

### ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

# Nestled Among the Trees, Shapes for All Seasons

At Adelphi, a Display of Sculpture Creatively Chosen for the Outdoors

By BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO

**A**delphi University has hit upon a terrific formula for a successful recurring art exhibition: Every two years, it gives over a leafy quadrangle at its Garden City campus to outdoor sculpture. The splendid grounds make the perfect setting for the event.

#### ART REVIEW

This year's biennial, the fourth, is slightly smaller than in previous years because construction of new campus buildings has limited the available space to a little more than two acres. But the show is no less impressive, with 14 sculptures installed among trees, gardens and ponds. They are generally very well sited.

The sculptures will remain on view for 18 months, giving students and visitors to the campus a chance to appreciate them in all seasons.

The organizers of the biennial — Richard Vaux, director of Adelphi University exhibitions, and Bill Shillalies, an adjunct professor of art — have sensibly chosen works that will survive outdoors. They are mostly stone, bronze and metal pieces, though there are also works of heavy treated wood, installed on bases to keep them off the moisture-laden ground.

To get this year's exhibition installed, Mr. Vaux and Mr. Shillalies worked with a tiny budget of \$12,000 and the help of student volunteers and the artists themselves. But the show never feels sloppy, amateurish or rushed, mixing a range of conventional formal and abstract metal sculpture and more experimental contemporary artworks with an assuredness that is deceptively effortless. Much time and care has gone into selecting and placing these works.

Fall is a terrific time to view outdoor

*"Outdoor Sculpture Biennial" is at Adelphi University, 1 South Avenue, Garden City, through April 1, 2008. Information: [www.adelphi.edu](http://www.adelphi.edu).*



**LANDSCAPE** *"Relative Velocity VI" (2006) by Nicolae Golici.*

sculpture, for the colors of the trees enhance the displays. Some of the works in this show are designed to frame the environment, among them "Negative Energy" (2006) by Steven Ceraso of Bay Shore. A pair of squiggly-lined totemic poles made of weathered steel, the work is arranged so that it silhouettes a yellow-hued tree. Here the use of empty space between the two sculptures is just as important as the objects themselves.

The most compelling pieces are those that push the notion of outdoor sculpture beyond conventional ideas of civic decoration — in short, sculpture with some kind of social or political meaning.

Richard Brachman, based in Brooklyn, gets my vote for best in show with his "Drums of War" (2005), a piece that speaks for itself. It is a pile of oil drums inscribed by the artist with historical quotations by famous people justifying the wars of their nations.

Another work of social and psychological intensity is "Sir, Yes Sir" (2006) by An Ti Liu, who was born in Taiwan and lives in West Hempstead. It consists of 120 life-size concrete babies in military formation facing a raised area where the viewer is invited to sit or to stand. I'm guessing that it is a sly metaphor for college teaching, with these fresh-faced recruits



**LANDSCAPE** "Sir, Yes Sir" (2006) by An Ti Liu.

lined up and waiting for their teacher to tell them what to think, say and do. Or maybe it has to do with complaints about the way art schools tend to produce artist-automatons.

Some of the biennial's most memorable works are among the least conspicuous. John Kahn of Saugerties has created an installation of skeletal-like remains made of carved stone and nestled beneath low-lying trees. It takes on big themes like life, death and impermanence. But the artist also clearly enjoys manipulating stone for his amusement, for he has cleverly carved another work, a bicycle chain, from blue stone and attached it to a crude pillar. That piece is just for fun.

In another area of the quadrangle, a row of five red geometric constructions fills a long lawn. These are the works of Pal Svensson, a Swedish artist inspired by a Swedish pioneer tradition of log house construction, though this may not be immediately apparent to most American viewers. The catalog informs us that the red color represents "Falu Red," the traditional color of Swedish barns.

Elsewhere, Nicolae Golici, born in Ro-

mania and now based in New York, presents a pair of Sputnik-like constructions made of wooden panels. Plunked in the middle of a grassy field, they look as if they fell from the sky. Also made of wood is Harry Gordon's "Popper" (2004), a grandiose assemblage of white oak pieces carved into a single large popcorn-kernel shape. Look more closely and you may see a human figure struggling to release himself from the abstract form.

The rest of the displays are mostly conventional metal abstract sculptures, the kind that used to be found rusting outside suburban museums. They are all well made but not terribly interesting, which I guess is why this sort of art has largely fallen out of vogue among younger artists. This was the only shortcoming of the show; perhaps the next sculpture biennial could be a bit more in step with the times.



**LANDSCAPE** "Clepsydra" (2003) by Molly Mason, all at Adelphi University.