

Sculpture and Science: A Lab's Artful Mixture

By Ariella Budick
STAFF WRITER

DON'T LET summer end without a trip to the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, where an exhibition of outdoor sculpture blends seamlessly with the surroundings. Here, art and landscape cohabit in relative seclusion, almost as if they had been produced in a single stroke of creation. The lofty pleasure of looking can be mixed with the fragrance of flowers, the shiver of a sea breeze brushing one's skin, the feeling of grass on your toes. And, of course, only outdoors can one gaze at a statue and nosh.

So bring a picnic and a comfortable pair of shoes, since the artworks sprawl across 102 acres. Before starting out, stop in at Grace auditorium, where you'll pick up a brochure and a detailed map, including a self-guided walking tour of the grounds.

James D. Watson, the Nobel-winning geneticist and president of the lab, has made a point of fostering a cross-fertilization between art and science on the verdant campus he oversees. Researchers' minds can expand when they are exposed to the complex spatial relationships and creative impulses frozen in sculpture. Conversely, many of the works on view take inspiration from biology.

David Boyajian's monumental seedlings, "Seed Form II" and "Big Boy Bud Form III," harden the ephemeral into steel. Young plants gently unfurling and reaching for the sky transmute into massive rust-colored slabs of metal, able to withstand the assaults of time. Boyajian takes an everyday growth process as a metaphor for the life-giving power of art.

In a similar vein, Christopher Solbert transforms disused industrial tanks and boilers into leaf-like shapes in "Black Oak II." Sterile man-made materials evolve backward into fertile forms.

Artist-businessman Walter Channing also mingles the organic with the imaginative. Whimsical animals and ferocious gargoyles sprout from the top of "Chimeric Tree," which stands just outside the window of Watson's office. The generative energy of the tree — a real stump, foraged from a forest, flipped upside down, its carved roots struggling skyward — invites the sculptor's refined interventions. The upshot is a creative partnership in which dead wood and a lively mind each enhance the other's strengths.

"Body Displacement With Sky Hook," by Daniel Georges, continues the dialogue between the human mind and brute nature. A limp, fleshy-looking limb is caught in a tangle of wires suspended from a pulley; it droops painfully. But a closer look reveals the artist's subtle trick. The

seemingly flaccid humanoid form is a molded concrete construction supporting the entire superstructure. We may think that technology holds nature hostage, but it's really the other way around.

Even the sculptures that don't deal explicitly with issues of plant and animal life engage in a conversation with the luxuriant setting. Looking through the hollow matrix of Richard Brachman's wooden "Twist," viewers can glimpse a patch of



Cold Spring Harbor Photos by Miriam Chua

David Boyajian's "Seed Form II," left, and "Big Boy Bud Form III" and Walter Channing's "Chimeric Tree" are among the sculptures on the 102-acre campus.



blue water and a roaming family of ducks. The brushed aluminum Mobius curve of Meryl Taradash's "Getting There," literally responds to nature as it pivots, languidly, in the wind. ■

WHERE&WHEN "Sculpture by the Sea" is on view through Oct. 31 at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, 1 Bungton Rd., Cold Spring Harbor. For information, call 516-367-8455 weekdays.