

No. 17 SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2006



The

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Art Profile

By Sheila Hollihan-Elliot

Eric David Laxman, Sculptor

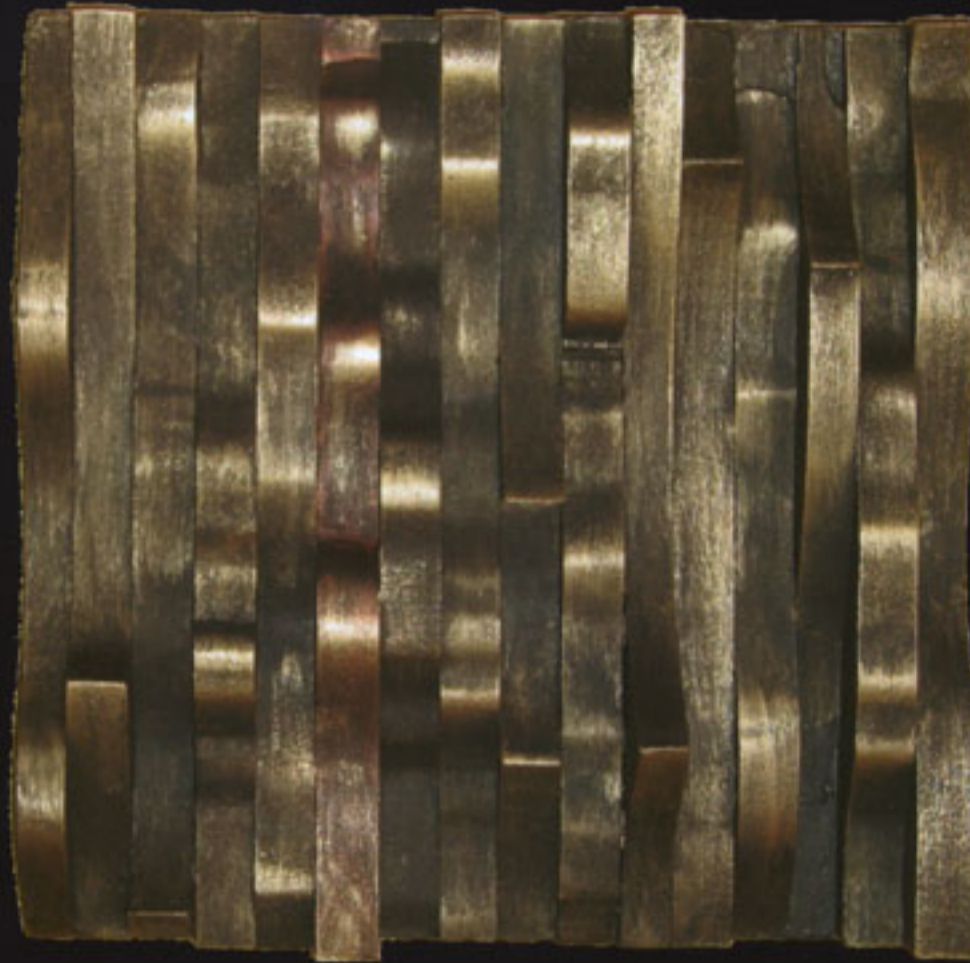
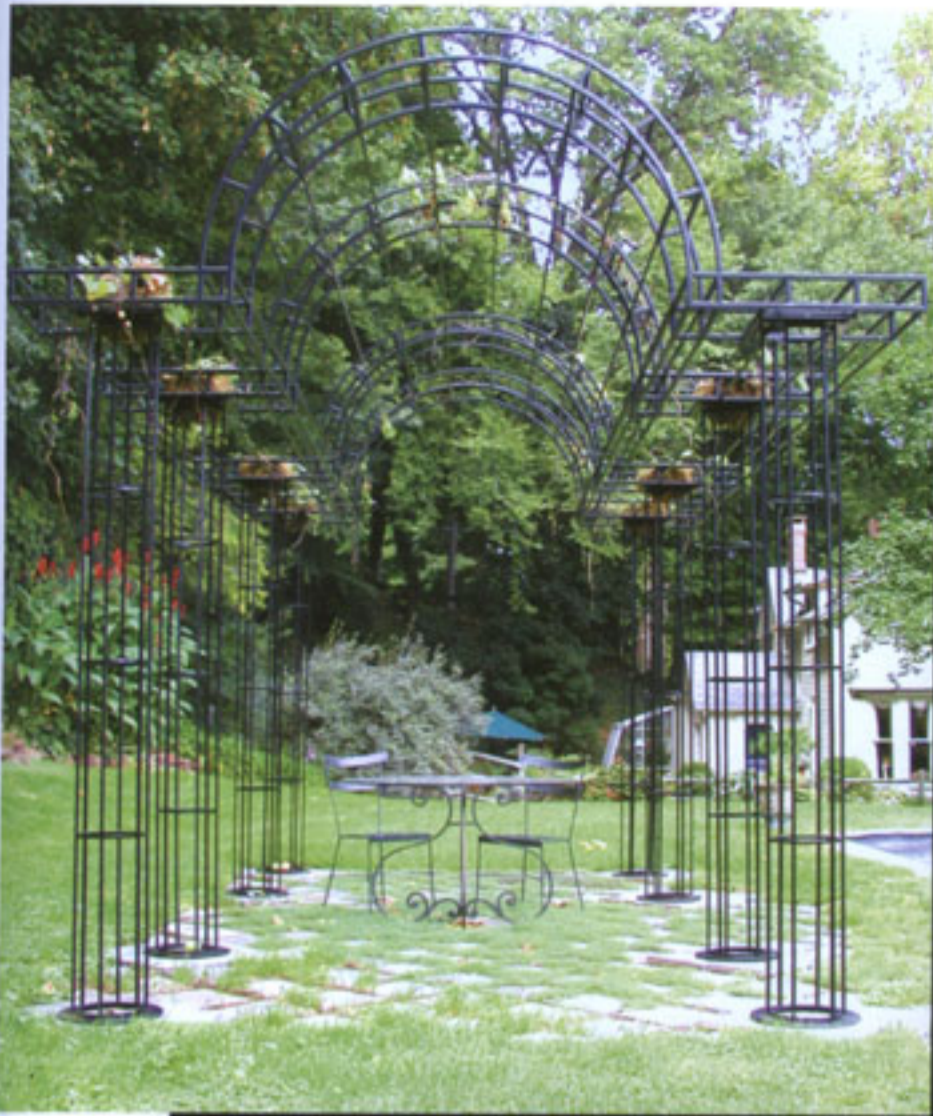


Photo by Janet Wortendyke

*8" X 8" Welded Steel currently on exhibit
at the Blue Hill Plaza, Pearl River*

Eric David Laxman prepared to follow the profession of medicine, though he wished there was a similarly challenging profession in art. But as a high school student in Ramapo, he didn't find mentors to guide him toward a viable career path in art. So, off he went to Tuft's famous pre-med program, graduated Summa cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa, and prepared to enter medical school. His last semester elective in marble carving changed all that. He could no longer ignore that sense of denying his purpose of life - aren't we meant to devote our lives to doing what we innately love to do, and not work on what we just happen to encounter in our early circle of influence?

It took courage. Laxman left the medical track to discover, create if necessary, a valid profession in art. He was not dropping out - he was forging a new path. In the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, he concentrated in the three dimensional tactile qualities of sculpture. His first professional commitments were in stone carving: he served as manager of the Vermont Carving Studio and did smooth realistic freestanding marble statues there.



Right: Pergola. Fabricated out of welded steel and powder coated. (private residence)

As a trained scientist, Laxman had always found the boundaries between different materials to be full of unexpected energy. He soon was exploring other materials in his sculptures and functional pieces - huge chunks of granite, burnished steel, expanses of smooth glass, and found metal objects. "I was like a sponge", Laxman remembers. "I'd go down the hall to another sculptor's studio and ask how a thing was done, and they would stop their own work and show me." These were the mentors, the journeymen forgers, welders, stone splitters, who taught Laxman techniques for working with strong, large-scale materials.

By the time he returned to Rockland to establish his own Eric David Laxman Studio, he had developed a style born of capability, visual sense, and as important, the willingness to collaborate with clients. "As an artist, I find that a client's wishes - and underlying needs - push me to a new places. You listen and absorb and clarify - and then it's problem solving. It's all choices - which direction you go, what paths will get you there. It's a pretty exciting ride!" Laxman has confidence in his early museum training, and trusts his visual sense when he designs - it is not a negative diva ego at work, but his experience to know that when a thing works and feels right, everyone involved seems to agree naturally. He often combines different materials in the same sculpture, custom-designed furniture, or architectural feature - and often melds elements of realism, semi-realism, and abstract in the same piece. The boundaries between materials and aesthetics are full of beauty and visual energy, and Laxman is grateful for the challenges commissioned projects afford him. "Once you've pushed yourself to different places, these new solutions become part of your language," he explained. "You keep evolving."

Laxman is in mid-career as a sculptor - well past the training and education phase, and today with a large fully equipped and staffed working studio and showroom in the Garnerville Arts complex. The studio space is amazing - soaring two stories high - with a vastness in scale and scope. He has grappling machinery to help move 2-ton pieces of granite; refrigerator size industrial welding equipment, and a huge metal slab table

Photo by Janet Wortendyke





as a base for his more demanding metalwork. This is not your weekend potter! His clients include some of the tri-state area's most notable private collectors, interior designers, and architects.

Laxman is now forging the next phase of his profession of art - getting the business side of his studio to the same level of energy and excellence as his designs and custom output. For example, he joined BNI, Rockland's innovative business networking organization, and soaks up ideas as gratefully from fellow Rocklanders as when working sculptors showed him techniques for metal work and handling equipment so many years ago. He is considering how to make very limited editions of his sculpture and museum-quality furniture. "I need to find a balance - what an artisan factory can do and what I must do so that the pieces are still my works of art",

he explains. "I'll only create limited editions that bear the hand of the artist." So Laxman continues in his quest to create a viable profession in art - and each day this profession enables him to create with joy, things of beauty and value and permanence. For more information visit www.EricLaxman.com.



Above: Steel Railing (private residence). Right: Gazelle Railing Detail, Steel 36"H x 18" (Sugarbar Restaurant, 254 West 72nd Street, NYC). Photos by Sal Cordaro



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