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Sculpture@Sylvester Manor returns: Exhibits appear throughout the landscape

By Charity Robey



A striking object is taking shape on the lawn that slopes down to the creek behind the old yellow house at Sylvester Manor. It seems that a long, sinuous sea beast has heaved itself out of the creek onto the shore to rest.

Closer inspection reveals that the beast is a cunning weave of brush and tree limbs enclosing a form of rebar and chicken wire. It's the work of Maren Hassinger, an artist known for public art projects, who worked with Shelter Island School students led by art teacher Catherine Brigham. The community project (the metalwork frame was donated by Marcello Masonry owner, Robert Marcello) is one of 19 beautiful and surprising works of art in the third annual Sculpture@Sylvester Manor. The show is open to the public at no charge starting June 13 on the green lawns and deep woods of Sylvester Manor.

This year's show features sculptures and installations by artists with ties to the East End, working with a title developed by Curator Tom Cugliani, "[R]evolution," which puts the themes of revolution and evolution expressed in Tom Paine's "Common Sense" and Charles Darwin's "On

the Origin of Species” in the context of the 250th anniversary of the nation’s Founding. He invited the participating artists to interpret that theme, and the creative and provocative results are installed on the Manor grounds for us to interpret and enjoy.

Some of the works installed in the landscape seem to become part of the forest. John Chino’s “Woodland Warp Sylvester Manor” is a web of intersecting nylon threads that glow yellow and green as the light changes in the clearing of woods and encircle the trunks of ancient trees like threads in a loom.

When Mr. Cugliani suggested the outdoor sculpture exhibit three years ago, he had no idea it would become an annual event, but he had hopes. “I’ve always been deeply interested in the history of Shelter Island,” he said. “It was very apparent to me that a sculpture show on the grounds of Sylvester Manor could be a very fruitful opportunity to bring art history and landscape together.”

In the 1980s, Mr. Cugliani ran a gallery in New York that focused on emerging artists. “I wanted to give artists a platform that was slightly more elevated than, ‘Let’s do a show in the barn,’” he said. “I wanted it to be grown-up and opinionated, thoughtful and critical. I spend a lot of time and energy thinking about it and writing about it and creating a digital catalog that accompanies it.”

The catalog Mr. Cugliani writes is the basis for the guided walking tour, which is available to every visitor.

This year’s artists are Catherine Brigham and students of the Shelter Island School District, John Cino, Oksana Danzinger, Matthew Thomas Dutton, Francine Fleischer, Jessamyn Go, Maren Hassinger, Justin Kenney, Gioia Kuss, Karine Laval, Pia Leighton, Curtis Mitchell, Oscar Molina, Lindsay Morris, Jill Musnicki, Nicole Rosenthal, Bonnie Rychlak, Tonito Valderrama, and John Wittenberg.