

COMMON

GROUND

NEW
JERSEY

ARTISTS

THINK

MONUMENTAL

PRESENTED BY



Morris Museum

ARTS ANNUAL 2026

COMMON GROUND: NEW JERSEY ARTISTS THINK MONUMENTAL

PRESENTED BY



Morris Museum

MAY 28-AUGUST 23

CONTENTS

iv	Statement from Lieutenant Governor
v	Statement from the State Arts Council
vi	State Arts Council Board Members Morris Museum Board of Trustees
vii	Morris Museum President and CEO Welcome
viii	Juror's Statement

Works in the Exhibition

1	Clifford Blanchard • Morristown
3	Sunil Garg • Summit
5	Wendy Gordon • Lambertville
7	Robert Koch • Jersey City
9	Robert Lobe • Newark
11	Judith Peck • Mahwah
13	Jill Scipione • Jersey City
15	Lee Tal • Jersey City
17	Josh Urso • Jersey City
19	Exhibition Checklist



Lt. Governor Dr. Dale G. Caldwell
Secretary of State

STATEMENT FROM THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

As the 4th Lieutenant Governor, and the 35th Secretary of State, it is my pleasure to recognize the artists represented in this year's *New Jersey Arts Annual* exhibition of contemporary art. I want to thank our longtime collaborators at Morris Museum for partnering with the New Jersey State Council on the Arts on this year's exhibition and bringing to life the *Arts Annual's* first ever outdoor exhibition.

This year's exhibition – *Common Ground: NJ Artists Think Monumental* – reminds us that art has the power to meet people where they are. The artworks selected for this outdoor showcase are in conversation with the setting, one not separate from the other, but connected through landscape, environment, and architecture. This experience encourages all of us to slow down, reflect, and see both our surroundings and one another with renewed perspective. At a time when so many of

us are searching for connection and belonging, this exhibition offers an opportunity for dialogue, contemplation, and shared experience.

Working closely with the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, I am confident that through their thoughtful efforts, along with our dedicated museum partners and the gifted artists like those featured here, our state will continue to foster meaningful and inspiring *New Jersey Arts Annual* series for years to come.

STATEMENT FROM THE

NEW JERSEY

STATE

COUNCIL

ON THE

ARTS



On behalf of the board and staff of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, we'd like to congratulate every artist selected in this year's *New Jersey Arts Annual* exhibition. Together with our partners at the Morris Museum, we acknowledge works by some of the most talented artists living and working in our state.

Each year, the *Arts Annual* provides an opportunity for New Jerseyans and visitors alike to discover work from some of the most thought-provoking and gifted artists in the state. This year's exhibition - *Common Ground: NJ Artists Think Monumental*, would not be possible

without the work of the board and staff of the Morris Museum. We want to especially thank Bryant Small, Associate Curator, as well as guest juror Johannah Hutchinson, Executive Director of the International Sculpture Center, for their dedication to the vision of this unique art experience. The Council is grateful to continue our partnership with the Museum to uplift and celebrate New Jersey's vibrant artist community.

Of the 91 artists who submitted a total of 530 pieces, 9 artists were selected for their work, which responds to light, weather, and the natural environment,

or reimagine one's relationship to landscape and community. *Common Ground* taps into curiosity and invites us to explore how we engage with the art around us. It is a true celebration of the power of sculpture to transform open space.

Congratulations to the artists selected in the 2026 *New Jersey Arts Annual*. Our artists are continuing to meet the moment and helping create a space for us all to have authentic conversations, reflection, and discovery.

Felicia Grant
Chair

Allison Tratner
Executive Director

Danielle Bursk
Director of Community Partnerships & Artist Services

Stephanie Nerbak
Artist Services Manager

**NEW
JERSEY
STATE
COUNCIL
ON
THE
ARTS**

**BOARD
MEMBERS**

Felicia Grant, Chair
Elizabeth A. Mattson, 1st Vice Chair
Carol Ann Herbert, 2nd Vice Chair

Sharon Burton Turner
Vedra Chandler
Joyce C. Goore
Jeremy Grunin
Robin Gurin
Gina Hulings
Ruth Lipper
Evie McGee Colbert
Kevin M. O'Brien
Vivian Scott Chew

ex officio members

Lieutenant Governor Dr. Dale G. Caldwell
Secretary of State
Senator Holly T. Schepisi
Assemblywoman Marisa Sweeney

**MORRIS
MUSEUM**

**BOARD
OF
TRUSTEES**

Edward von der Linde, Chair
Marsha Baldinger, Vice Chair
Barry H. Jaruzelski, Vice Chair
Richard A. Watson, Esq., Secretary
Darren Schulman, Treasurer
Alexandra L. Braunstein, M.D.
Eric Hart
Scott G. Leonard, Esq.
Melanie Levitan
Thomas J. Loughman, Ph.D.
Matt Mignon
Richard Nolan, Esq.
Stephanie Taylor, Ph.D.
Waqas Wajahat
Margie Wang



WELCOME

The Garden State teems with creativity. From acclaimed musicians to a thriving film industry and an abundant legacy in literature, there is no shortage of cultural experiences to be found in each and every county on any given day. Artists give our community myriad gifts, but among them the most generous one is how their works frame our sense of where we are and how we are doing. Great works of art instigate a conversation, speak to what we are thinking, and even express our aspirations as a culture. In this way, the role of art in community is indispensable—not just as a chronicle of what is happening, but also as a lively agora of ideas and sentiments. When the work of art speaks to what we want our places to become, there is no denying its civic intent. This holds true throughout time and in cultures the world over.

Communities across America episodically look to artists to embellish public-scale projects with sculpture in ways that embodied this civic role of art. Monumental sculpture long served as one of the few truly accessible and equanimous ways for our society to mourn a loss, celebrate a triumph, and extol a virtue. In New Jersey's towns and cities there are hundreds of examples defining public spaces, with even more quietly fitting within (or even silently shaping) the urban fabric. For a nation in which art sometimes is met with suspicion, there is hardly a village in our region that doesn't take pride in the bandstand on the town green, a beloved building, a cenotaph, or seasonal quilt festival.

And yet there is now serious reflection on the concept of the role of art in public spaces—focused mainly on a reconsideration of who and what we commemorate. In this year in which we recognize the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, and mindful of the yet-unresolved conversation about monuments, it seemed appropriate to take this opportunity to host the 42nd New Jersey Arts Annual with a challenge the series had never confronted: monumental outdoor sculpture. Our artist community responded abundantly and our team—including guest juror Johannah Hutchinson—worked diligently to create *Common Ground: NJ Artists Think Monumental* as an experience that celebrates the work on our 8-acre campus. Our great thanks to everyone involved and a warm welcome to all who visit this summer.



Thomas J. Loughman, Ph.D.
Morris Museum President and CEO



Johannah Hutchison

Executive Director, International Sculpture Center
Publisher of *Sculpture* magazine

COMMON GROUND

NEW
JERSEY

ARTISTS

THINK MONUMENTAL

For more than four decades, the Arts Annual has celebrated the breadth and vitality of artistic practice across the state. In 2026, that tradition expands in a bold new direction for the Morris Museum as the exhibition steps fully outdoors, transforming the Museum's eight acres into an open air gallery. To help shape this inaugural outdoor edition has been a privilege, and an opportunity to reflect on how artists across New Jersey are thinking about their work, scale, landscape, and public space of the museum.

The call presented a wide range of approaches to the space: some artists embraced monumentality, others subtlety; some leaned into material experimentation, while others foregrounded narrative, gesture, or ecological awareness.

What united them was a shared willingness to think expansively about what art can do when it leaves the walls of a gallery and enters the shared spaces where people move, gather, and encounter the unexpected.

The nine artists selected for *Common Ground: NJ Artists Think Monumental* embody this spirit of exploration. Their works invite viewers to slow down, shift perspective, and experience the Museum's grounds in new ways. Whether through sculptural form, environmental intervention, or spatial reimagining, each artist engages directly with the outdoors as a living context—one that changes hour by hour and season by season.

Though distinct, each of the selected works creates a connected experience, inviting visitors to move among them in different ways. Some come alive with color at night, while others blend into the landscape and reveal themselves unexpectedly. Each offers a different way to engage.

These works do not simply occupy space; they activate it. They provoke curiosity, encourage movement, and open pathways for reflection about our relationship to nature, to place, and to one another.

Bringing the art outdoors also expands its accessibility and is a new way for visitors to experience the Morris Museum, encountering these works in an environment

where art becomes part of the everyday rhythms of the landscape. This shift aligns beautifully with the Morris Museum's commitment to curiosity, wonder, and community engagement. It also underscores the power of art in public to spark dialogue and create shared experiences across diverse audiences.

As someone who has long championed the importance of sculpture and public art within educational, civic, and interdisciplinary contexts, I am thrilled to support this new chapter for the Morris Museum. The artists represented here demonstrate the depth of talent and imagination flourishing across New Jersey. I hope this exhibition inspires visitors to explore, linger, and return—discovering something new each time they walk the grounds.

ARTWORK
LOCATIONS

WENDY GORDON

JUDITH PECK

ROBERT LOBE

JOSH URSO

CLIFFORD BLANCHARD

MORRIS MUSEUM

LEE TAL

ROBERT KOCH

JILL SCIPIONE

SUNIL GARG



CLIFFORD



BLANCHARD

MORRISTOWN, NJ

My work is made with stainless steel salvaged from the scrap yards in central and northern New Jersey. Cutting, welding, reshaping and joining these found objects is central to the inspiration behind the creation of the sculpture. Assembling such artifacts creates a precarious harmony between materials where balance and tension are at work creating either a sense of equilibrium or the suggestion of motion. The work's content, which occupies the middle ground between the tangible and the abstract, touches on themes from the human experience, nature, and mythology.



Cliff Blanchard's interest in sculpture developed in studio art classes in his early years at college and further evolved when Mr. Blanchard moved to Portland, Maine where he established a welding studio and gained representation with a local art gallery.

Since returning to NJ and reestablishing a welding studio at home, Mr. Blanchard has been fabricating sculpture, furniture, and lighting from salvaged and repurposed stainless steel from NJ scrap yards. His work has been shown in juried shows throughout the county such as: Allied Artists of America, NYC; The Newark Museum, NJ; Academy of Fine Arts, VA; Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts, CT; Phillips Museum of Art, PA; The Salmagundi Club, NYC; Wayne Art Center, PA; Marietta/Cobb Museum of Art, GA; The Haggin Museum, CA and others. Larger scale outdoor work by Mr. Blanchard has been exhibited at Sculpture 2010, NJ; Burlington County College Sculpture Garden, NJ; Studio Montclair, NJ; and Contemporary Sculpture at Chesterwood, MA.

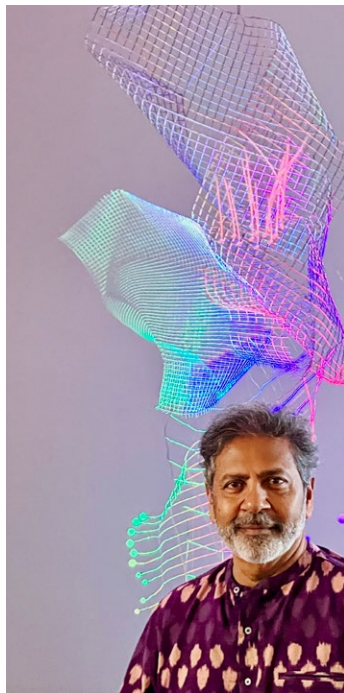
Mr. Blanchard's work has been awarded numerous awards and other distinctions throughout these exhibitions, including a New Jersey State Council on the Arts 2025 Individual Artist Fellowship.



Reciprocones
2013
Stainless steel with
aluminum base







SUNIL

GARG

SUMMIT, NJ



[IS]/[IT]

2025

PVC, HDPE and LDPE tubes, LED Lights and controller

Not much in our lived experiences is “permanent.”

I work with light to explore impermanence, change and renewal. Light is paradoxical, primordial, variable, boundless, and temporal. We cannot see it; yet it is the “cause of visible things.” My ever-evolving sculptures posit that moments pass, never to return except as preserved in universal memory. I aspire to entice viewers to appreciate this inherent “cadence of light (life),” value the rhythms in their own lives and experience impermanence and ephemerality together.

My installation (two computer-programmed, complementary, and monumental light sculptures) is ever-changing, open and boundless, providing a common/shared experience. It harkens the flora and colors of the seasons in New Jersey: winter – spring – summer – fall. It embeds a message (in Morse Code) with the word “IT” on one side and the word “IS”, on the other, as if in an endless query or call: “IS IT?” and response: “IT IS!”



Upon graduating from the University of Delhi, India with a Degree in Chemistry, Garg received his Doctorate in Physical Chemistry at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, NJ. He had a corporate career in research, product development, marketing, and executive management. He received his Juris Doctor from Rutgers Law School in Newark and practiced environmental, regulatory, intellectual property and transactional law in New York and New Jersey. He founded and operated a science and law consulting firm. As a public official, Garg regulated the operations of one of the largest waste-to-energy systems in the US.

As a youth, Garg learned classical Indian music. In New York, in the early 1970’s, he played the sitar, recording and appearing with premier jazz musicians involved with improvisational, Free Jazz and Third-Stream jazz movements.

Although a well-received visual artist in New Delhi, with a solo show of paintings at a premier gallery in 1970, Sunil painted and sculpted only sporadically through his corporate, legal and governmental careers.

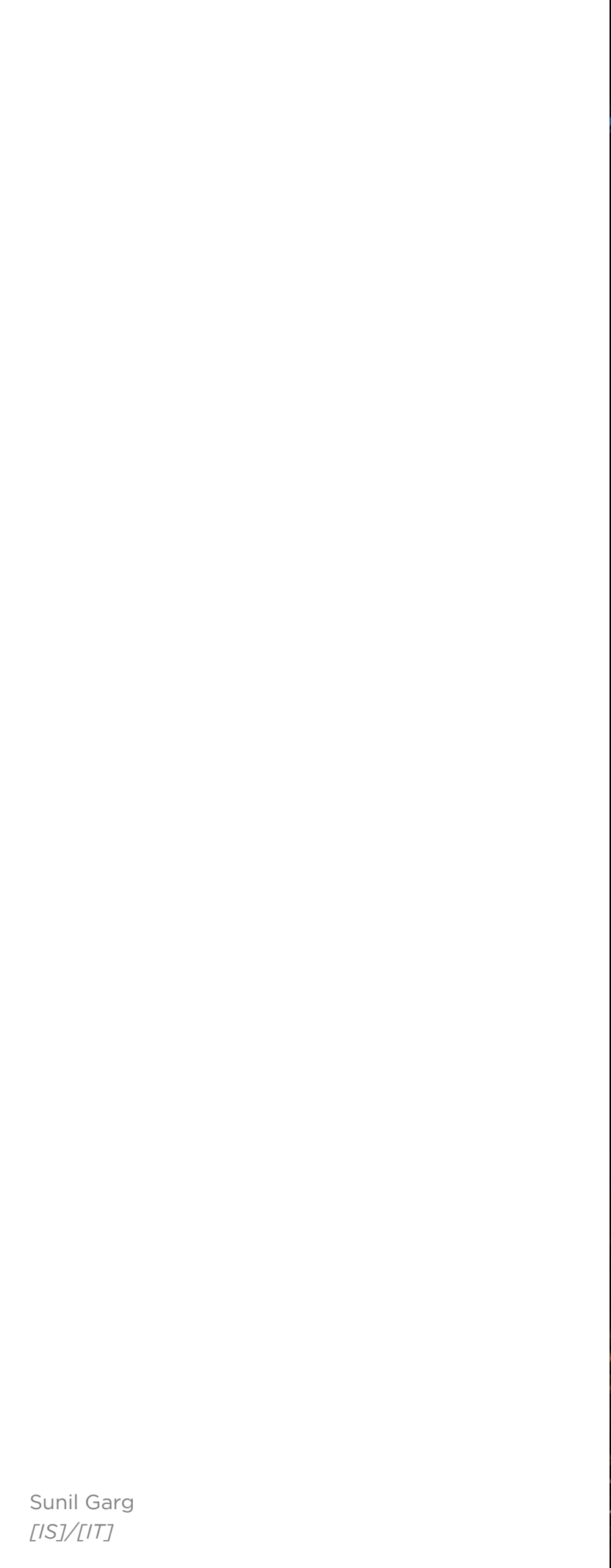
Garg is now known primarily as an experimental light and illumination artist and maintains a studio at Mana Contemporary in Jersey City.

He has exhibited solo at the Novado Gallery, the Affordable Art Fair and at the Visual Arts Gallery, New Jersey City University. He has exhibited in group shows on invitation by curators at Index Art Center, Gallery 14 Maple, Walsh Gallery, Williamsburg Art and Historical Center, Hammond Museum, Queens Museum, FIT Museum, Morris Museum, Lehmann College Art Gallery and Mana Contemporary, among others.

More than 20 of Garg’s large-scale, site-specific public art installations (in and outdoors) have been exhibited in Chelsea, Bushwick, Newark, NJ, Key West, FL, Madison, WI, Summit, NJ, Philadelphia, PA, Long Beach Island, NJ and Jersey City, NJ. He was invited to create a large-scale outdoor installation, on a 25-acre marsh, for *Landworks 2019*, a 50-year celebration of the iconic Earthworks 1969 show by the Long Beach Island Foundation.

His work has appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Hyperallergic*, *Artefuse*, *Vogue* and other media. A mini documentary on his work was selected for the New Filmmakers’ Festival.

He is a 2025 NJ State Council on the Arts Sculpture Fellow. He was invited, with 10 fellow sculptors, to exhibit in the *New Sculpture/New Jersey* show at the Morris Museum in 2024-25.



Sunil Garg
[IS]/[IT]

WENDY

GORDON



LAMBERTVILLE, NJ

I started *Palm Oil Ollie* in 2017, in reaction to a rapidly changing and—frankly—scary world. This sculpture is all about how we have devastated the natural habitat for these intelligent, sensitive beings by plowing down their forests for palm oil plantations. “Ollie” is my tongue in cheek visual interpretation of how an orangutan would fortify herself in battle. She is ultimately battling us. I gave much consideration to whether she should be giving the finger but settled that this was an appropriate human-like gesture.

“Ollie” was made in the very traditional process of bronze casting. Fabrications of chainmail vest, helmet, custom steel base and custom, weatherproof image panels followed. We cannot imagine the consequences of losing a species so close to us.



I believe that every artist creates their own art history, usually at the beginning of their career with realistic renderings and with practice and time seeking their own vision and interpretation of the world. My own journey has certainly taken this path, but I will pick it up after my time at the Johnson Atelier. Although I learned much technically at the Atelier, I don’t feel my artwork blossomed until 5 years after I left employment there (those 5 years I took off from artwork - raising little ones).

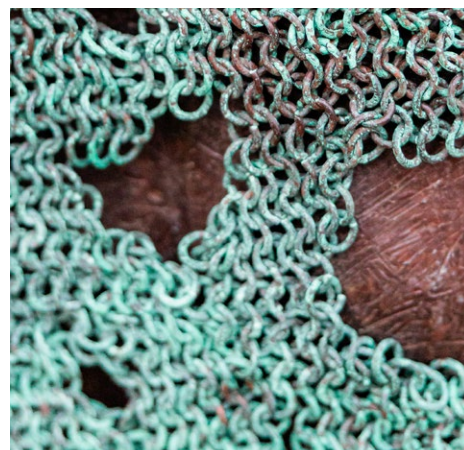
From 1995 to 2016 I was exploring the underlying structures of forms in nature and looking at them, for the most part, in multiples, noting both the similarities and differences between them. At the beginning of this period, I was combining wirework

and newsprint paper with acrylic medium into organic shapes of pods, cones and loaf shapes. These forms were much more organic than anything I had done previously. Around 2002 I began silver soldering brass to replace the hand-worked wire and my forms became more “cubed” both because of the change in wire and my desire to abstract the rounded organic forms. In 2008 I became more interested in botanical structures — the pods, leaves and branches of the brass-only series, mostly inspired by becoming an avid gardener and reflecting my environment of living in the woods. I really enjoyed the forming of three dimensional shapes with multiple wires (like drawing in the air!) Several years ago I began experimenting with cast rubber and beeswax. I also began doing chainmail. I have always loved metal, the way it smells heated up and the way it “fights back” when working with it, while also being very versatile. I was very intrigued to combine the very recent symbols in our lives, from computers, into the very old technique of chainmail, and see these as physical forms of highly pixilated symbols.

This brings me to 2017. It has been said that artists experience a drastic change in their practice in middle age. It’s true! I began to look at the creatures we share our world with and the impact we have on them. My first piece in this new series is *Don’t Tread On Me*, a look at the way we have used the snake in both narrative (Adam & Eve) and our images (Caduceus and the Gadsden flag). The second piece in this series, *Palm Oil Ollie* I finished in 2023 after about 6 years of work. This has been my most challenging piece to date. More to come!



Palm Oil Ollie
2023
Cast bronze, copper chainmail, steel base, vinyl sign panels





Wendy Gordon
Palm Oil Ollie

I make welded steel sculpture that reflects my connection to nature. My work often starts with thoughts of something that I may have seen on a walk on the beach or while walking my dogs. That original inspiration is rarely visible in the final forms as I simplify things into minimalist organic pieces. My work is constructed using straight lines to express soft fluid feelings. I try to connect a balance between the work and the space that they occupy and the shadows that they may cast.



Robert Koch is Jersey City, NJ based sculptor whose work explores the abstraction of nature. Robert's welded steel work is constructed using segmented rods covered with a welded surface texture to create subtle forms. Growing up in rural Pennsylvania, Robert's work is organically influenced by the work of Harry Bertoia, whose studio was located across the street from his grandparents' house. He studied at Kutztown University in the 1980's and later at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. Robert's work has been exhibited throughout the US in such galleries as OTA Contemporary in Santa Fe, NM and Broadfoot and Broadfoot in Boonton, NJ. His work can be found in public collections such as NJTransit's Elizabeth Station and Mack-Cali's Harborside Atrium in Jersey City, NJ. Robert is currently working in his ART150 studio focusing on creating a body of work for his upcoming solo exhibition at KANEKO in Omaha, Nebraska.



ROBERT

JERSEY CITY, NJ

KOCH



Untitled
2023
Welded steel





ROBERT LOBE



NEWARK, NJ

Nature's Clock
2006
Heat treated hammered aluminum



Rocks and trees have a story to tell. I am drawn to such compelling features and relationships that give evidence to natural phenomena and evoke a free association of imagery both abstract and figurative. Nature inspires me to strive for the classical and the fantastic. My signature technique is a variation of the ancient metalworking technique repoussé, in which metal is hammered around an object to obtain shapes and patterns. Encasing trees and boulders in malleable aluminum, and with countless strikes of pneumatic air hammers and well-placed blows of old fashion mallets. I gather and tool the metal snugly around their shapes. (Later the forms are commercially heat-treated for maximum strength and durability.) This unique process enhances the textures and shadowy contours of the life-sized sculptures, blurring the line between abstraction and realism. Nature is like a riddle that keeps coming back into your head. There is something that you cannot identify or define, and each time you touch or view it, it seems different.



In 1967, I began working with miscellaneous materials to create a tactile experience of space. I made work called “walk-ons”. A person would feel volume and surface by walking on my sculpture. This led to my inclusion in the historic Anti-Illusion: Procedures and Materials Exhibition at the Whitney Museum in 1969. I had the extraordinary opportunity to visit Bolton Landing in the winter of 1968–69 when David Smith’s estate was still intact after the artist’s death only three years before. Formalist and Conceptual Art divided the art world at that time. My new sculptures specifically addressed formal issues of volume, surface and mass. Using wood plank joinery, the perception of mass was defined by the organization of the surface grain in relationship to hollow volumes. I had my first solo show at Zabriskie Gallery in 1974. Sourcing ideas for my wood sculptures migrated from the drawing board to simply picking up stones and translating their surfaces into wood planes. Placed outdoors, these wood sculptures eventually crumbled

into another version of nature albeit romantic. The realization that my artistic visions emanated from nature led me to set up an outdoor studio where the blasted tailings from the excavation of the World Trade Center were dumped. I would bicycle over every day with mallets, hammers, map gas and a sheet of aluminum. Some rocks spoke to me more than others. I used these to hammer out aluminum “stone clones”. I showed these with the original rocks on the roof of PS1 in 1976.

The following year I started working directly in the landscape in Nova Scotia where the brutal forces of nature carved amazing relationships out of trees and rocks. Organization and distribution of form and material eventually led to working in nature as a site-specific entity. I began my outdoor studio in 1985 at Harmony Ridge Farm and Campground with 400 acres along the Appalachian Trail. The Exxon show at the Guggenheim Museum in 1977 introduced these new ideas to the public. In 1983 I installed a piece in the Buffalo subway system partially indoors, partially outdoors, hammered over a site carved out by Niagara Falls 10,000 years ago. In 1987, the Whitney Museum acquired Facial Structure, an enormous wall relief featuring a rock and tree.

In 1996, the GSA commissioned *Harmony Ridge* for the US Geological Headquarters in Reston, Virginia. *Nature in Nature*, (2011) was an outdoor exhibition in Prospect Park of three large pieces, referencing the historical (*Antique Jenny*), geological (*Nature's Clock*) and mythological (*Invisible Earth*) sides of nature. In 2016 Grounds for Sculpture showed a retrospective of wall sculptures. Over time my focus has shifted from the iconicity of the sublime to the more difficult realizations of the historic dilemma nature represents today. *SUPERSTORM* installed in Duerte Square on Canal and Sixth Ave from 2019 to 2020 was a reference to Superstorm Sandy. It was hammered over a huge tree with shallow spiral roots blown off its boulder home by Superstorm Sandy in Northwest New Jersey at Harmony Ridge.



Robert Lobe
Nature's Clock



*Humble Walker - Only to Do Justice,
Love Mercy, Walk Humbly*
1972
Steel, fiberglass, resin, acrylic paint

My sculpture has its focus on human nature and how we think and behave: our concerns with those close to us—family, friends and lovers—and those distant who we learn from and care about through accounts in the news. The deepest mystery, despite being the most intimate, is ourselves, and that is my subject matter as well. Women, from youth to aging, through marriage, motherhood, career and beyond comprise a large component of my sculptural themes.

Although I have carved in wood and stone, modeled figures in clay and wax and fabricated structures in steel, I am most recently working with fiberglass and mixed media for creating large outdoor work. The narrative element in my art on social issues and family dynamics comports with my writing, having published several non-fiction books and two novels on these subjects. I continue to work in both disciplines with no specific scheduling, which affords an energizing compound of brain, body, and spirit.



Judith Peck is a sculptor and Professor Emeritus of Art at Ramapo College of New Jersey. Her work is in 80 public and private collections such as the Yale Art Gallery and the Ghetto Fighters Museum in Israel. Her Ladies of Steel, four large-scale steel sculptures, were on solo exhibit on Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, Gateway to the UN, in New York for most of 2023. From October 2024 through June 2025, a solo show of her sculpture was featured at the Mahwah Museum in New Jersey.

Dr. Peck's sculpture and books reflect her interest in human rights and in critical situations people encounter and must resolve. She schedules

her sculpture *Refugees* to have year-long loan installations at nearby libraries and schools. During her 41-year tenure as a professor at Ramapo College she instituted a program (ongoing) to train college students to conduct art workshops in homes for abused children, psychiatric centers, domestic violence shelters, drug abuse facilities, urban housing projects, prisons and nursing homes. Engaging in selected art activities side by side with the individuals involved in these settings allows students to be exposed to the major domestic issues of our time—mental illness, poverty, child abuse, substance abuse, crime and aging—while having an opportunity to help these individuals through art activity. Her book on this innovative college course is titled *Art and Social Interaction*, published by Routledge, a division of Taylor & Francis. Her newest book for teachers and parents of young children (Routledge 2023) demonstrates the integration of body and brain research in children's learning: *Dynamic Play and Creative Movement: Powering Body and Brain*. Peck's second novel, *Naked Under the Lights* (Black Rose writing 2021), centers on a dysfunctional family set against the functional energy of artistic production. Her first novel, *Seeing in the Dark: Arielle's Story*, centers on marriage and teen children. Information about her books can be found on iapbooks.com. The extensive output of her sculpture in several media can be seen at <https://jpecksculpture.com>.

Judith earned a doctorate at NYU, two master's degrees at Columbia University and a bachelor's degree at Adelphi University along with studying at the Art Students League in NYC where she earned a merit scholarship for full time study at nineteen. She lives and works in Mahwah, New Jersey.



JUDITH
PECK MAHWAH, NJ



Judith Peck
Humble Walker - Only to Do Justice, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly

I began my *All My Sisters* crocheting project during Covid. Crocheting connected me to my aunts and grandmothers who crocheted and knitted for us. Recently I worked with a group of about 30 community women and children who contributed to the public art project along with my sisters. I named it *All My Sisters* in honor of them and, in a wider sense, to honor those who do what is often considered "women's work" — what in this time is called "essential work": serving, caring for the sick, remembering those who have died, encouraging, comforting, seeking justice. The flowers, like an Afghan or a pair of slippers, are intended to bring a moment of happiness and a feeling of inclusion in a time of anxiety and isolation.



Jill Scipione's artwork concerns corporeality, exploring themes of body and soul. She works from a variety of source material including sacred art, deep-sea marine life and undersea videos, butcher charts, textbooks and museum artifacts. Scipione began working from museum biology and anthropology collections at the Smithsonian and other museums in the mid-1990s, meeting with curators and collection managers, and incorporating the imagery into her artwork. In 2007, she began a decade-long drawing study of human skulls of historic peoples from global, anthropological museum collections, as part of a long-term residency at the American Museum of Natural History, New York. In 2013 she began a series of works based on the infant burial sites on New York's Hart's Island.

Jill Scipione was born in Ashtabula, Ohio, on Lake Erie. She received early art training at the Butler Institute of American Art and majored in painting at Carnegie-Mellon University. She was awarded a Pollock-Krasner grant in painting. Her work has been seen in galleries, museums, and art spaces in New York City, New Jersey, Boston, Santa Fe, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

Jill Scipione is a founder of Victory Hall Inc., a non-profit arts organization in Jersey City; and is Manager of Rainbow Thursdays Artists, an education and exhibition program that engages the developmentally disabled in the visual arts. She is a community advocate for the disabled and for environmental issues.



JERSEY CITY, NJ

JILL

SCIPIONE



All My Sisters
2025
Crochet with topiary
frame as armature



Jill Scipione
All My Sisters

My work explores the relationship between indigenous natural forms and contemporary sculptural language. Drawing from plants, growth patterns, and organic systems found in the landscape, I translate these references into fabricated structures using industrial materials such as metal and reflective surfaces. I am interested in how sculpture operates in public and outdoor spaces, where light, weather, and movement reshape perception. Rather than functioning as static monuments, my sculptures act as responsive markers that register time, presence, and change.

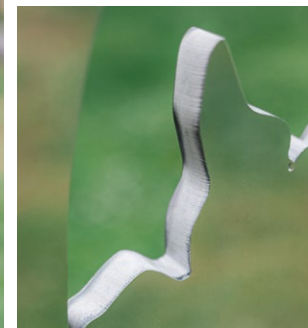


Lee Tal is a multidisciplinary artist based in Jersey City, New Jersey. His practice spans sculpture and large-scale installation, with a focus on works situated in public and outdoor environments. Drawing inspiration from indigenous flora and natural systems, Tal translates organic forms into contemporary sculptural languages through the use of industrial materials such as polished stainless steel and fabricated metal. His work explores monumentality through presence rather than scale, using reflection, light, and environment as active elements. Born abroad, Tal's experience as an immigrant artist informs his sensitivity to place, adaptation, and shared space. He has exhibited internationally at institutions including the Whitney Museum of American Art, CICA Museum (South Korea), Sejong National Contemporary Art Museum, Susquehanna Art Museum, and Sinaloa Museum of Art.

LEE TAL



Blooming Reflection - Northern Blue Flag
2024
Polished stainless steel





Lee Tal
Blooming Reflection - Northern Blue Flag

My work explores process, the immediacy of cast concrete, and transforming common materials into monumental forms. My pieces disrupt geometric shapes with organic lines to subvert form and viewer expectations. The cracks that suffuse my work are both ornamental and symbolic. Influenced by geology, I draw on the layered, fractured beauty of the natural world—from canyons to dried mud. My sculptures preserve personal encounters with nature, even as erosion, climate change, and our obsession with innovation effaces them. They offer a commentary on the fragility of our environment and the consequences—both ecological and psychological—of constant development. Through monolithic yet cracked forms, I explore the tension between stability and transformation, celebrating the raw beauty of the imperfect while encouraging reflection on our journey through an evolving world.



Josh Urso, a contemporary sculptor based in Jersey City, NJ, specializes in working with concrete, stone, and various pigments. Before delving into sculpture, he studied engineering and product design at Carnegie Mellon University. After graduation he owned and operated Josh Urso Design, a furniture and lighting design business for over two decades before pursuing sculpture full time. His background in producing functional objects and his familiarity with manufacturing processes instilled in him a love of materials and a drive to explore purely sculptural forms. His work is inspired by the natural world, the urban environment, the inherent qualities of materials, and his desire to create monumental forms. As seen in all his pieces, he has been fascinated with breaking the geometric form with the fluid line and exploring the complex notion of beauty.

Josh's sculptures are versatile and suitable for both indoor and outdoor installations such as sculpture gardens, landscapes, and public spaces. Each piece can be customized to fit specific site dimensions, making them ideal for commissioned projects.



JOSH
URSO
JERSEY CITY, NJ



Interchange
2023
Concrete block



**EXHIBITION
CHECKLIST**



Clifford Blanchard
Reciprocones
2013
Stainless steel with aluminum base



Sunil Garg
[IS]/[IT]
2025
PVC, HDPE and LDPE tubes, LED Lights and controller



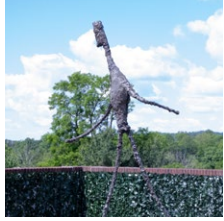
Wendy Gordon
Palm Oil Ollie
2023
Cast bronze, copper, chainmail, steel base, vinyl sign panels



Robert Koch
Untitled
2023
Welded steel



Robert Lobe
Nature's Clock
2006
Heat treated hammered aluminum



Judith Peck
Humble Walker - Only to Do Justice, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly
1972
Steel, fiberglass, resin, acrylic paint



Jill Scipione
All My Sisters
2025
Crochet with topiary frame as armature



Lee Tal
Blooming Reflection - Northern Blue Flag
2024
Polished stainless steel



Josh Urso
Interchange
2023
Concrete block

The New Jersey Arts Annual is a unique series of exhibitions highlighting the State's visual and performing artists. In partnership with major museums around the state, one exhibition takes place each year, alternating between host institutions. These exhibitions are open to any artist currently living or working in New Jersey. The Arts Annual series is sponsored by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment of the Arts. Since 1985, the New Jersey State Arts Council has co-sponsored the prestigious Annual in keeping with its mission to encourage and foster public interest in the arts, promote freedom of expression in the arts, and to facilitate the inclusion of art in every building in New Jersey. To learn more about the Council, please visit www.artscouncil.nj.gov.

The Morris Museum thrives as the region's premier engine of curiosity and wonderment. Founded in 1913 and located on 8 acres in Morris Township, New Jersey, since the mid-1960s— the museum draws visitors across the region to its dynamic and acclaimed art exhibitions program and performing arts events. Its 45,000+ object collection of art and material culture from around the world joins the art of our time in displays throughout the Museum's purpose-built spaces and within the historic Twin Oaks mansion, designed by McKim, Mead & White. The Morris Museum: from everywhere, for everyone.

Published by the Morris Museum on the occasion of the exhibition *Common Ground: NJ Artists Think Monumental*

May 28–August 23, 2026

The New Jersey Arts Annual Exhibition is a project of the Morris Museum and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Publication: © Morris Museum. All rights reserved

No parts of the contents of this catalog may be reproduced without the written permission of the Morris Museum.

Project Editor: Marcus Romero

Design: Ultravirgo

Artwork Photography: Kenneth Petiote

Cover photo: Installation view of Robert Lobe's *Nature's Clock*, 2006 (Heat treated hammered aluminum) as presented on the Morris Museum campus, May 2026. Photo by Kenneth Petiote.

PRESENTED BY



Morris Museum

Morris Museum

morrismuseum.org
(973) 971-3700
6 Normandy Heights Road
Morristown, NJ 07960

