

# IMAGES

OF NEW YORK'S TECH VALLEY • 2007 Edition

Arts & Entertainment

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### Inspired by Mother Nature

Beauty of the region is incorporated into artworks of all types

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With its spectacular mountains, forests and lakes, plus the panorama of the changing seasons, New York's Tech Valley provides unlimited inspiration for artists who call this area home.

Immersing themselves in their setting is a vital part of the creative process, and artisans often incorporate natural resources into their work.

One of the most dramatic examples of the relationship between the land and art is the Storm King Art Center in Mountainville. The center, founded in 1960, sits on 500 acres where more than 100 large sculptures are displayed outdoors.

Thirteen works by David Smith anchor the permanent collection, which also includes sculptures by Alexander Calder, Henry Moore, Louise Nevelson and Mark di Suvero. Storm King is open April through mid-November and will host an exhibition of works by Louise Bourgeois in 2007.

"I think the landscape works beautifully with the sculptures," says David Collens, Storm King director and curator. "It's the combination of both – both are important to us. It's the sky, it's the mountains – a combination of everything."

At Blue Moon Clay Studios in Greenwich, Brenda McMahon crafts saggar-fired porcelain pots with grapevine handles. McMahon moved to the upper Hudson Valley after a decade as a television news producer in Albany. A cross-country trip and a pottery class helped determine her new career path.

At her studio – which she runs with sculptor John Visser – McMahon creates her pots, and then fires them surrounded by a variety of organic materials. Her surroundings are a part of each piece.

"It's a magnificent vista that helps me maintain the quiet and serenity that I take into



**Jim Petrillo, owner of Earthworks in Amsterdam, uses a chainsaw to craft unusual works of art.**

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the studio where I center the clay and work with the soft earth that I form into these vessels," she says. "The nature of upstate New York is completely reflected in my work."

Noga Zerubavel, of Ballston Spa, is a counselor with the Domestic Violence & Rape Crisis Services of Saratoga County. Founder of Olive Branch Art, she creates custom wearable bead art made with natural gems and minerals.

"My two careers intertwine well," Zerubavel says. "They create a balance for me of being able to honor different parts of myself and things I care about. "My artwork really became a part of my life at the same time I began to feel a strong connection to nature. I like to do a lot of my beadwork outdoors," she adds.

At Earthworks in Amsterdam, Jim and Christine Petrillo showcase works of 32 chainsaw sculptors and other local artists. Jim Petrillo – a former logger – sculpts pieces from 12 inches to a 9-foot cactus and a 7-foot black bear. The sculptures can take "anywhere from minutes to months," says Christine Petrillo.

"I find this setting very inspirational," she says. "I've been making jewelry since 2003, shortly after I met Jim. He showed me how to look at the earth in a different way."

Story by Anne Gillem  
Photo by Brian McCord

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