

# A Shelter for Art

*The worlds of art and science come together in an new documentary*

by Jonathan Peters

**D**riving up a steep hill, only the horizon can be seen in a massive swath across the sky. It is a feeling of taking off. The sight of five towering steel structures in the distance give the viewer a feeling of arriving on another planet. Upon closer glance, the rust brown girders that stand in an Easter Island-like semi-circle have features, they are waiting, watching. Their massiveness creates a feeling of safety like the shelter of a canyon.

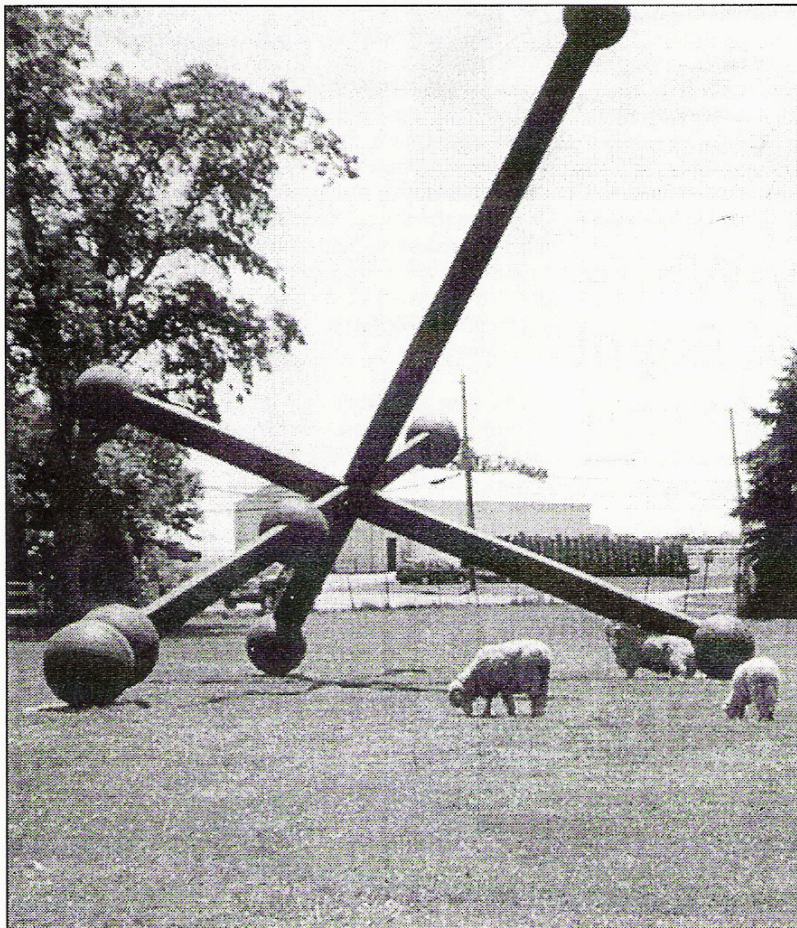
This quintet of beings are astronauts. They are the creation of Romanian artist Me hi Popa Nova. Throughout his 100 acre compound in Bridgehampton, science and celestial sculptures tilt, fly and capture the attention. It is a desire on the part of Nova to merge both technology and art in an ongoing endeavor called Nova's Ark Project.

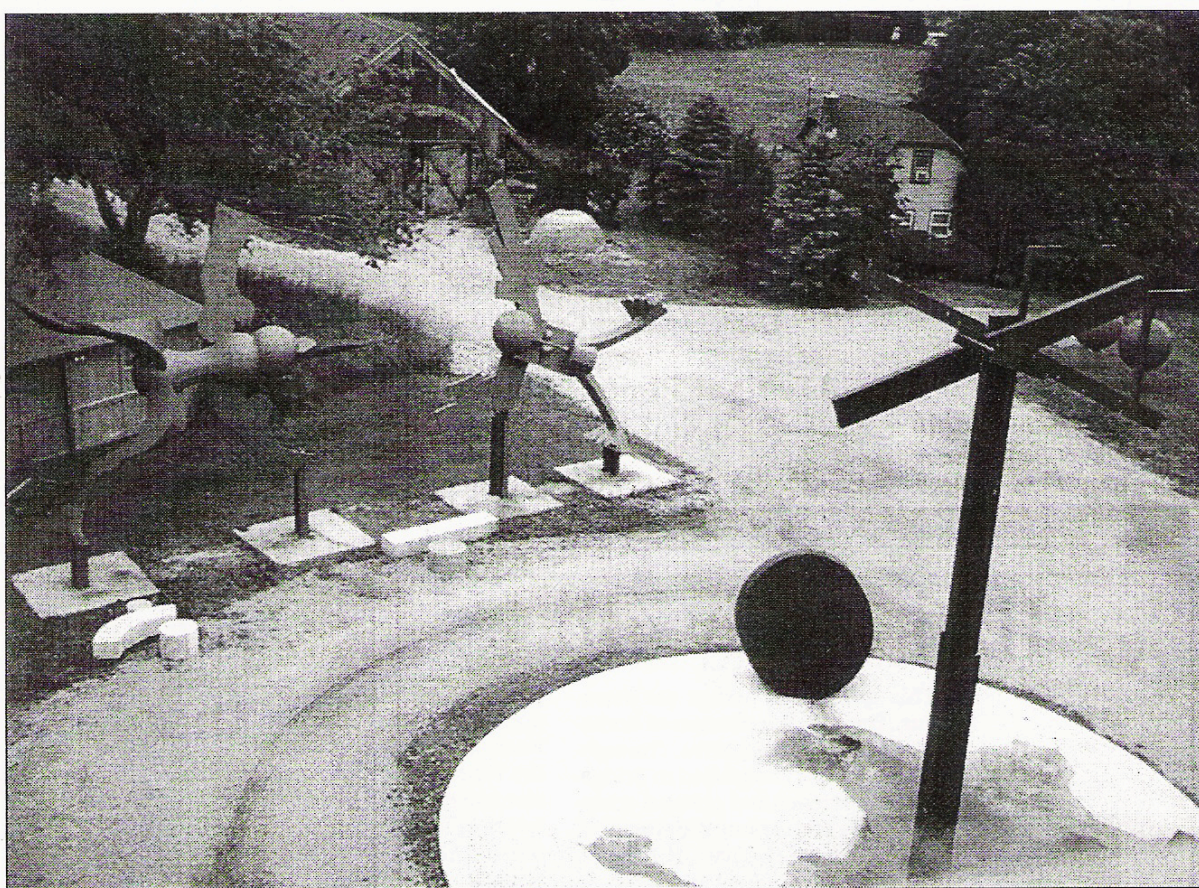
And this summer Sag Harbor filmmaker Kathryn Madison will be wrap-

ping up a two year project of her own: documenting the world off Millstone Road of Nova and his lady friend Tundra Wolf. For the last two years, Madison and her colleagues have captured hours of footage detailing the artist's life and work. It is a strange brew of science and sculpture.

"As technology advanced, the spiritual humanities did not," said Nova. "I felt we had to do something beyond the usual art that adorns the walls. We

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Some of the many outdoor sculptures on display at Nova's Ark Project.

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Nova — a name he adopted which means "beginning" — represents both the "newness" of the artist's arrival in the United States and the "newness" of his art.

It is Nova's contention the astronauts that inhabit his yard are about to embark on a voyage into space. Strength is a component the artist strove for in this piece.

"We want to convey the power of the humans," he said. "I would like the humans to feel that they have a new dignity." Some 50 yards from the five astronauts, a giant triangle soars toward the heavens. It is not merely a geometric form; it is an entrance, a stargate.

This multi-dimensional art form that encompasses the triangle and astronauts represents one striking symbol of the artist's beliefs.

"When you look through this triangle to the astronauts you have the feeling the astronauts are ready to pass through this gate to the stars." It is Nova's integration of science and art which is inherent in this piece and all of the colorful creative forms that live in his artistic world. Nova's circular home, called the Elliptical House, stands 30 feet high and is a sort of liv-

ing sculpture.

For filmmaker Madison, the tale is everything; it is Madison's mantra—"the most important thing is to tell a good story."

The film is replete with interviews with people like former Southampton Town Supervisor Vince Cannuscio, who was a proponent of Nova's round home. Cannuscio stood up for the artist before the town's Architectural Review Board and helped to get the home approved. According to Madison, the former supervisor dubbed himself the Godfather of the Elliptical House.

The film also includes the dedication of two sculptures commissioned by Nova in 2000 for the new International Building in Suzhou, China. Once again, circles play a powerful role in the artist's works. "The River of Man" features four interlocking figures in a form the artist has experimented with in several other works at the project.

In "China Reaches to the World" a red circle — China — is connected to a blue circle — the earth — by and undulating beam.

In the future, Nova sees an interconnecting circular society. His home is a prototype for a community of the future. It is meant to be a space city he calls the "Cosmic Brick." His Chi-

nese friends have referred to his work as "magical," it is a word that is on the tips of the tongues of many who view his work.

Within his rebuilt barn are many more examples of Nova's "Integral Art." Created with neon paint is a piece called the "Amazon" which is an integration of sculpture and painting. As the room darkens, a black light fixed upon it causes the vivid colorful creatures to dance to life. An orange gorilla, a spiraling yellow snake, a purple toucan, these magical elements summon a playful spirit; the work is alive, it speaks on many levels. Art should be a revelation, Nova says.

Nova has integrated art, science, humanism. Madison has taken Nova's work and integrated her medium with his to create another artistic form.

"Working with Kathy is like working with art because she understands the deep meaning of this quest," Nova said. "It is a conversation between two artists that want to ally into another form."

On August 17 Nova's world will be on public exhibit. Until regular museum hours are created, Kathryn Madison's film will introduce the public to Nova and his world.

"Everytime you come here you feel as if you've really traveled through something, like going through the looking glass," she said.