



Photo by Jeb Wallace-Brodeur

Sculptor Kate Pond slices through a plate of steel with a plasma cutter in her Williston studio. The technical aspects of her massive projects, designed for public spaces around the world, often require her to consult with engineers and mathematicians.

The art of place

Vermont sculptor's works of steel and concrete dot the globe

By SALLY JOHNSON

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WILLISTON — To say that Kate Pond's art has a sense of place is to miss the point. Most of Pond's sculptures — massive, weighty structures fashioned of concrete, wood or her main medium, steel — are all about place, right down to the most minute details.

For instance, the sculpture Pond created for the Highgate Springs border crossing between Vermont and Canada, unveiled in a ceremony in mid-October, is, on one level, a personal tribute. The piece is dedicated to her friend, fellow sculptor Judith Brown, who died five years ago of breast cancer. But more than that, "SUNFIX for Judy" is a creature of place in every respect.

"The piece sits very near the 45th parallel of latitude, and it's constructed at 45-degree angles," Pond explains, her fingers stroking the glossy photos in the brochure published for the sculpture's installation. "At the equinox, the sun comes down at a 45-degree angle, and it passes directly through the hole in the center of SUNFIX. The sunspot thrown by the sun exactly matches the ellipse of black marble set into the ground on the north side of the piece. If you follow the sightline from the top, it points directly at the North Star."

It is almost accurate to say that Pond is from the Canadian border. Although she was born in Maine 59 years ago, five generations of her family have come from East Berkshire and the surrounding area. A thin, serious woman with long gray hair and a weathered face, Pond

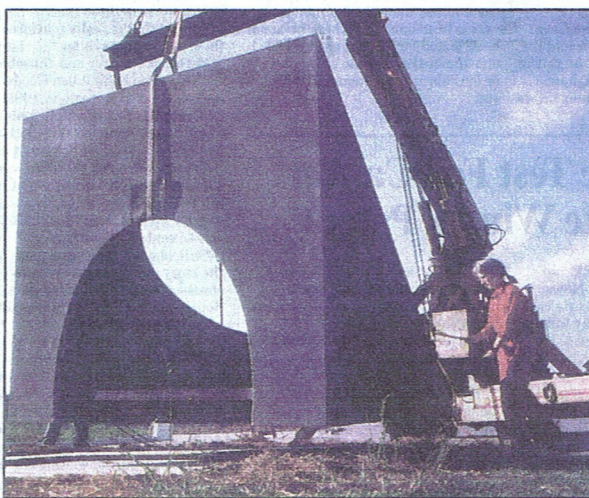


Photo by Fred Stetson

Kate Pond oversees the installation of her sculpture, "SUNFIX for Judy," at the U.S. Border Crossing in Highgate Springs.

Fred Stetson, a writer.

Her work, however, has enormous reach, taking her to places as near as Quebec and as far as Norway. She calls it the "World Sculpture Project," an incorporation of her own sculpture and the art produced by schoolchildren during Pond's 10 years as an artist-in-residence in pri-

Oslo, Norway (1996); Honolulu, Hawaii (1998); Sendai, Japan (1998); and Queensland, Australia (2000)."

In Oslo, for example, Pond won a grant to put a hollow, concrete cone outside the Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology. The sculpture, called "Solekko," has a steel time capsule bolted to the top, filled with small clay figures and postcards from children in Vermont, Quebec and Norway. The cone is constructed at a 53-degree angle, the exact angle of the sun at noon on the summer solstice. At that hour exactly, "Solekko" does not cast any shadow. "The kids and I watched it together," says Pond. "It worked."

The technical challenges presented by Pond's projects can be daunting, to say the least. It is one thing to go after a piece of wood with a saw or a piece of stone with a hammer and chisel. It is another to tackle structures so large that it takes a crane to move them.

Enter the S.T. Griswold Co., a concrete firm in Williston, and its president, Doug Griswold, who has been Pond's patron since 1972, when she first moved into a studio at the far corner of the Griswold complex.

Doug Griswold is a key player in the collaborative effort that takes Pond's ideas from concept to finished sculpture — a man with "an amazingly creative, innovative mind," says Pond. The other members of the team include Mel Doherty, a structural engineer with a detailed knowledge of sundials, and Jim Rader, a mathematician who uses his computer to make the angles and measurements come out right. Rader also is

"The World Sculpture Project connects people, places and time. At sites around the world, sun-aligned sculptures house time capsules filled with the artworks of local school children and their counterparts from other host site countries. Each site-specific sculpture marks an Equinox or Solstice and is the focal point of sea-