

& MORE

Monumental EFFECTS

Waves wash over a field, as if water is suddenly made of grass. A 212-foot-long steel form vaults a meadow, its two opposing arms seemingly pinning the ground down on either side, while a towering red gateway announces the entrance to hundreds of open acres of land backdropped by mountain slopes dense with trees. The some 125–145 monumental sculptures anchored on the fields of Storm King Art Center in New York’s Hudson Valley are made mostly of steel, aluminum, or copper, yet every artwork appears animated in its articulation. While few of the forms depict anything realistic, the artworks all possess personality and character.

“I enjoy helping people realize that they’re just as welcome to figure out what an artwork means as anybody else,” says Nora Lawrence, senior curator at Storm King. “Anybody is allowed to feel something—and anything—about a work of art here.”

Unlike a museum gallery, the sculptures at Storm King are situated outdoors, thoughtfully and strategically

positioned against the looming wall of Schunnemunk Mountain and the rolling Hudson Highlands, in which the park’s namesake peak figures. Throughout the grounds, works rest on plinths of native grasses, wildflower-strewn meadows, and manicured lawn. Works by Mark di Suvero, Robert Grosvenor, Robert Murray, Alice Aycock, Sol LeWitt, Isamu Noguchi, Louise Nevelson, and most of the major makers of monumental sculpture are included in the collection, their works often so vast that viewers can wander beneath them.

“Storm King provides people with a way of experiencing art that is not the same as they would see it elsewhere,” says Lawrence, “and it also provides artists with experiences they can’t have anywhere else. Their vision for works of art can be realized.”

Had it not been for the vision of Storm King’s founders, the late Ralph E. Ogden and H. Peter Stern, two businessmen who owned the nearby Star Expansion Company, a maker of industrial parts, these five hundred acres of land might

Some sculptures on the grounds of the Storm King Art Center seem as big as the surrounding mountains, but each is set firmly in place on earth and lawn to be experienced up close

WRITTEN BY *David Masello*

Storm King Art Center, in New York’s Hudson Valley, sixty miles from Manhattan, is one of America’s first and largest outdoor sculpture museums. This page: Among the park’s most arresting works is Maya Lin’s *Storm King Wavefield* (2007–08), an 1.1-acre art piece composed of earth and grass, its undulating form replicating ocean waves. Opening page: Mark di Suvero’s *Figolu* (2005–11) is one of eleven sculptures by the artist on view.



Clockwise from top left: Visitors are drawn to Mark di Suvero's *Neruda's Gate* (2005), on long-term loan from the artist; Zhang Huan's *Three Legged Buddha* (2007) is a copper and steel work noted for the fact that the modeled face is that of the artist; Alice Aycock's *Three-Fold Manifestation II* (1987; refabricated 2006), is a whimsical creation fashioned of aluminum and stainless steel, composed of three tipped bowls; Sol LeWitt's *Five Modular Units* (1971; refabricated 2008), is a decidedly minimalist work of five contiguous cubes; Ursula von Rydingsvard's *Luba* (2009–10), made of cedar wood, manages to be both part of the natural landscape and a manmade creation.

have become paved with more lanes of the New York State Thruway that edges the park. Ogden established a foundation that acquired the acreage, as well as 2100 acres of the adjacent mountain that provides Storm King with a viewshed destined never to change. While that steep, forested mountain assumes its own sculptural presence throughout the year, it is in fall that Schunnemunk is at its most intrinsically artistic, a Cubist collage of autumnal hues.

While Ogden and Stern conceived of their museum as a venue to highlight examples of Hudson River School paintings, it was an impetuous purchase of thirteen David Smith sculptures in 1966 that set a new agenda for Storm King. Today, Lawrence, along with David Collens, Storm King's longtime chief curator, and John Stern (son of Peter Stern), Storm King's president, are largely responsible for siting the works, many of which remain in the permanent collection, though several are on temporary loan.

When asked if five hundred acres may not be enough for the ever-growing collection, Lawrence says, "We definitely have space left, but I will say it's always a concern. We maintain a careful balance between what's on loan and what's permanent."

Some works, however, are meant to become as permanent and integral to the landscape as the mountain, notably Maya Lin's four-hundred-foot-long waves, some sculpted to crest at fifteen feet. Her *Storm King Wavefield*, fashioned on site in 2008, is the largest of the sculptor's three extant wavefields (the others wash over parts of Ann Arbor and Miami). Another sculpture that assumes the intransigent presence of the surrounding Highland Hills is Richard Serra's *Schunnemunk Fork*, whose four massive plates peak coyly from areas of the ground.

As one wanders Storm King—on foot, by motorized cart, or on one of the bicycles available to visitors—the artworks beckon from their fields, as if they possess magnetic charge. Sol LeWitt's *Five Modular Units* appears as the span of a bridge set on grass, its precise geometric forms hypnotic in their rhythm. The beams of Mark di Suvero's *Pyramdian* form an inverted T, a work positioned such that it appears to be in dialogue with neighboring sculptures. Of sculptor Robert Murray's *Kiana*, an especially complex, even lively work from 1978, Jonathan Lippincott, his biographer/monographer and an authority on monumental sculpture, says, "It's wonderful seeing the work outdoors, in natural light, where you can really appreciate the play of light and shadow on the forms. The color is rich and lush and reflects Murray's ever-more nuanced and sophisticated palette."

No matter how one responds to abstract forms, there is a kind of sacred aspect to the experience of Storm King. Even Lawrence, while surveying the fields daily speaks of the "holy trilogy of Storm King: art, nature, people. It's a mantra we intone here." ■



CURATE | DESIGN | CREATE

944 5TH AVE N, NAPLES, FL 34102

239.300.0092

WWW.PATINACOLLECTION.COM

LOOK FOR US AT OUR NEW 3RD STREET SOUTH LOCATION LATE 2019!