

LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS...AND MORE! THE SCULPTURE OF DENIS CURTISS

Joyful is the word most heard as visitors move around the outdoor sculpture garden of Denis Curtiss. *Eden* is another one. The acres surround this Connecticut native's working studio dances and prances with life-size sculpture that belie the sturdiness of 12 gauge steel that makes them durable outdoor works of art. You can almost hear drivers passing the display as they travel scenic Route 7 three miles north of Kent saying, "Giraffes! Elephants! A pyramid of gymnasts!" They hit the brakes to see if they might be hallucinating, and if Denis is working he will wave them in. As cheerful as the work he creates, Denis welcomes visitors to stroll the gardens or to come into the studio to see works in progress.

Denis has been a prolific, energized sculptor since his days in the college art department. A certificate in mechanical drawing grounded him in line and perspective. An apprenticeship in antiques restoration honed his expertise with wood and patinas. Perhaps the greatest influence to his style is the twenty years he spent working and studying around the world. It began with two years in the Peace Corps. In Fiji he lived among craftsmen and artists whose approach to creativity jolted classically trained Denis into a new way of seeing and doing. After that, his artistic receptors absorbed techniques and styles as he taught and learned about art in Africa, the Middle East, the Far East, and four years of living at the base of Mt. Pentelikon in Greece.

When he returned to northwest Connecticut in 1993, Denis gathered all those experiences and worked through them until he reached the sculpture form and material that has become his unique style. It has been dubbed "triaxial construction" seamlessly welded in steel or bronze, into deceptively light and lively dancers, gymnasts, wild and domestic animals. These delightful pieces have attracted collectors around the country. Because their liveliness interacts so well together, it is usual for buyers to return for a second or third piece to adorn their landscape. Singer and art collector Andy Williams came back many times for a total of 24 pieces!

You can see some of Denis's work on his website, on the grounds of the Interlaken Inn in Lakeville CT, and at Sculpturedale, his studio in Kent, adjacent to Kent Falls State Park.