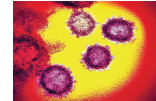




(/thebeat/)SIGN UP FOR NEWS ALERTS
(/thebeat/)



(/coronavirus/)

CORONAVIRUS NEWS (/coronavirus/)

≡ SECTIONS HOME (/) NEWS (/LOCAL-NEWS/) SPORTS (/LOCAL-SPORTS/) CULTURE (/BERKSHIRELANDSCAPES/)
OPINION (/OPINION/) CALENDAR (/CALENDAR/) OBITUARIES ([HTTP://WWW.LEGACY.COM/OBITUARIES/BERKSHIRE/](http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/berkshire/))

View fullscreen



(/uploads/original/20190710-140636-

SCULPTURENOWMOUNT-4_73872.jpg)

Ashley Blalock's installation of nylon yarn titled "Queen Anne's Lace," is on display through the trees at the SculptureNow exhibit at The Mount in Lenox.
STEPHANIE ZOLLSHAN - THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

SculptureNow: 'A varied and enriching artistic experience'

Posted Wednesday, July 10, 2019 3:06 pm

Don't miss the big stories. Like us on Facebook.

Like 43K

Support local
journalism
SUBSCRIBE TODAY →

By Nicolas Davidoff, The Berkshire Eagle

Lenox — "These eight pieces of wood were burned at the Leverett Peace Pagoda on August 9 — the anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki," said Thomas Matsuda, a Japanese American artist who is classically trained in the art of Buddhist sculpture. "I lined the eight pieces in front of the pagoda and surrounded each of them with a kindling. Buddhist nuns and monks chanted. Larry Brings Good offered

IF YOU GO ...

What: SculptureNow at The Mount

Where: The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home, 2 Plunkett St., Lenox

When: On view now through Oct. 27

Information: www.sculpturennow.org

a Native American prayer. Then they were lit on fire in the middle of an open field. While the burning was going on, Mary Ellen Miller played the shakuhachi, a traditional Japanese bamboo flute, and my son Kai played the alto saxophone. I called the ceremony and the charred remains of the pine stumps 'Purification.'"

Matsuda's "Purification" is one of the 30 sculptures on display at The Mount this summer as part of the SculptureNow exhibit. The sculptures have been on display since June 1 and will remain on the grounds until Oct. 27. SculptureNow is collaborating with The Mount for the seventh year in a row in putting

together this outdoor exhibit that complements the pristine grounds of Edith Wharton's home.

"The average viewing time of a sculpture is three seconds," said Ann Jon, artist and a founding member of SculptureNow. "Not here. Visitors can take a leisurely stroll around the vast property or even sit down and enjoy a picnic on the lawn all while enjoying a varied and enriching artistic experience."

Jon was born and raised in Denmark before moving to the U.S., and is now a long-time resident of the Berkshires. Her passion for art followed her to her new home where she decided to start an organization that would promote sculpture.

"I came up with the concept in 1998," Jon said. "My mission was, and still is, to promote the general knowledge and appreciation of sculpture in the Berkshires while also offering artists venues to display their work."

SculptureNow has exhibited shows at the Norman Rockwell Museum and the Berkshire Botanical Garden before finding a home at The Mount. The shows have grown consistently in size and scope since their inception, according to Jon, which has allowed them to invite world-renowned sculptors such as Albert Paley, all while still promoting the work of local and international artists looking to make a splash.

"Every artist is different," said Jon. "That's the most fun part. Ashley Blalock, for example, came all the way from California with her sculpture packed in a suitcase. In the 17 years I have been doing this show, I had never seen that."

Blalock's piece, "Queen Anne's Lace," is a set of six giant spiderwebs. Jon and Blalock knew exactly where they were going to place them on The Mount's grounds.

The woven nylon webs hang between the trees that line a small path that deviates from the property's main road. The summer light shines through the branches, reflecting off of the transparent threads.

"The placement of each piece is extremely important to us and the artist," Jon said. "It can really add so much to a sculpture."

Matsuda's "Purification" is strategically placed alongside the winding stream, contrasting the vivacity of both the flowing water and the garden.

"After a lot of discussion with the board of SculptureNow, we decided to place the piece next to this stream," Matsuda said. "I had displayed 'Purification' in Worcester by a lake and I really liked the juxtaposition and the reflection on the water."

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER THESE ADS

"Purification is a very meaningful piece to me," Matsuda said. "There are a lot of different layers. The eight stumps represent the eight noble truths, which are one of the foundational concepts in Buddhism. You can think of them as the 10 commandments. A big influence was the Hopi Indian prophecy, which speaks of this crossroad where we find ourselves, it then asks. 'What shall we bring forth, purification or destruction?' I interpret it as either we purify ourselves to live in harmony with each other and the Earth, or we become purified by natural destruction or war. Therefore, I see Purification as having both a positive and negative message at the same time. I also the pieces as both beautiful and disturbing as well."

Matsuda was greatly influenced by Native American traditions and culture during his formative years. After studying at the Pratt Institute in New York, he joined a group of Buddhist monks who were traveling across the country.

"We often stayed in Native America reservations," Matsuda said. "I ended up going back and living on the Navaho reservation after the trip and that greatly influenced my work and my yearning to travel to Japan."

Matsuda then traveled to Japan to learn the art of traditional Buddhist sculpture under the tutelage of master Koukei Eri.

"After two years, I came back to America because I wanted to reach a larger audience," Matsuda said. "I still feel that I am carrying the same messages and teachings that I learned while studying Buddhist sculpture and iconography. I hope that shines through in 'Purification.'"

Michael Thomas, a sculptor and filmmaker who splits his time between Great Barrington and New York City, has a very different message behind his work. He is a member of SculptureNow's board and has collaborated with its shows on numerous occasions.

"'Circus' was inspired by me going to the Barnum Bailey Circus in New York City when I was a kid," said Thomas.

The orange rings, which seem to float one on top of the other, stand tall near The Mount's stable.

"Rings are ubiquitous in a circus," said Thomas. "People fly on them, people throw them, they catch on fire. One of the main tenants of what I do is that I try to take these extremely heavy materials and shape them to give them levity, so that they seem to float almost. There's a fun element to a lot of my sculptures; there's a playfulness to them."

Thomas' sculptures are made from salvaged materials from the industrial era. The metal rings he used for Circus come from salvaged replacement parts for the Eerie Canal.

"A lot of times, when I go find materials at junkyards, the objects will tell you what to do," Thomas said.

"We want sculpture that's varied at SculptureNow," said Thomas. "We don't have themes, but we do want politics, we do want social commentary, and we mostly just want straight up art. We don't want to make it any one thing. We want to bring in many different elements because the people coming to shows like these are turned on by something different."



TALK TO US

If you'd like to leave a comment (or a tip or a question) about this story with the editors, please email us (mailto:news@berkshireeagle.com). We also welcome letters to the editor for publication; you can do that by filling out our letters form (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSebsleaANReD7JSKRQ_UZaBy8p6LM0bDwZr-AIld8qg6XtY_w/viewform) and submitting it to the newsroom.

OTHER ITEMS THAT MAY INTEREST YOU

Show brings magic of Gershwin to life (/stories/george-gershwin-alone-show-brings-magic-of-gershwin-to-life,582719)

'Still I Rise': Art that evokes 'thoughtful experiences' (/stories/still-i-rise-art-that-evokes-thoughtful-experiences,576383)

More than just apples at the Lenox Apple Squeeze (/stories/more-than-just-apples-at-the-lenox-apple-squeeze,550736)

Neave Trio returns to the Berkshires for two events (/stories/neave-trio-returns-to-the-berkshires-for-two-events,550732)

Pro Football News (https://pro32.ap.org/berkshireeagle/a

Seahawks have traditional slow start to NFL free agency (https://pro32.ap.org/berkshireeagle/article/seahawks-have-traditional-slow-start-nfl-free-agency) 18 minutes ago

Stefon Diggs' addition highlights Bills large offseason haul (https://pro32.ap.org/berkshireeagle/article/stefon-diggs-addition-highlights-bills-large-offseason-haul) 1 hr, 34 min ago



Auto Racing (https://racing.ap.org/berkshireeagle/a

The Latest: Big South Conference cancels all spring sports (https://racing.ap.org/berkshireeagle/article/latest-big-south-conference-cancels-all-spring-sports) 2 hrs ago



Earnhardt, Busch sign on for NASCAR esports series (https://racing.ap.org/berkshireeagle/article/earnhardt-busch-sign-nascar-esports-series) 1 hr, 34 min ago



NASCAR Standings (https://racing.ap.org/berkshireeagle/a

Rank	Trend	Driver
1	3	Kevin Harvick (https://racing.ap.org/berkshireeagle/driver/kevin-harvick)
2	-	Joey Logano (https://racing.ap.org/berkshireeagle/driver/joey-logano)