



IT IS ONE THING TO TWIST, BEND AND TRAIN a material as heavy as metal to adopt nature's organic flow, but to do so with the lightness of satin streamers, THAT is either showing off or is pure genius. Having achieved the monumental unions of fortitude and delicacy and industrial and warmth, a selection of largescale sculptures scattered throughout the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens move tease the audience with arabesque postures, bows and turns.

Is it a bird, a cobra or a vine? Against the lush green landscape, the smooth, polished surface of “Zia” plays out beautifully. Palms, clouds and fragments of sky take turns at colonizing its reflective silver façade. Before our eyes, the 15-foottall stainless-steel body tries on a familiar subtropical print. It suits it too. The rusted base grounds its modern attitude and stops it short of being sterile. After all, sculptor Gino Miles wants his enigmatic creations to feel free and alive.

“Over the past 12 years, it has become my life’s work to blend the inorganic hardness of metal to look as if it has naturally grown that way,” said Mr. Miles, who has spent 45 years perfecting the graceful minimalism and clean execution on view through May 12.



TOP: “Grace,” by Gino Miles, at the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens in West Palm Beach. BOTTOM: “Splendor,” by Gino Miles, also at the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens. COURTESY PHOTOS

“Contours in Metal: Sculpture by Gino Miles” represents three periods of an artistic career obsessed with nature and plant-life cycles. The conceived shapes on display, many of which resemble knots and climbing stems, deliver a sense of fluidity and playfulness seldom associated with the seriousness of steel and bronze. On more than one occasion, a continuous metal ribbon embraces the figure’s core, wraps itself around it and does a little dance that may culminate in chunky

chooses to take — whether it goes in or out of itself — is far from random. It is a pure demonstration of self-love in a bronze piece titled “Grace,” which sits immediately to the right upon exiting the indoor galleries. The figure stands 38 inches tall and features the weaving pattern and seamless form that characterize the Santa Fe-based sculptor’s body of work.



Stretching 100 inches, the steel frame of “Aja” extends a freer, more abstract interpretation. Its long swan-like neck rivals the swinging palms nearby. One section opens us wide and shields its underbelly as if it were protecting chicks. Nothing is wasted here. There is no excess of material or curves. The piece, named after the favorite song of a friend, is inspired by an old cedar tree trunk Mr. Miles found on his property. The stump sprouted a new growth following multiples rains and winter snows.

While pieces of this magnitude are increasingly outsourced, his sculptures are fabricated by hand. By his own admission, the sculptor “micromanages” a team charged with various manual tasks such as grinding, sanding and polishing.

“I don’t really have a ritual. I’ll go in the studio in the morning and start laying out a piece, and the design just kind of flows out,” said Mr. Miles. “I do consume a lot of tequila and sometimes it does help.”

in the know  

‘Contours in Metal: Sculpture by Gino Miles’

- >> **When:** Through May 12.
- >> **Where:** Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens, 253 Barcelona Road, West Palm Beach.
- >> **Cost:** Free for members, \$15 for nonmember adults, \$10 for seniors (age 65 and older), \$7 for students, and children under 5 are free.
- >> **Info:** www.ansg.org or 561-832-5328.

Whatever his approach, it has paid off. Many of his works are in permanent and private collections throughout Europe and in Palm Beach, Dubai, Brazil and Guatemala. The Colorado-born sculptor, who lived in Italy for a decade before settling in New Mexico, first became interested in painting and sculpture in the early 1970s at the University of Northern Colorado. Constantin Brancusi, Marino Marini and other European masters figure among his influences.

Whether it’s modern steel or the more classical-looking bronze, Mr. Miles favors materials that interact with their surroundings, which is

why a 360° walk around the works is a must. One sculpture offers multiple views and triggers various associations depending on the angle from which it is perceived and where the sunlight lands. Witnessing this changeable flexible attitude on a static actor such as metal presents a visual contradiction. Adding to the perception game is the viewers' reflection, which inevitably gets caught here and there by virtue of observing. Incidentally, the human cameo appearances symbolize the sculptor's intended message.

“What I hope people take away from the show is that it is possible for one person to affect the environment and create beauty. We should never give up. We should always keep trying,” said Mr. Miles. “People see the effort put into art and that's what is inspiring.” †



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