the first time, he will be showcasing work alongside both his brother, Alex Barrett, and their father, the internationally renowned sculptor Bill Barrett, based in Santa Fe, who is still creating at the age of 86. Both *Guided Spirit* and Kevin Barrett’s other work currently at the Gardens, *Sundance*, fit in naturally with the environment, and Sokolow said the artists deserve recognition for creating that natural symbiosis.

“They’re made to really work well with the setting that we have here,” she said. “They’re lyrical, but also strong and durable and everlasting. They do mimic the garden a bit in their portrayal. The whole idea is a play between the garden, which is both man-made and organic, as echoed in the sculptures, which are also man-made but also organic. There’s that play between what’s natural and what’s created.”

One of the pieces that perhaps best speaks to that thematic unity is Norman Mooney’s *Butterfly*, one of several pieces he has as part of Uncommon Ground IV. The sculpture sits on prominent display in the middle of a cultivated circular garden of shrubs and plants. It is among several site-specific installations, where the sculptors take extra care to make the piece fit in naturally to the environment at Bridge Gardens.

Sokolow was excited for several other sculptors who will be exhibiting work at



“Butterfly Effect” by Norman Mooney

Bridge Gardens for the first time. Gino Miles also made the trek from Santa Fe with his sculpture, Shelter, a spiraling, bronze piece, while Harry Gordon is showing his piece, Grasshopper, a large granite sculpture.

The exhibit will also feature works from several locally-based sculptors. Hans van de Bovenkamp, who has a piece called She-Clamdigger in the exhibit, has works ubiquitous throughout the Bridgehampton area and Joel Perlman, who has two sculptures in the exhibit, has a studio in Water Mill.

"I have the long relationship with Cheryl and also with the gardens, and I know how great the work looks there, and how important it is to have a good match between the site and the sculpture, and Cheryl is very good at doing that," Perlman said. "And I like participating with my buddies, and many of them are in the show. It's almost in addition to being an art thing, like a gathering, because we all hadn't seen each other since the beginning of the pandemic."

The sculptors all agree that showcasing their work at Bridge Gardens is a valuable opportunity. Kevin Barrett, who is based in Massachusetts, has brought pieces to the exhibit from the start, and said he is always eager to return.

"I really believe it's important for the work to be in an environment like this," he said. "A lot of museums don't have the space to do these kinds of shows, so it's really unique. It's beneficial for all of us, because the hardest thing is getting people to see the work. And Cheryl has a good eye." Other sculptors featured in the exhibit include Richard Heinrich, Robert Perless, Carole Eisner, David Hayes, Steve Zaluski, and Peter Rosenthal.

While options for gathering socially have greatly increased in recent weeks and months, the exhibit — spread over five beautiful and socially distant acres — does represent a safe and almost therapeutic way to engage with art and the natural world, both Sokolow and Kennedy said.



"Shelter" by Gino Miles



"Grasshopper" by Harry H. Gordon

“Bridge Gardens has really been a resource for people throughout Covid,” Kennedy said. “We had a lot of visitors come through in the last year, and having sculptures on exhibition here just adds to the interest factor of why you should visit.”

Partnering with the arts is something the Peconic Land Trust has been doing for years, she added. “We feel like art is a natural component of experiencing nature. We’re excited the exhibit is going to be here for a long time. It can give everybody a chance to experience it more than once.”

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