

# Arts & Living

The Southampton Press

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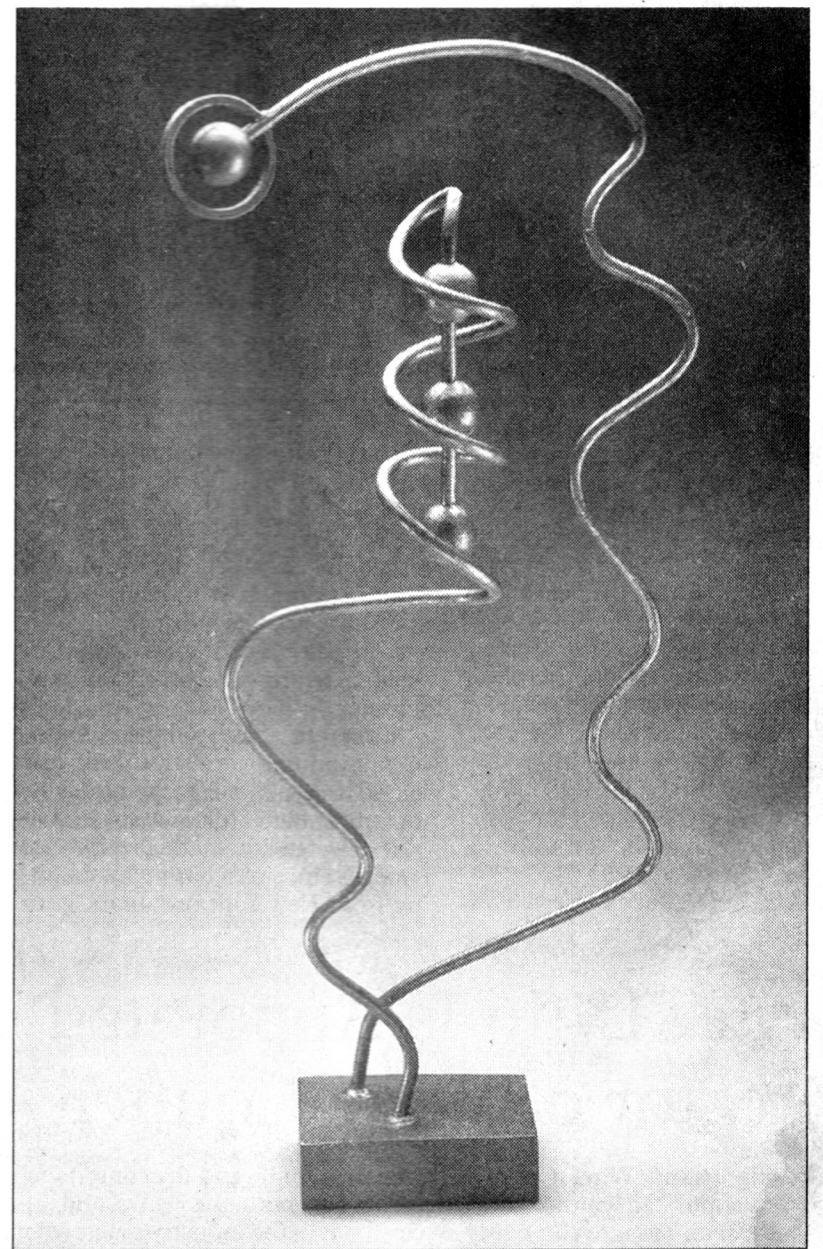
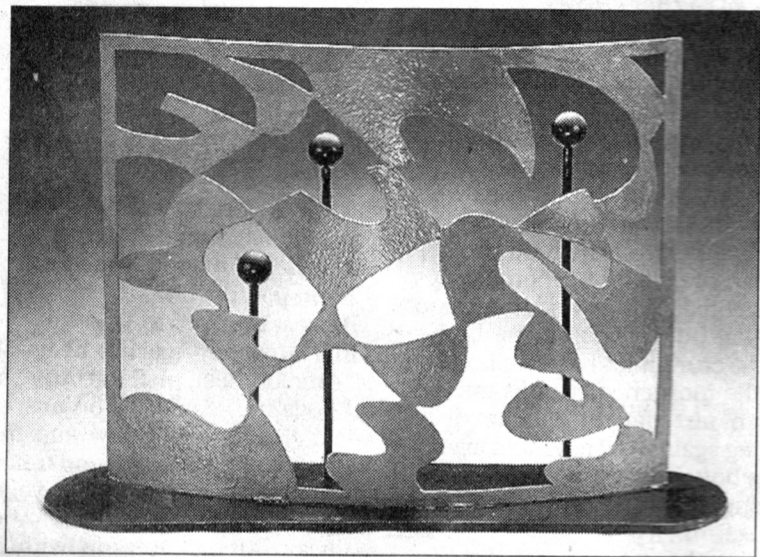
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## GOOD VIBRATIONS ON CANVAS, IN STEEL



By Pat Rogers

For Springs artist Stephen Loschen, it's been an interesting process of self-discovery. Becoming an artist was not on his mind when he hitchhiked his way from Bellmore to Montauk in 1977 to meet up with a friend in the small fishing community—he was only looking for a change of scenery as part of his search for a new life.

What Mr. Loschen found at the eastern tip of the South Fork was a passion for creating art on canvas or with steel. Completely self-taught, Mr. Loschen was inspired by several abstract painters whom he met while he was working as a bartender. He received training on his way to working with steel through apprenticeships with well-known sculptors. And, slowly but surely, Mr. Loschen's passion and talent for creating bold and eye-catching pieces revealed itself.

"I've always painted, but I didn't really believe that I could do this, be an artist," Mr. Loschen said in an interview before a series of new sculptures was unveiled in his 11th group show at Ashawagh Hall in East Hampton on Saturday.

"My paintings have always been abstract, but I didn't know that you could be an abstract artist until I met Willem De Kooning at his studio in Springs in 1990," Mr. Loschen said. "I had been painting for years and started doing some sculpture, but I didn't know that it was really all right until I met him and saw his work. And then I knew that the kind of art I was doing was okay."

Add to the mix the validation that he received through visits to the studios of abstract painters Larry Zox and Dan Christenson and his artistic destiny seemed to be assured. The works created by Mr. Loschen are much more than the "okay" he genuinely understated; and yet it appears that he is just beginning to feel comfortable in his own skin in the role of an artist.

Mr. Loschen's paintings, as viewed in his Springs studio, are full of life, fun and exuberance. A purely abstract artist, Mr. Loschen favors bright and bold primary colors and covers his canvases with eye-catching interlocking shapes. His paintings are somewhat reminiscent of the works of pop artist Keith Haring, but different in the way the canvas is completely consumed by the free-form shapes.

"I'm a subconscious painter," Mr. Loschen said. "I overlap the canvas with spray and paint and the shapes begin to take their forms. If you look around at my paintings, you'll see repeated shapes and forms. I didn't plan it that way. It just happens. I overlap and overlap and the shapes appear. And I pull out the shapes that appear on the canvas."

Mr. Loschen and the late Keith Haring are similar in that they both could be classified as Pop artists. And Mr. Loschen's work, like Haring's, has a whimsical, happy feel that seems to scream, "I'm alive and I like it," from the six and eight-foot-wide canvases the artist favors.

"I like to work big," Mr. Loschen said. "It suits me and how I like to paint. I like primary

colors and I like happy paintings.

There's nothing wrong with paintings that show sad times or horrible things, but I don't want to paint them in my studio. Life can be rough enough. I like paintings that make me feel good."

In Mr. Loschen's paintings and painted steel sculptures, there seems to be a close correlation between the two mediums. On the canvas, Mr. Loschen creates his strong shapes primarily through the use of his color choices. In steel, free-form shapes filled with the open air are created by lines formed in steel.

Mr. Loschen has six sculptures on view in a group show currently underway at Ashawagh Hall in East Hampton. Grid 1/2000 and Grid 2/2000 both have a basic black vertical grid as their starting point. Each sculpture also makes use of bold lines that end in dual circular shapes. The black steel lines seem to extend from the controlled grid and the uniform spaces in between as if to reach for the life that surrounds it and to create large pockets of free-form shapes around the grid.

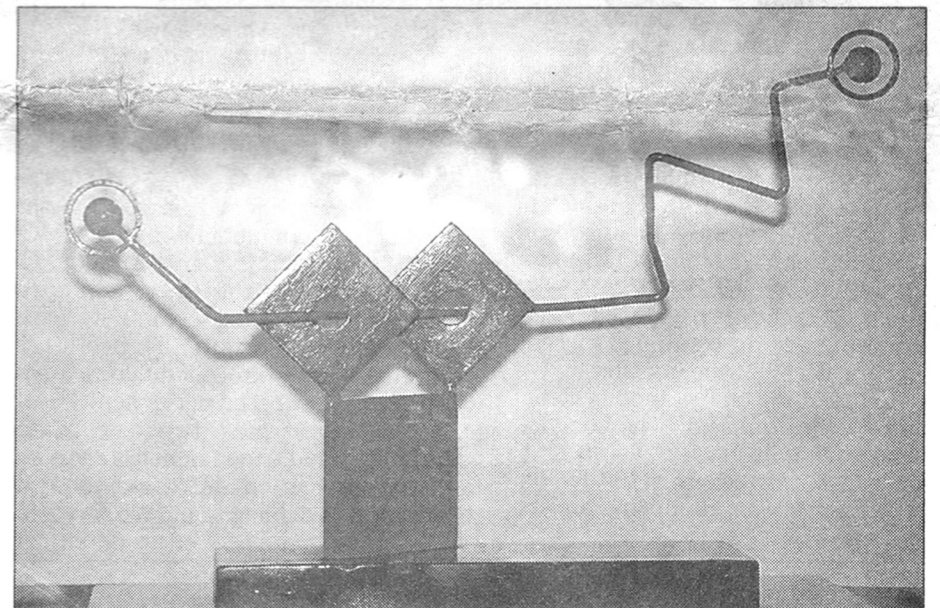
Another work, "Hello Dali!" relies on singular shapes painted in primary colors, as does the sculpture "Horizontal Blues." The forms used in "Frozen in Time" are painted a quiet, light gray, giving the piece a haunting quality. "Turn Out" is predominantly composed of black circular patterns, with a solitary red shape running through it.

*Stephen Loschen's work seems to scream, 'I'm alive and I like it!'*

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From left, above, an untitled sculpture by Stephen Loschen; Mr. Loschen in front of one of his paintings; "Short Circuit"; and, below, "Horizontal Blues."

BY PAT ROGERS



## VIBRATIONS: On Canvas, in Steel, Loschen's Art Makes a Joyful Noise

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Mr. Loschen said that his latest series of sculptures represents an evolution in his work in that the surfaces are more polished, complete with a finished sheen, while his other creations have a rougher finish. Each of his painted steel sculptures in the studio clearly bears Mr. Loschen's mark and is stylistically similar to the works in the exhibition.

But while the works at Ashawagh Hall seem to have been created with a surer hand than his earlier works, those in his studio appear more delicate in their use of lines and color. Many of the sculptures are painted in subdued tones, such as a coppery orange or a quiet shade of leaf green. They also rely on strong lines, whether they are rounded, curly-cued or piercingly straight.

In addition, Mr. Loschen has two large sculptures located on the grounds of the Gansett Green Manor, an Amagansett inn. He said

that most of the sculptures he has in his studio are models for works he would like to create on a larger scale, like the works of his mentors.

He recalled that he was first introduced to the world of sculpture in 1981 when he worked for one year for the well-known sculptor William Tarr, who is best known for his cube-like tribute to Martin Luther King Jr., which is located in Manhattan. In 1992, he began apprenticing with sculptor Elizabeth Strong-Cuevas. He began creating his own sculptures in 1993.

"I've always worked with my hands," Mr. Loschen said of a varied background that includes carpentry, plumbing, commercial painting, landscaping and bartending. "Then I worked with Bill Tarr, who showed me how to weld. I'm a hands-on kind of person. That's how I learn best. Bill Tarr opened the door for me into sculpting. Elizabeth Strong-Cuevas has taught me an enormous amount. I owe a lot to her."

Mr. Loschen has also apprenticed with a number of sculptors who work in Abrahamsville, Pennsylvania, whom he described as successful, but not known on Long Island. Mr. Loschen moved from Montauk to East Hampton in 1980.

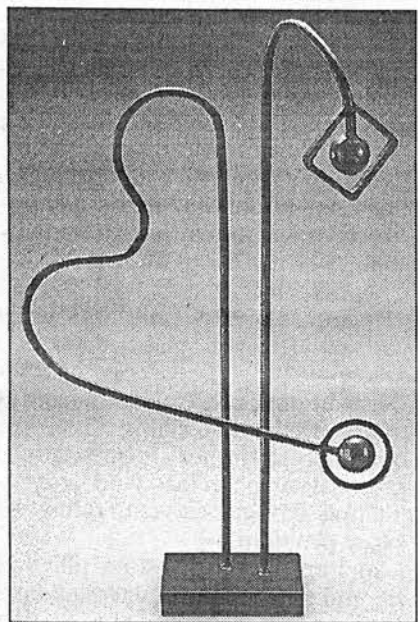
Mr. Loschen started participating in group shows at Ashawagh Hall in East Hampton in 1985. He has also shown his work at the Artscapes Garden Sculpture Show and at Cyril's Restaurant in East Hampton and is currently working on a series of six large sculptures entitled "The Metallic Herb Garden," which will be placed along Montauk Highway in Napeague next summer. His collectors include Lisa De Kooning and Stephan Susskind.

Mr. Loschen's studio is open by appointment only; he can be reached at 267-1073. The exhibition at Ashawagh Hall on Springs Fireplace Road in Springs, East Hampton, runs through September 24.



Stephen Loschen's "Turn Out" is on view at Ashawagh Hall.

PAT ROGERS



An untitled sculpture by Stephen Loschen.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY ARTIST