

HOUSATONIC LIVING

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'Resurgence'

Boyajian Sculpture Barn opens with new exhibition

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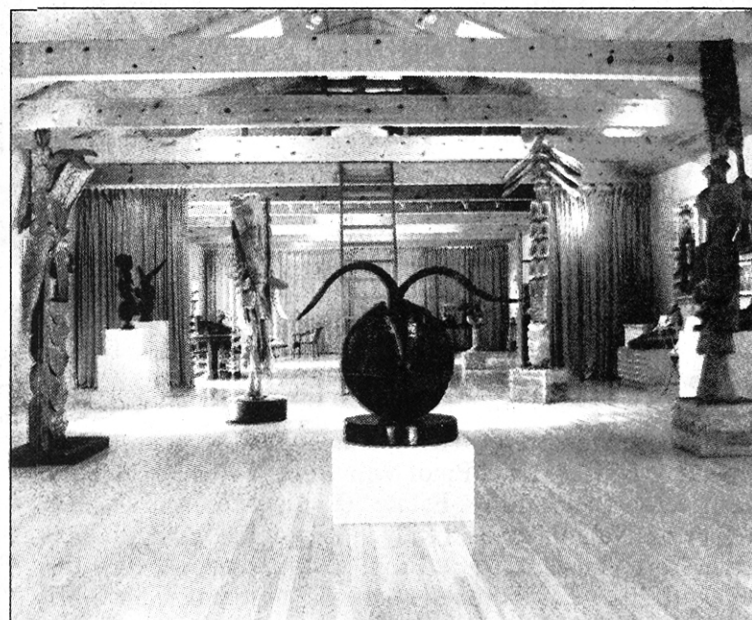
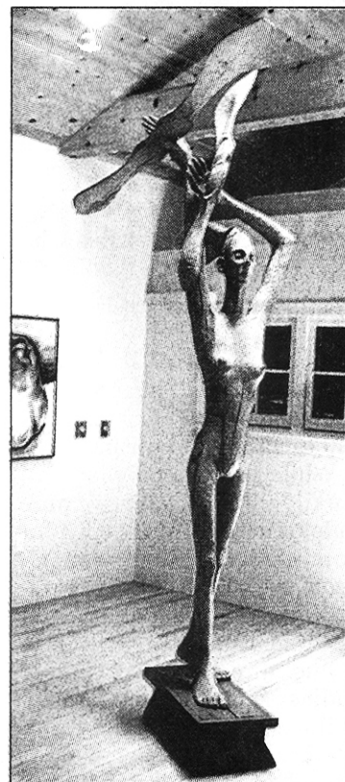
Nature is often the well-spring of inspiration for artists and no less so for David Boyajian, who lives and works on a sprawling property at the intersection of Route 39 and Milltown Road in New Fairfield.

Motorists traveling along a bucolic strip of Route 39 in New Fairfield often catch a glimpse of Mr. Boyajian's nature-inspired sculpture on his property, but a closer look reveals the historic barns that now serve as The Boyajian Sculpture Barn, where, any day of the week, one can find the sculptor creating what he calls his "resurgence"—in steel, wood, charcoal and pastels.

This weekend, Mr. Boyajian, his wife Carter, a performance artist and designer, and their son, Gabriel, are inviting the public to a one-year anniversary celebration at the Sculpture Barn. Mr. Boyajian's latest free-standing stainless steel and bronze sculptures and his wrought iron ornamental trellis pieces will be on view and for sale in the four-acre Sculpture Field.

The gallery exhibits the artist's broad range of works—from small tabletop stainless steel and bronze pieces, to his larger-than-life carved wood figures. The walls are adorned with the artist's new charcoal and pastel works and etchings. The show opens with a celebration June 26 and 27 from 10 a.m. to sunset, featuring refreshments and entertainment by Bertrand Laurence, a French-born blues guitarist from Providence, R.I. It is to continue weekends and by appointment through Sept. 6.

"We want visitors to get a glimpse of how an artist lives and works," Mrs. Boyajian said.



Above, the 3,000-square-foot gallery at The Boyajian Sculpture Barn in New Fairfield, which doubles as a performance space, and, left, "Maple Seed Dancer," by David Boyajian. These and other works by Mr. Boyajian are part of "Resurgence," an exhibition of the artist's work, which opens June 26 and 27.

"We'll guide you through the Sculpture Field, gallery and David's huge studios, where you'll see pieces in process. We think of 'Resurgence' as a celebration filled with the energy and lifestyle of working contemporary artists."

A year ago, the family moved from the artistic community of Ridgefield to the home and studio barns formally owned by sculptor Michael Nevelson, the son of celebrated artist Louise Nevelson. After her death, her sculpture was moved to the homestead and stored there.

"I realized that I needed to galvanize and bring everything together in one space," Mr. Boyajian said, noting that he used to carry his work around before finding this studio space. The couple agreed that, for both of their art forms, the former

Nevelson space was ideal.

Saturday, Mr. Boyajian was working in his studio, just below the 3,000-square-foot gallery, putting the finishing touches on one of the sculptures to be included in "Resurgence." He described his current series as "Dicotyledons," variations on his "Cotyledons" series—interpretations of seed forms as they germinate and blossom, abstract forms depicting life.

"My work is founded in nature," he explained while preparing the final pieces for one of his newest freestanding sculptures. Comparing the flower-like sculpture to the blooming of spring blossoms, he added, "I always look at the points of origin and if I feel it looks too linear or plane, [adding such a piece] is a way to pull the mass together so it becomes more

open. I want the work to germinate, to grow, to catapult so it can expand and explore."

Exploration has always been a part of the artist's life. Mr. Boyajian started sculpting at 13, when he began studies with mentor and renowned sculptor, Wolfgang Behl in the Willamantic Workshop. He earned his Bachelor's of Fine Arts degree from Alfred University, followed by his Master's degree from the Maryland Institute, Rinehart School of Sculpture two years later. He spent the next 10 years honing his skills while assisting figurative sculptors Behl, Elbert Weinberg and Andrew Coppola.

At the time, he said in his bio, "creative dynamism on narrative steel and wood sculptures"

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Boyajian Sculpture Barn 'Resurgence'

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involved "gestural abstraction inspired by images of man/woman and their relationship to nature and dream."

While still pursuing his own work, the award-winning sculptor has taught his craft for more than 20 years—metal, wood and stone sculpture—at the Silvermine School of Art in New Canaan, where he serves as the director of sculpture studies and is a Silvermine Guild and Sculpture Guild member. He teaches drawing at the Norwalk Community College.

"Teaching truly stimulates my mind," he said. "Artists are always learning, growing and developing—it's a constant process. But it's amazing to see how each student's train of thought works, how they translate and develop their ideas."

Among his students is his 11-year-old son, Gabriel, whose welded works will also be on view in the exhibit.

Over the years, Mr. Boyajian has changed media, but has continued to focus his work on nature. In his artist statement, he explained his work as "[centering] around themes of nurturing, regeneration and growth; symbolizing passage and transformation as it relates to the journey of life.

"My shapes often define a narrative or metaphor by juxtaposing images from nature with the use of industrial materials," he continued. "I choose steel because of its association with industry and manufacturing. I find that its tensile strength, durability and flexibility allow me to portray both the contour and gesture of my forms without sacrificing the dynamic of their metamorphosis. For me, the steel's creative potential is revealed when scale is not encumbered by physical weight or density of mass." They are, he said, his "poetic perceptions," whether volumetric, linear, concave/convex, forged, fabricated or carved.

He started his "Bud and Seed" series in the late 1990s, and while the works are based on reality, he allows his imagination to take them to more abstract shapes. Adding color on the smaller sculptures, he said, provides depth and movement. He uses oil sticks, which look like large crayons, to "break from dormancy into regeneration," thus "[triggering] an inner dialogue. For me the color has brought out the vitality and freshness of the seed form's natural physical life."

The industrial feel of metal was not always the artist's media of choice. From the

early 1980s to the early '90s, he created pieces out of wood, the results being the larger-than-life wood figures that seem to keep watch over the other works in the 3,000-square-foot gallery that doubles as a performance space. It was there that Mrs. Boyajian produced and directed Donna Moore's one-woman show, "The Balancing Act" in March. "Wood doesn't move as fast as working with steel," he said. "Metal is more fluid." He noted, however, that he is returning to his wood and stone roots.

Drawing, on the other hand, has always been a part of the artist's life, and something that ties each of his works together. "Drawing is fast, so I have the immediacy that I don't have in steel or wood. It allows me to get right down to it. Sculpture, on the other hand is a very time consuming, multi-step process."

Nevertheless, he continues his natural theme in his sketches, as evidenced in the pastel and charcoal drawings on view in the gallery. His work moves fluidly from drawing to wood to metal sculpture, but the theme remains constant—"The cycle of life, from turmoil to dormancy to rebirth."

"Take the seed forms, for example. Many of them are from the imagination, translated from paper to steel," he said. "There's a complexity in drawing, the steel showing the strength in nature."

Also in the gallery are many of the models for Mr. Boyajian's commissioned works. Among them is a section of the aluminum and stainless steel wall relief "Land of the Sleeping Giant" for the Cultural Complex in Hamden; "Hero," his "sculptural salute" to firefighters at Fire Company #16 in New Haven; "The Harvest Gates" he created in Hartford to raise awareness about hunger in the Hartford area, and the model for a 10-foot piece for the Newington Library. The circular frame surrounding a tree stands upon a pyramid and is adorned by four birds. "It's like a time piece, with the birds marking the quarters for the season," he said. "It's about family and

community."

"Compassion," a painted aluminum portrait tableau of Justice Thurgood Marshall, was another commission he completed and that was unveiled in May by the judge's widow, Cecilia Marshall, at the Thurgood Marshall Middle School for Social Justice in Bridgeport on the 50th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education decision.

"Commissions offer a break for me creatively," he explained. "You learn to expand and, creatively, you become more versatile."

The new space has done that for this artistic family, whether their focus is on performance theater or visual arts, allowing the Boyajians to create their own "poetic perceptions."

"It's such a cool space, like our own Tribeca in the country," Mrs. Boyajian said, adding that next year's celebration may include an interactive fabric exhibit of her own creation. "We're really looking forward to the opening. Art and culture are always representative of our time, and from an artist's perspective, where we're going."

"Resurgence" opens June 26 and 27 from 10 a.m. to sunset at The Boyajian Sculpture Barn, located at 3 Milltown Road in New Fairfield. The opening includes live music, refreshments and Sculpture Field walks, rain or shine; the shows runs weekends and by appointment through Sept. 6. For information, call 203-746-6101 or go online to www.sculpturebarn.com.

