

Art

Change and continuity in outdoor sculptures

By Edward J. Sozanski
INQUIRER ART CRITIC

The outdoor sculpture treasure hunt continues this week at Grounds for Sculpture, just east of Trenton in Hamilton, N.J., and at the Abington Art Center in Jenkintown.

Both feature permanent displays of outdoor sculpture that change annually. In each case, not all the sculptures are replaced, which allows for continuity from year to year.

Grounds for Sculpture is by far the larger operation. The 16-acre site, which has been landscaped to provide a variety of placement situations, includes a 10,000-square-foot, glass-walled pavilion where smaller pieces are displayed indoors.

In this, its third season, the park is featuring work by Melvin Edwards, William King, Beverly Pepper and Manuel Neri. They account for 24 of the 46 sculptures scattered over the grounds. Another 36 sculptures and works on paper are displayed in the pavilion.

Although sculpture here tends to be abstract rather than figurative, only two of the four featured artists work that way.

Pepper's tall, thin, cast-iron pieces seem to be based on common tools such as files, scaled up to monumentality. As forms, they're no more interesting than the originals. Edwards' welded-steel pieces, which incorporate giant chain links as a reference to the everyday world, are more original and far less static.

King's giant stick-figures, fabri-



DAVID GAMBER

Michael Grothusen's "Origin" at the Abington Art Center was supposed to deteriorate gradually, but collapsed after construction. House forms serve to modify the piece.

cated of flat aluminum plate, also try to achieve presence by scaling up. Neri's rough-cast, human-scale figures are far more expressive. They feel a bit like Rodin-Giacometti hybrids whose bodies have been daubed with vivid enamel colors.

The holdover sculptures tend to look better the second or third time you see them, after they have settled into their environments. The best examples of this phenomenon are the cast-aluminum pieces by Art Schade, which have weathered to a luscious pearl-gray patina.

The small sculptures in metal

and stone on the second level of the pavilion prove conclusively that size has nothing to do with quality. These include a Jo Davidson nude, a John Storrs torso in limestone and a tiny standing nude by Gaston Lachaise. Exquisite all.

Of the nine sculptures installed on the grounds at Abington Art Center, six are new. One of the holdovers is a work in progress by Winifred Lutz that has changed somewhat from last summer.

All the new pieces are abstract and one, *Origin* by Michael Groth-

usen, might be characterized as an environmental piece. It's a structure of packed earth that was supposed to deteriorate gradually; however, it collapsed dramatically right after it was constructed.

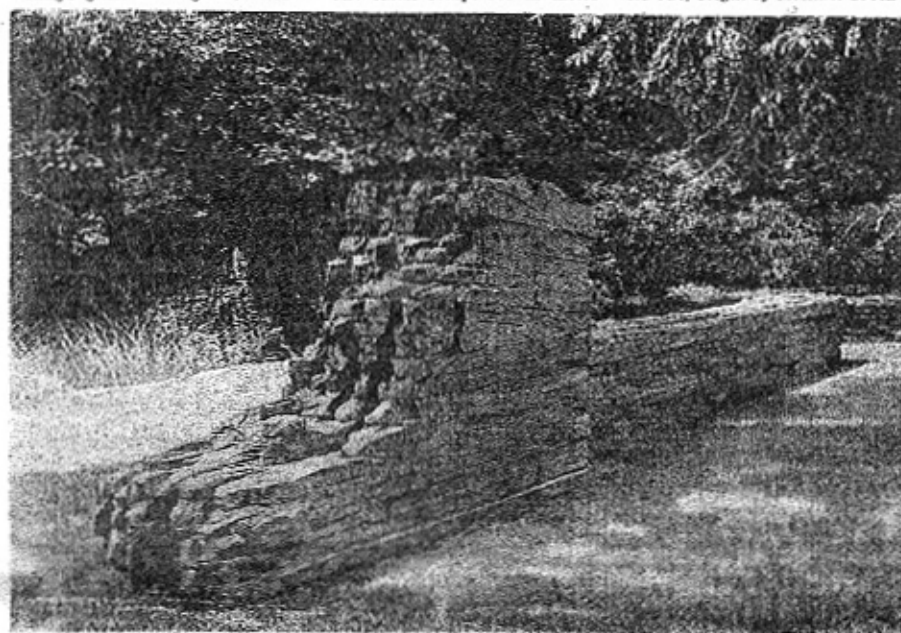
Grothusen has since modified the piece by adding some house forms, also of packed earth. Without them, the "ruin" offers no evidence of being an artwork.

The strongest of the new pieces is *Hannah's Horizon* by Ursula von Rydingsvard, a low, solid structure of cedar wood rubbed with graphite that resembles a slate wall. Like the Grothusen piece, this one also looks a bit like a ruin, albeit a more intentional and substantial one. And it merges effortlessly with its site.

Jesse Moore's *Dido's Pyre* is the most fanciful of the new works. Constructed of cypress wood, it resembles a giant amphora or plumb bob suspended upside down under a tripod formed from three tapering ladders. Moore's piece generates an unusual tension of forces, an upward thrust counterbalanced by one's tendency to read the vessel form as falling.

The settling-in effect has improved the appearance of Nick Kripal's *scarius*, a large adobe sculpture halfway down one side of the lawn. Lutz's *Reclamation Garden* looks less like a work in progress than it did last year. The structures she has created from fallen trees now read as being intrinsic to the landscape.

Grounds for Sculpture, 18 Fairgrounds Rd., Hamilton, N.J.
Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Through Sept. 30.
Phone: 609-588-0816
Abington Art Center, 615 Meetinghouse Rd., Jenkintown; The center is closed through Sept. 6, but the sculpture garden remains open to the public. Through mid-1996. Phone: 215-687-4802.



WOLTEK NACZAS

"Hannah's Horizon" by Ursula von Rydingsvard, also at the Abington Art Center, is a low, solid structure of cedar wood rubbed with graphite that resembles a slate wall.