

LAKE GEORGE MIRROR.

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"THE QUEEN OF AMERICAN LAKES"

SECTION B

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By Anthony F. Hall

Rock, bronze, steel, the detritus of industrialization, colors from nature and from art's historical palette – these are the elements that, once assembled, become a sculpture by John Van Alstine.

Or, rather, once transformed.

"Transformations," appropriately enough, is the title of the comprehensive exhibition of Van Alstine's sculpture, drawings and photographs on view at The Hyde Collection in Glens Falls through September 18.

"Ara," the Latin word for altar, pyre or sanctuary, appears frequently in Van Alstine's titles, with good reason. The word's transcendental penumbra is not something he takes lightly. In every piece (or at least in every piece he judges to be complete or successful), what Van Alstine calls "the art spirit" is at work, choreographing the disparate elements, forging a kind of magic, casting a never-to-be-broken spell.

How else could those heavy objects appear to be floating in air?

SURVEYING A FIFTY-YEAR CAREER

"Transformations," comprises 63



John Van Alstine: Portrait of the Artist at his Peak

"Transformations," on view at The Hyde through Sept. 18, exhibits the full range of the sculptor's powers



pieces, including three sculptures installed on The Hyde's lawns.

"I love seeing the sculpture outdoors because it relates to the outdoors," said Van Alstine. "But in the white cube of a gallery, where nature has been brought indoors, you're in an environment where the sculpture is fully visible. It pops. Now you're seeing it in a different context, within a frame, a frame not unlike the frame around a drawing, painting or photograph that signals, 'this is art.'"

"Transformations" has a narrative, one that corresponds, at least roughly, to the course of Van Alstine's fifty-year career.

That career began serendipitously enough at St. Lawrence University, where his undeclared major was skiing.

Serendipity also played a role in steering Van Alstine away from carving abstract shapes from marble blocks "like everyone else in art school," he says.

"At Cornell, a piece that I had just finished was set up on the carving table and as I stepped back to look at it, the piece fell to the floor

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A: "Sisyphean Circle 7." B: Van Alstine with "Bongo." C: "Sisyphean Circle - The Long Arc of Covid Bends Toward Truth." D: Van Alstine's "Transformations" in The Hyde's Wood Gallery. At center: "Doryphorus."

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