

The Southampton Press



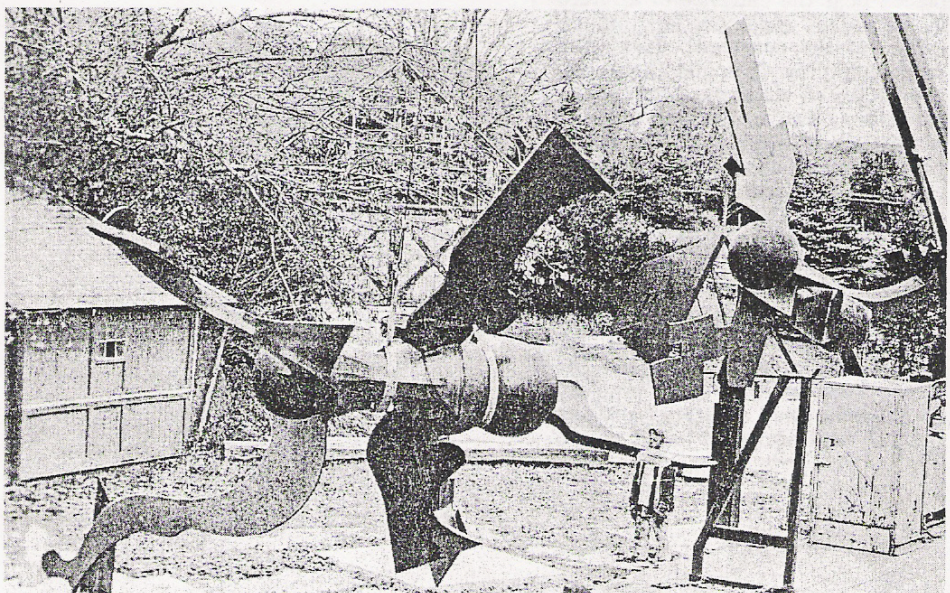
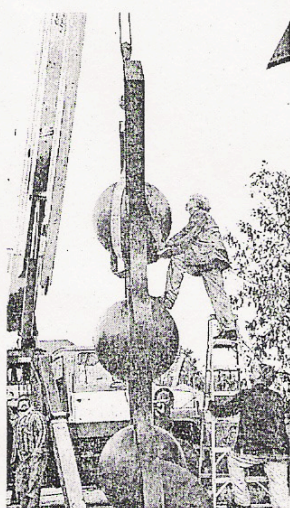
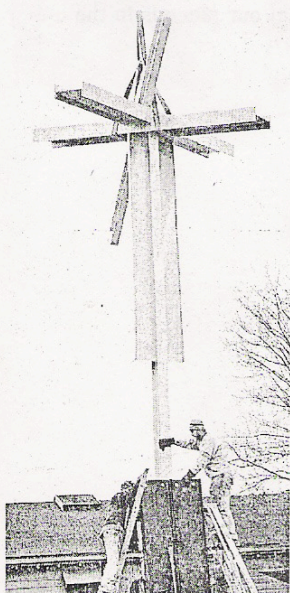
A Garden of 'Magic'

By Pat Rogers

Three new sculptures were installed on the grounds of the Art Project in Water Mill, the home and working space of artist Mihai Popa, who goes by the artistic name of Nova. The new pieces, along with several others already in place, form one of the main outdoor focal points of Nova's planned "Art Project Museum and Cultural Center," which the artist hopes to open in the summer of 2000.

"This will be a place to get away and to be around nature and the beauty of art," said Nova, who is both an artist and an architect, in an interview after the installation. "It will be a place of meditation, where people can come and get a sense of spirit and feel connected with the mystery of humanity and a link with superior forces and

(Continued on Page B5)



Sculptures by Nova at the Art Project in Water Mill include, clockwise from top, "The Astronauts," "The Moon," "Space Dance," "Gaia" and "The Big Bang." Last Thursday, three pieces were added in the Art Project Courtyard and others were slightly rearranged by technical advisor John Sherman, production manager Luna Shanaman, and steel shop assistants Gil McManus, Ryan Bollman and Rich Fernandez.
—Pat Rogers Photos

Nova's Growing Garden of 'Magic'

(Continued from Page B1)

with nature. I want to give people a dimension of magic."

The Art Project occupies 55 acres of a 100-acre working farm on Millstone Road in Water Mill and is known for its monumental art and the elliptical shaped house just off Scuttle Hole Road. Plans for the summer opening call for the completion of three indoor gallery spaces and a series of outdoor sculpture gardens. The museum will primarily showcase Nova's work, but the Romania-born artist said that he would like to show other people's work in the future.

The sculptures installed on Thursday are also of monumental scale. "The Big Bang" occupies the center of the courtyard. The angular steel piece is painted a powder blue and stands approximately 30 feet tall. "Space Dance" depicts separate male and female figures gracefully floating on their sides. Each piece is about 15 feet tall and 20 feet long. They are located near "The Big Bang." The installation of the female figure completed "Space Dance," as the male half of the sculpture was already in place.

The third sculpture installed on Thursday was "The Moon." It was placed near the entrance of a future indoor gallery space, not far from the center of the courtyard. Two other steel sculptures, Gaia and The Angel, were adjusted via crane. They are located near two converging paths a stone's throw away from the courtyard, which is formed by two brightly-colored barns and one wall of the more demure Castle Gallery, an indoor exhibition space. A path that winds between indoor and outdoor display areas flanks the fourth side.

The Art Project is easily identifiable by its distinctive, monumental art, some of which can be seen from the street. Near the front of the property on Millstone Road is "Orion," a 30-foot natural steel sculpture based on the

constellation of the same name. A short distance away is "The Species," a work composed of 15 brightly-painted concrete pieces that depicts Noah, his wife, and assorted abstract, yet recognizable, animals. Even the house where Nova and his companions live is an eye-catcher. The blue, oval-shaped house was designed by the artist/architect. It was dubbed "The Ark" during construction in 1989, as the beams of the house resembled the ribs of a ship.

The artist is also known for his five-figure installation, "The Astronauts," which is set inside the expansive property in a grassy meadow near the stables and polo field. The 20-foot abstract forms tend to invoke mysticism in the tradition of Easter Island or Stonehenge. The installation can also be viewed through another sculpture, "The Stargate," a triangular steel form near the front entrance of the Castle Gallery.

Nova said that he does not produce sculpture for the gallery circuit and has focused his energy instead on producing monumental art for The Art Project. He said that it has always

been part of his plan to create a public sculpture garden and space to display his work in the public art tradition.

"I'm dealing with big issues so it's best if I work big," said the artist. "The place will be open for free. I'm offering people free time to come and spend with art and nature and greater forces than ourselves. I feel that you should give back to others to feel human and what our place is in the universe."