

Dan Rattiner's Podcast: Oscar Molina, Artist



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Joel Perlman Discusses 'Sorcerer' & the Process of Metal Sculpting

BY OLIVER PETERSON

This week's *Dan's Papers* cover artist Joel Perlman talks about his monumental metal sculpture "Sorcerer," how it ended up in front of the new Bridgehampton Museum, his experience teaching art in NYC, and what brought him to the Hamptons.

Tell me about this sculpture on the cover. How did it end up in Bridgehampton?

"Sorcerer" stands in front of the Bridgehampton Museum through some fortunate issues of timing, enthusiasm, and generosity. The museum had recently completed a decade-long renovation and instituted a contemporary exhibition program. The painter Eric Dever invited me to participate in the inaugural show with him. We admire each other's work and although the pieces are very different, we enjoyed the dialogue between them.

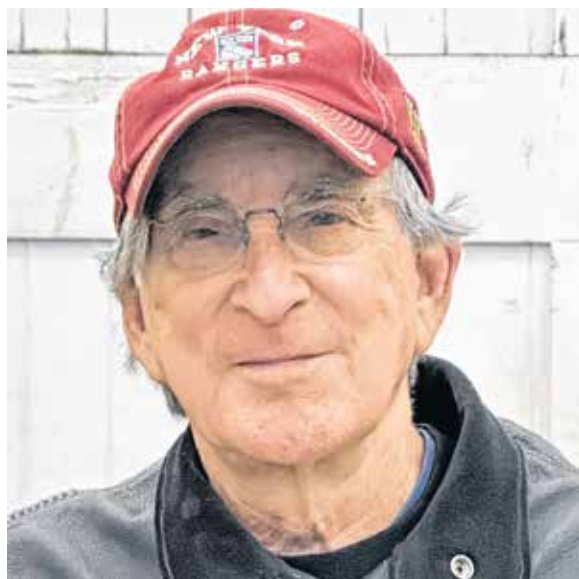
This piece, "Sorcerer," was originally commissioned by the Primera Group principals Ralph and Cornelia Heins for a project in Dallas. Upon seeing it completed at Liberty Iron Works, they decided to re-route it to their sculpture garden in Sagaponack. The Heins are among my most avid supporters already having many of my works in their collection.

Encouraged by Bridgehampton Museum's collections manager Tim Malyk and director Conner Flanagan, I asked if a pit stop in Bridgehampton was possible on the journey east. The answer was a very excited, "Yes, of course."

I know you work instinctively and kind of build as you go, and let your creations take shape organically. How does one do that when working with these kinds of materials?



JOEL PERLMAN'S "MATCHLESS," WELDED STEEL, 36X32X13 INCHES



JOEL PERLMAN

I do usually work instinctively, just winging it, but on a project this scale, I presented a study to the Heins. The next stop was Liberty Iron where I have worked on big projects with my friend and "guru" John Degen for more than 40 years. John is a genius who can build anything. Working together outside, the sculpture was completed in four months.

In my Water Mill studio, I can do a piece up to 10 feet (with my assistant, artist James Greco) comfortably. Larger than that, I am at Liberty Iron which has great machinery, and very skilled workers who enjoy working on sculpture.

What goes into turning your construction into an enduring piece of art that can handle the elements and outlive the people who own it?



JOEL PERLMAN AT BRIDGEHAMPTON MUSEUM OPENING WITH HIS PAL MARY HEILMANN

The material is 1 and 1/2 inch thick aluminum plate which reflects my interest in industrial processes. The aluminum also reflects the ever-changing light out east. Aluminum is impervious to weather and needs almost no maintenance. It is also one third the weight of steel, and although more difficult to work with, it gives you more bang for the buck.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe you moved from working in New York City full time to living and creating out here in the Hamptons. What brought on that change and how has it affected your work?

I always maintained studios in both Tribeca and out east, and still do. Light is one of the reasons I, and so many other artists came out east. After almost 50 years as a part timer, I moved out for good during the pandemic, now only returning to the city to teach part time at the School of Visual Arts.

You have a long history of teaching at the School of Visual Arts. How does being a professor inform or affect your own work as an artist?

Teaching at SVA for more than 50 years has also given me energy, perspective, and a sense of giving back to the system I came from. The feedback from young artists is always a plus.

You've spoke to me about a sense of "danger" being an important element of a sculptural composition. Can you talk about that and what else inspires you?

The energy I get on days in NYC, the interaction of my peers out east and my lifelong interest in motorcycles, sports cars, and things that are dangerous and move fast contribute to the creative process.

Where can people find your work online and in-person?

My monumental works can be found locally in front of the Parrish Art Museum, Guild Hall, and the Nassau County Museum of Art. I maintain a studio in Water Mill, and I can be reached through my website joelperlman.com



JOEL PERLMAN WITH "SORCERER" UNDER CONSTRUCTION AT LIBERTY IRON