



LIFE. STYLE. ART.

PLEASE TOUCH THE SCULPTURE

Famed artist Gil Boro thinks art should be tactile

BY TOM SOBOLESKI

"I sometimes wonder if the hand is not more sensitive to the beauties of sculpture than the eye. I should think the wonderful rhythmical flow of lines and curves could be more subtly felt than seen." —Helen Keller.

Walking his spacious grounds and Studio 80 compound in Old Lyme, Connecticut, sculptor Gil Boro says, "I really want everyone to get exposed to sculpture and touch it."

Scattered around 4.5 picturesque landscaped acres are some 110 sculptures, many multi-colored and 10' or taller, to delight the eye and stimulate the imagination. It's a living portfolio of Boro's lifelong body of work. Curvilinear sweeps, brass balls suspended in steel half-moons, interlocking squares, stone and wood benches, geometric clusters resembling jungle gyms, all begging to be stepped into or sat on and touched.

An artisan with worldwide critical acclaim, Boro says he knew he would be a sculptor in 7th grade, when "art became very important to me." He credits an encouraging teacher and a public school system in Great Neck, New York, which maintained a thriving art program because "they believed you should be a well-rounded individual."

A second boost came shortly after graduating college. "I was out of Duke for about a year," Boro says, "and about the closest I've ever come to starving to death." Out of the blue he was invited to meet with innovative architect Philip Johnson. "I don't know how I got the appointment," he says. Johnson saw

promise in him and encouraged him to attend architecture school to supplement his education and "as a means to make a living." After that, "I just turned my back on two-dimensional art. I really wanted to be building things."

A tall, solidly built man with a genial demeanor, Boro muses as he deliberately strolls past his own art. In a resonant baritone, he pensively explains his works and what inspired them. One, *Tres Gatos*, is dedicated to his three cats, Barney, Molly and Polo. Barney and Molly are 22 years old and Polo passed away two years ago. It's a very personal piece for Boro.

"In the middle of the night," he poignantly explains, "I started thinking about the three cats. They're from the same litter so they're always entwined." Polo is underneath and between Barney and Molly because "he was always butting in."

Boro has replicated *Tres Gatos*' abstract forms at least six times, some in polished stainless steel, one in cheerful hues of lime, purple and magenta, some tabletop size, and some 8' tall.

Despite decades of welding, grinding, forging and polishing,

Boro has lost none of his enthusiasm and creative vision. His excitement is palpable for being selected to exhibit on the prestigious El Paseo sculpture mile in Palm Desert, California, this winter. He exudes joy describing his *Nine Squares* series—welded structures comprised of nine entangled squares made with steel or aluminum tubes. "I didn't want anything parallel," he says. "Each one of those little spaces to me are very exciting. It's about spatial relationships but also ultimately it's a place to go." Some are tabletop size, and one is a giant 6' x 9'.







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Vision of Visions

You'd think completion was his favorite part of the process, but Boro prefers the start of a new piece. "It's the excitement of waking up and diving into a new project." Design ideas just seem to pop into his head, whether here at Studio 80 or at the strangest places, including his optometrist's office. That imagination shows in his work.

He refuses to do similar pieces. If someone asks for a piece like one they've seen in his landscape, it won't be an exact match. "They'll be different proportions. I really get into the spatial aspects of a sculpture—the spatial relationship, the scale of a piece, and the space of a piece. That's part of my personality."

Always looking forward, Boro's creativity is still strong. His location invigorates him. "Old Lyme is not only an art-centric community," he says, "but it somehow fertilizes one's creative energies. Prior to my arrival in 2004, I created about three or four sculptures per year. In the last 12 years, I have been energized to design over 10-15 sculptures per year."



Tre Gatos by Gilbert Boro

Boro's latest project exemplifies his lively mind and hands. After attending performances featuring the music of Dmitri Shostakovich, he spent many nights contemplating it "until I woke up and started thinking about how music

evokes visual images in my mind. With my eyes closed I can see colorful shapes that are created by the music."

The result is *The Musical Masterworks Series*; three-dimensional art inspired by songs like "Stand by Me," "Lean on Me," and "Look at Me."

He's at a stage in life and career that prompts reflection. "What art has done for me is help regain the creativity we all have as children," Boro says. "The challenge of art and the joys of creation, for me, are equally related to the visualization and execution. My sculpture is concerned with the interrelationship of space, place and scale. Through my art, I aspire to engage people's minds in the creative process. If I am successful, this will be my legacy."

All Boro's sculptures are for sale. The grounds at Studio 80 are open 365 days a year from 9 a.m.–5 p.m. For more info, please visit sculpturegrounds.com. ●

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