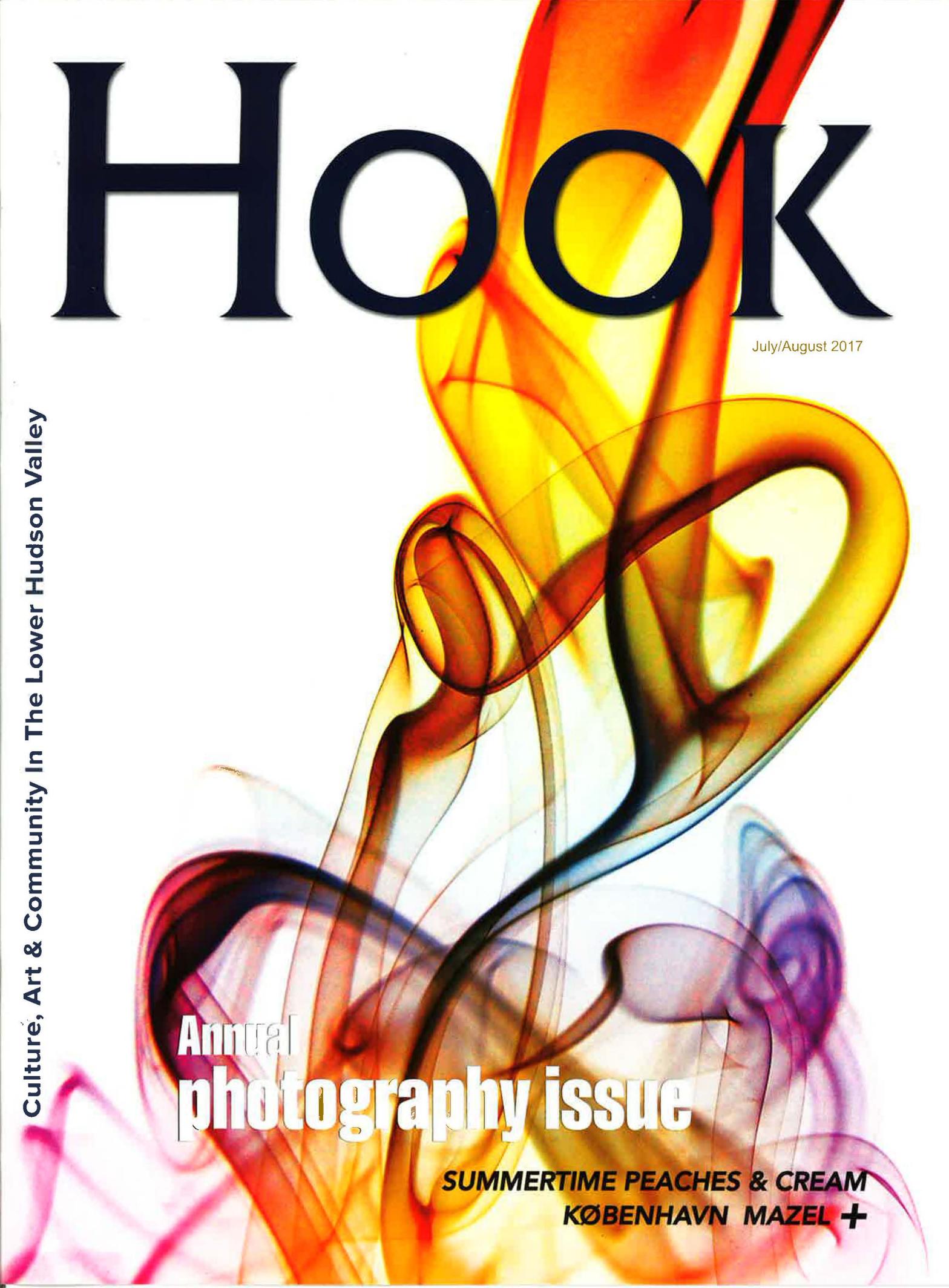


HOOK



July/August 2017

Culture, Art & Community In The Lower Hudson Valley

Annual
photography issue

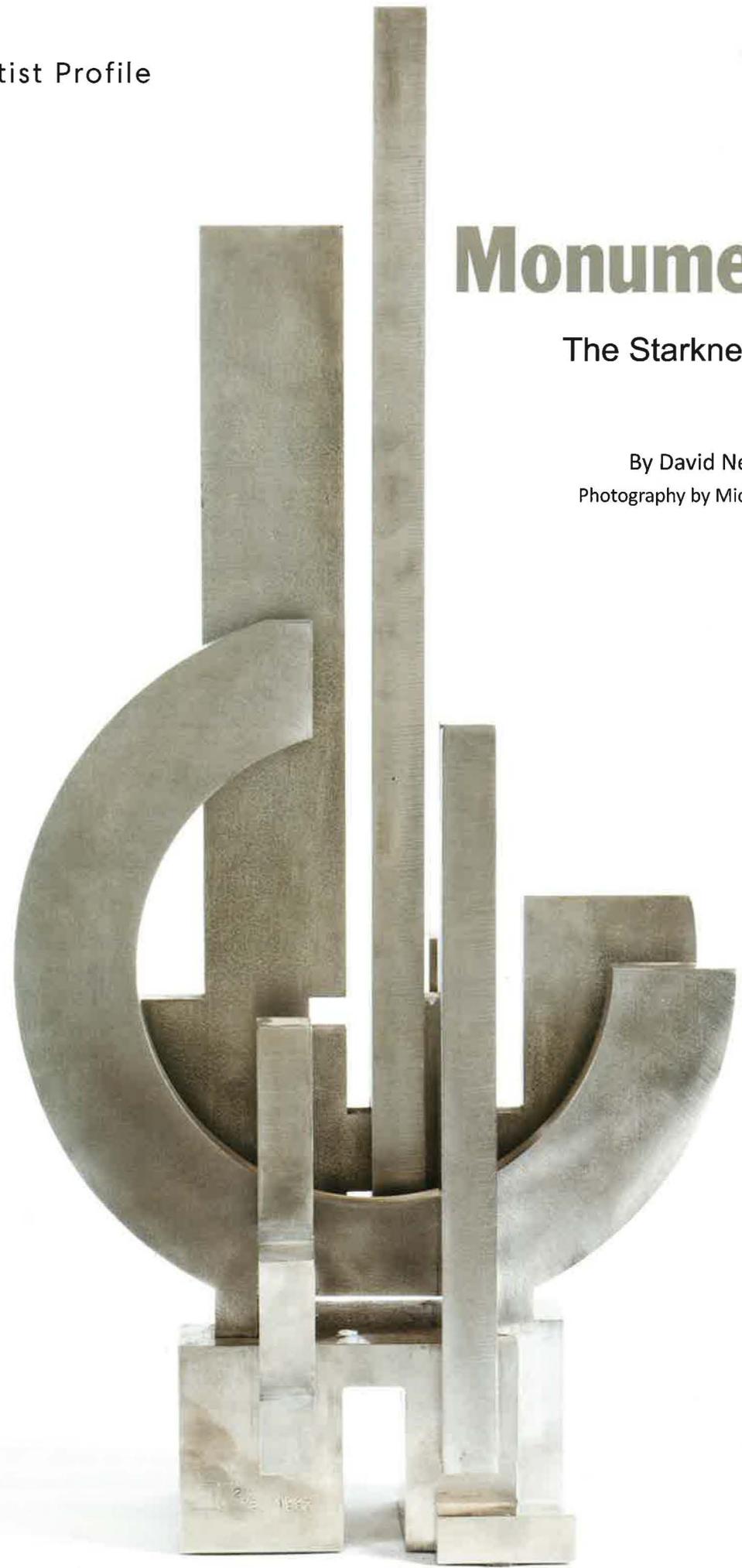
SUMMERTIME PEACHES & CREAM
KØBENHAVN MAZEL +

Monumental Art

The Starkness Is Striking

By David Neilsen

Photography by Michael Mundy



The large CorTen and stainless-steel structures vary in height and shape, but they are all connected by the same themes. They are ordered. They are architectural. They are minimalist, yet on a far-from

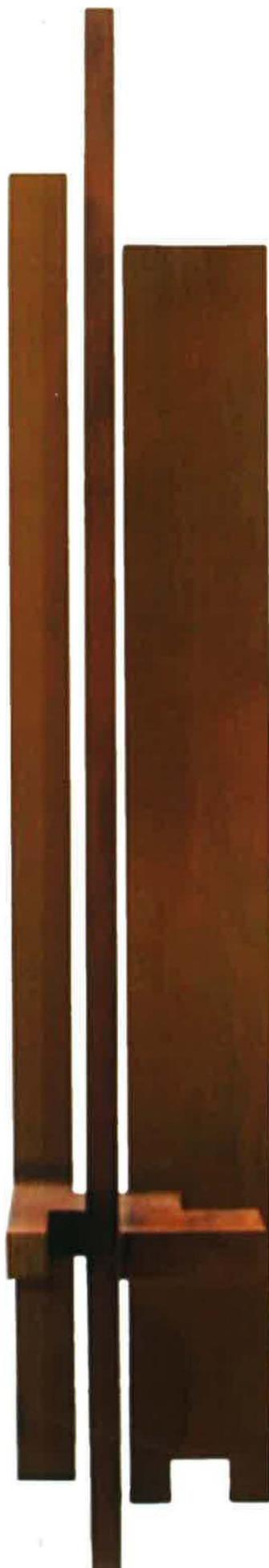
minimal scale. They are the monumental sculptures of French Sculptor Marino di Teana (1920-2012), and they are a sight to behold.

“What I love about the work of [di Teana] is that he always conceived of things on a small scale, like the size of this,” says Benoist F. Drut, holding his thumb and forefinger a couple of inches apart. “Then they would grow. From that little sculpture it could evolve into something for a table, or it could evolve into a monumental piece. He would study the work on a small scale, and then he would do a bigger scale.”

Drut is Gallery Principal of Maison Gerard, an art gallery in New York City. Curating an exhibit of his fellow countryman’s work has proven a joy beyond his expectations. “I love monumental sculpture,” he says. “But for me to create an exhibit, I need to have a connection [to the art] that can translate into not sleeping all night because ‘Oh my God I have to have it.’ When I saw [di Teana’s] work, I immediately, selfishly, thought it would be perfect for me. I love these shapes.”

Each sculpture is a combination of lines, angles, and arcs all connected in a precise, orderly manner. “In a sculpture like *Liberté*, you can really appreciate the layers and layers of the piece,” he says, referring to a seven-foot-tall sculpture included in the exhibition. “You see the depth, how you have an arch which is brilliant on its own level, then more in front, more in back. It’s really complex, and yet when you look at it, it looks effortless.”

In true Marino di Teana fashion, there are other versions of *Liberté* in existence ranging in size from just under three feet tall to one located at the Place Charles de Gaulle in Fontenay-sous-Bois, France, which towers an impressive sixty-nine feet above the



ground. Until recently, it was the largest steel sculpture in all of Europe.

He has many works in public places throughout France. As a trained architect, he received many commissions from official government entities. “He was the darling of



Photography by Matt Coats

Benoist F. Drut

the French Government,” explains Drut, “because you could order something—a sculpture for the town—and it would be delivered on time. The man would exactly know the physics, the size, nothing was left to chance.”

Eyeing his monumental sculptures, it is easy to see the architect within the artist. “Every sculpture, or most of them that we know of, were designed with the idea that one day [the design of the sculpture] could be a building,” says Drut. “Sometimes you will see a drawing of one of his sculptures and there are lines, and the lines correspond to different floors, some of which even have balconies.” As if to prove the architectural worth of his sculptures, di Teana would sometimes stage one of them as a fully-functioning building, sometimes placing little figures standing all around it, bringing it to life.

Di Teana’s life work has been kept alive by his son, Nicola. “He has basically dedicated his life to protecting the [warehouse] which houses all of his father’s work,” says Drut. “It’s also attached to the house where di Teana lived.” Drut walked the corridors of the warehouse, located some 45 minutes

“In a sculpture like Liberté, you can really appreciate the layers and layers of the piece.”



Upcoming show.
Maison Gerald will be
presenting the work of
Marino di Teana at the new
to open the “7 Lakes Club”
in Sloatsburg, NY
in the Fall.

outside of Paris, and together Drut and Nicola selected pieces for this exhibit, which will be the first solo exhibition of Marino di Teana's work in the United States.

An exhibition of this magnitude would overwhelm a traditional gallery space. Drut expects to exhibit somewhere between twenty and twenty-five pieces, many of them over six feet tall. Well aware of this, Maison Gerard is presenting the exhibition not at one of their galleries in the city, but off-site on the grounds of the historic Grosvenor Atterbury Mansion in Southampton. Some of the pieces will be set inside the mansion, and others within the landscaped gardens of the estate.

"A friend of mine who is a landscape designer has taken over the grounds with the blessing of [the owner]," explains a very excited Drut. "She moved

trucks and trucks of grass and planted 15,400 plants. Once you drop your car off, you will arrive in a sinuous way with flowers going from white to red, interrupted by a fountain in the middle. Then you will arrive at what I call the esplanade, which is a field with seven of the monumental sculptures, the tallest being eleven or twelve feet. There's no path. No proper way to discover [the exhibit]."

The show will run from July 22th to August 26th, after which, Drut plans to bring it north. "We've not yet finalized everything, but it's going [to Rockland County]," he insists. He is in discussions with locations in and around Sloatsburg and Tuxedo Park. "Tuxedo Park is really an amazing area. It is so insane, so beautiful. It's really very special, and I think by default it's going to be really dreamy, the perfect setting for these pieces.

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