Assembly of Artists

'Sculpture Sonoma 2005' the first of several planned efforts to organize local artist groups

By DAN TAYLOR Photos by MARK ARONOFF THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

culpture Sonoma 2005," an ambitious series of events and exhibits under way countywide, began last year with one man's thought.

It was an intriguing notion from an influen-

"I thought it would be a good idea to find out ho Sonoma County sculptors consider the ost accomplished among their peers," said alter Byck of Paradise Ridge Winery in Santa

Byck and his wife, Marijke Byck-Hoensears, initially wanted only to mark this sumer's 10th anniversary of the outdoor sculpture low at their Fountaingrove winery with someing a little different.

The idea just got bigger and bigger.

Now, 100 sculptures by local artists are on disay at a dozen county venues through the end the year. A carefully crafted, full-color, -page booklet documents the entire undertak-

On Aug. 20, at least two dozen sculptors will ad some of their works on trucks for "a sculpre tailgate parade," suggested by Timber Covsculptor Bruce Johnson. The sculptors will invene at Santa Rosa Junior College and pade through downtown Santa Rosa during Sculpture in the City," a daylong salute to lo-

"To me, this is artists supporting communi-," said Vicki Kumpfer, organizer of the downwn event and art coordinator for the Santa osa Parks and Recreation Department. "We ofn hear that the community should support artts. This gives artists a chance to contribute. rtists are great community builders, because eir way of thinking is so creative."

their peers, "Sculpture Sonoma 2005" allows ie county's artists to present their best to the

Questionnaires sent to 110 sculptors yielded a st of 28 artists considered the top talents. The

ists already known nationwide: Mark di Suvero, who lives in New York City now but keeps a studio in Petaluma; and Ned Kahn of Graton, who won a MacArthur Foundation "genius

The balloting also identified some highly regarded but less famous sculptors, including John Watrous of Graton and Michael Cooper of Sebastopol, both longtime teachers and artist mentors. Cooper actually is better known to museums than to his peers, Byck said.

Whimsical assemblage artist Monty Monty of Santa Rosa, a favorite among other artists, also made the cut. "He's very popular among his

List in hand, Byck began to meet with local museum directors and curators and the Arts Council of Sonoma County to plan a series of shows presenting work by the leading sculptors. Hours and hours of discussion followed producing an electronic storm of e-mailed notes and minutes from meetings.

Meanwhile, Community Foundation Sonoma County was seeking a grant designed to foster collaboration among local arts groups and need ed a specific kickoff project for 2005. The "sculpture project," as participants called it then, was already in the planning stages and seemed ide-

Last December, San Francisco's James Irvine Foundation awarded a \$400,000, three-year grant to Sonoma County, to be administered by

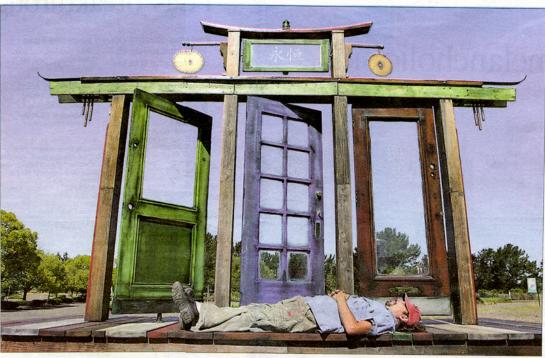
"It'll have lasting impact," Kumpfer said. "Our art community hasn't coalesced. Now we'll work together more, rather than on parallel paths.

"Sculpture Sonoma 2005," as it was finally named, became the first stage of a long-term plan to raise the profile of the region's arts. A task force was formed and an administrator hired to oversee the process.

"This has been the single most significant Because the sculptors showcased were chosen countywide visual arts event we've ever had," said arts council president Michael Friedenberg, "and it came from the collaboration between arts organizations."

You can reach Staff Writer Dan Taylor at oster included Johnson and two other local art- 521-5243 or dtaylor@pressdemocrat.com.

COVER STORY



Monty Monty of Santa Rosa put Chinese symbols on three revolving doors, from left, signifying "yesterday," "today" and "the future." A slight breeze sets them twirling outside the Museum of Contemporary Art at the Burbank Center for the Arts north of Santa Rosa.

JOHN WATROUS

Home: Graton

Background: Master's in sculpture from New Mexico Highlands University, Las Vegas, N.M. He teaches computer art and three-dimensional design at Santa Rosa Junior College. During 31 years there, he also has served as gallery director and art department chairman. He collaborates with Peter Middleton to create circuit boards that control lighting installations that shift colors and designs. Each piece is crafted for a specific loca-

Quote: "My work is about changing patterns, and getting people to slow down and notice them. During my 15 years as curator at the college gallery, my job was controlling placement and lighting. If you can control your own lighting, you can create your own environment. My technical side was always



MONTY MONTY Age: 46 Home: Santa Rosa Background: He started his art education with a correspondence course at age 14, and completed a two-year Sonoma County program in graphic arts technology by 16. In 1979. he became a professional graphic artist, continuing off and on until the '90s when he began creating

what he calls "vintage collectable sculpture and assemblage." He makes his artworks out of cast-offs and curios that include

stopped clocks, old-fashioned kitchen tools and

dented coffee cans. He

violin he made out of a

bowling ball.

even plays music on a bass

Quote: "I'm constantly

'Where did this come

been?' I'm trying make peo-

ple aware of familiar ob-

context. You can get people to alter their preconcep-

tions about how things

Showing work at Arts

Council of Sonoma Coun-

Arts, Finley Community

Winery, all Santa Rosa

Center and Paradise Ridge

ty, Burbank Center for the

should be used.

jects outside their regular

Where to see his work:

from? Where has this

telling myself stories as I put these things together

John Watrous creates sound and light sculptures in his Graton home/lab studio

separate from my artistic side. I never integrated them until 10 years ago. I want to control as many aspects of a three-dimensional work as possible."

Where to see his work: Showing work at Paradise Ridge Winery and Santa Rosa Junior College Art Gallery.

MICHAEL COOPER

Home: Sebastopol

Background: Master's degree in sculpture from San Jose State, master's of fine arts from UC Berkeley. He taught art for 34

years at two community colleges: Foothill in Los Altos Hills and De Anza in Cupertino. Cooper combines wood and metal in in tricate sculptures that are often mobile, sometimes motorized.

Quote: "I like combining materials. It creates checks and balances. You want to figure it out. You can't help yourself. I've always liked art that gets right in your face. I'm trying to get people to look in a different way. The truth is, the reason why I make things is that is the best way to explain what I want to say.

Where to see his work: Showing work at Paradise Ridge Winery and Sonoma County Museum now Santa Rosa Junior College in November.



Michael Coper of Sebastopol is a full-time sculptor with his me and:tudio off Green Valley Road