

GARDEN GALLERY

Bee and Thistle Inn gives ground to sculpture



if you GO

WHAT: Sculpture Garden at the Bee & Thistle Inn
WHERE: Bee & Thistle Inn, 100 Lyme St., Old Lyme
WHEN: 11 a.m.-dusk, through Sept. 30
COST: free

Story by **KATHLEEN EDGECOMB** / The Day
 Photos by **ADENA STEVENS** / Special to The Day

Restaurants have always used their walls as galleries of sorts for artists. It's a way to support the arts and lure in customers. Many, like Noah's in Stonington, have rotating shows that, for the most part, feature local scenes and portraits.

But the folks at the Bee and Thistle Inn in Old Lyme have taken art appreciation to a new level.

They've brought 10 sculptors together — some established in the form and others just starting out —

and scattered their works around their five-acres on Lyme Street.

The Sculpture Garden at the Bee & Thistle Inn will be open to the public through September.

"Owning a historic property is a big project," says Linnea Rufo, who bought the 1756 inn a little over a year ago. "I want people to be able to enjoy it."

Nineteen pieces are strategically placed around the building, lining the front walkway, rising out of an herb garden or hugging the wetlands.

See **INN** page **D2**

■ Top, "Sunnyside Up" by George R. Anthonisen.

■ Above, Cindy Peret and Jacque Satter, both of Wilbarham, Mass., sit in the Bee & Thistle Inn sculpture garden before going inside for lunch.

■ Right, "Alla Prima" by Michael Melle.

■ Far right, "Generations" by Anthonisen.



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Sign, sign, everywhere a sign

The STREET SIGNS are routinely stolen, in all probability because of what's on them. Nevertheless, the town of East Lyme has not changed the names of Mamecock Road or Lover's Lane, nor has the town of New Hartford remained its most pilfered road sign, Pussy Lane.

In Stonington, highway supervisor Bill Stewart is perplexed that the

preferred pinched sign is Wolfneck Road, adding, but not encouraging, that Hickey Drive is the sign he expected to take a beating when installed several years back. And for North Stonington, it is the "character" signs — sporting pictures of cows, tractors, horses — that must be replaced regularly.

It's a curious thing. What possesses a person to steal a street sign? The pilfering of street signs has

been a prank since, well, since they first went up, back in the 14th century. From my impromptu research, it is reasonable to conclude that unusual or amusing signs, those with sexual connotations and ones bearing first names and/or surnames are preferred by perpetrators of this particular prank.

For years, the Pamela Way sign in Waterford was repeatedly stolen, says Ed Stewart, public works direc-

tor there for years before taking the same job in New London. "We must have replaced that sign 10 times in a three- or four-year period, and then it just stopped. All we could figure was Pamela moved."

As a teen, I had my eye on Joyce Street, just off Masons Island Road in Mystic. Now of course, you can order sign replicas off novelty gifts Web sites, but let's face it, it's not nearly as gratifying as nabbing your

own piece of locality in the middle of the night with a couple of friends.

Even more appealing was the "Welcome to Historic Mystic" sign just before Baptist Hill in Mystic. This beautiful sign and others similar are a welcome sight in our surrounding communities. As much as I admired that sign, and still do, for

See **STREET** page **D2**

Inn owner hopes public will come enjoy the scenery

From D1

The bronze sculptures of George R. Anthonisen are displayed on large black boxes. The Boston native, who now lives in Bucks County, Pa., has seven pieces in the show, including some classical work like "Generations," a circle of people of various ages. There's also one called "Game Over" a thought-provoking image of an arm with a needle sticking out of it.

Michael Melle, a Plainfield artist who paints with oils and draws with chalk and charcoal, took to natural elements and created hay and stick sculptures of humans. "Alla Prima" is a slight woman, dressed in denim, a straw hat protecting her ticking face from the sun, who concentrates on a plein air painting. She's so real looking, some visitors are reluctant to venture too close so as not to bother her.

Other pieces include a shiny blue abstract called "After the Race II/8 Buckingham Blue" by Gilbert Boro, a renowned sculptor who recently moved to Old Lyme and set up

a studio just down the road from the inn. A hard plaster sculpture of a young boy and a dead rat called "1987" is a provocative piece by Eric McDonald, a May graduate of the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts in Old Lyme.

Frederick S. Osborne, president of the Lyme Academy, says it's refreshing to see a business take an interest in the arts and support the art ambience of the town.

"Art is one of our largest single assets," he says. "Directly, the exposure from this show for people who study here is enormous. And anything that contributes to the spirit of art in the town benefits all of us."

Rufo owned an inn in the Berkshires and became friends with several sculptors there, including Melle and Andrew DeVries. She called them late last year and asked for some names of other sculptors who might be interested in showing their work for the summer. In January, just a few months after opening the Bee & Thistle, she sent out 25 letters.

"I felt like I was running downhill and couldn't stop," she says, laughing at all the work and coordination it took to get the show in place. "I've become a curator."

About 75 people showed up for the opening.

Since the show has gone up, Rufo has invited the public to wander around the grounds. Every day, she looks out the windows of the inn and sees someone relaxing in one of the many seating areas she's scattered about. She also installed paths between her property and her neighbor, the Florence Griswold Museum.

She wants residents to take advantage of the picturesque location of the inn and enjoy the art and sloping lawn that meets the reeds in the Lieutenant River.

On a recent afternoon, Rufo sent a couple who had had lunch at the inn out into the gardens.

"They didn't come back until 5 o'clock," she says. "They spent the afternoon at the Florence Griswold House."

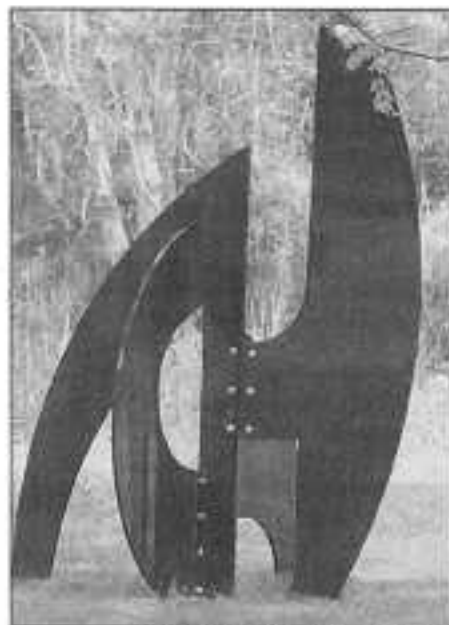
And that, says Rufo, is part of her plan, too. She wants to connect the historical and cultural places in town with the other businesses. Between the Florence Griswold, the Lyme Academy, the Lyme Art Association and the galleries and shops, the town is becoming more and more of a destination.

"I'm so lucky to be in such good company," she says.

If any of the pieces sell, Rufo says the inn will not take a cut, as galleries traditionally do. But a portion of sales will go into a scholarship fund that will help an Old Lyme youth pursue a career in the arts.

One night, after the last dinner patron had left the restaurant and preparations for the next day's breakfast were arranged, Rufo went out and sat in the one of the Adirondack chairs on the lawn. She was surrounded by the darkness. Some of the sculptures were illuminated by lights from the inn.

"I could have stayed there all night," she says.



ADINA STEVENS / Special to The Day

■ "After the Race II/8 Buckingham Blue" by Gilbert Boro, in the sculpture garden at the Bee and Thistle Inn in Old Lyme.