



HIDDEN  
COLLECTION

BY PETER TRIPPI

# SEVEN BRIDGES

## A MECCA FOR CONTEMPORARY REALISM, AND MORE

**S**even Bridges is a compelling destination for lovers of contemporary art, especially realism, and also of natural scenery. Leafy Greenwich, Connecticut — 35 miles northeast of New York City — is renowned for its wealth and cultural sophistication, yet not enough people realize they can make a free appointment to visit this private foundation between April and October.

This hidden gem is the brainchild of its founder and chairman, Richard C. McKenzie, Jr. Born and raised in Washington, D.C., he spends his time between Connecticut and California. McKenzie is a successful financier who began to sculpt his own large-scale geometric abstractions relatively late in life. He says that the primary mission of Seven Bridges is “motivating and inspiring all, regardless of age, to enjoy the boundless satisfaction that emanates from viewing and creating art.” This objective is achieved in various ways. First, Seven Bridges buys pieces by living artists so they can keep making art full-time, a matter



Gallery 2 seen from outside; at center are three of Richard McKenzie's own abstract sculptures.



STEVEN ASSAEL (b. 1957), *Preparation of the Bride*, 1994, oil on canvas, 96 x 108 in.



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**BO BARTLETT** (b. 1955), *A New Beginning*, 2008,  
oil on canvas, 96 x 50 in.

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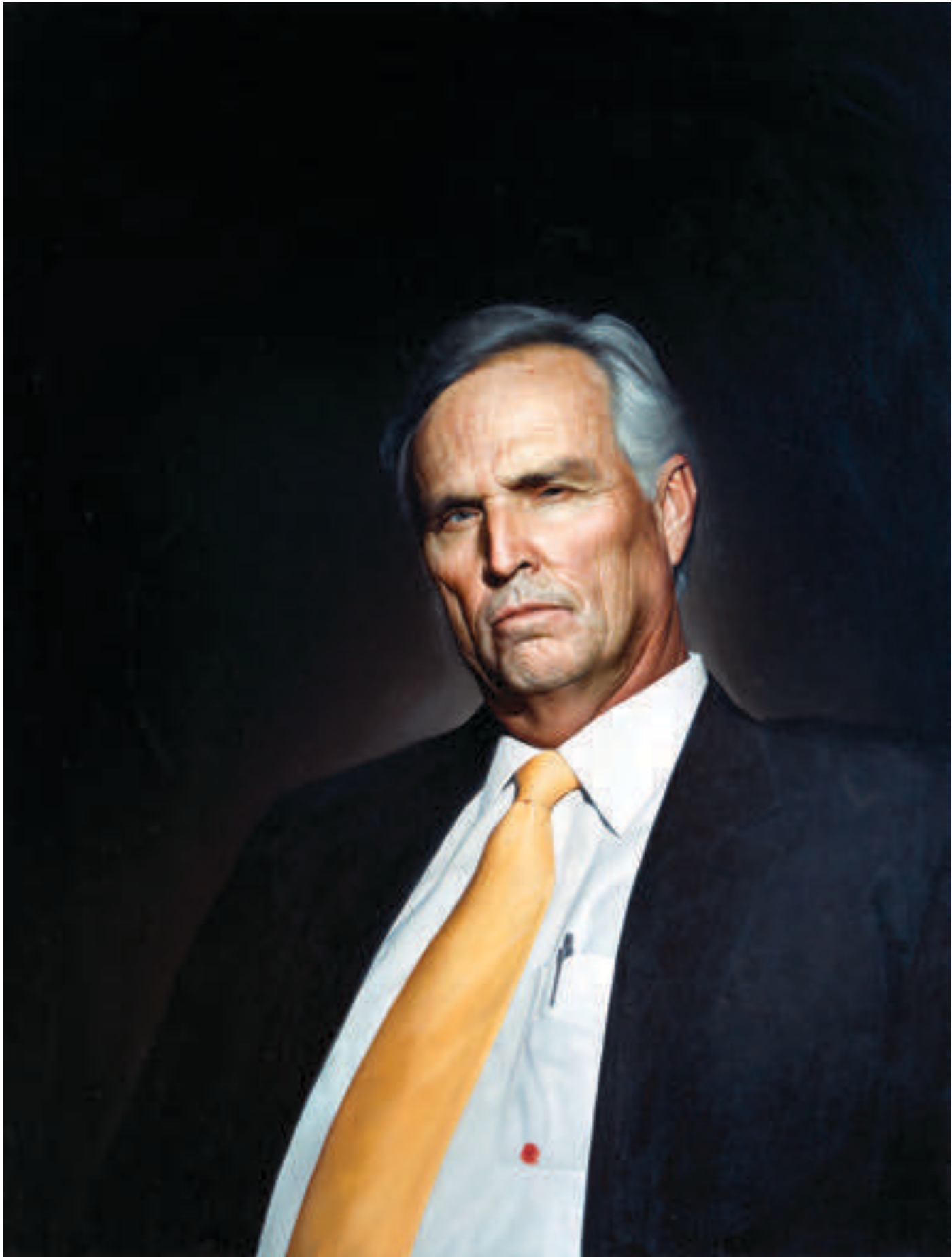
**CARL DOBSKY** (b. 1972), *The Ship of Fools*, 2015, oil on linen, 72 x 108 in.



**PAUL FENNIK** (b. 1965), *Birthday*, 2005, oil on canvas, 48 x 60 in.

particularly urgent for those working in bronze and glass, where the costs of casting are extremely high. Second, McKenzie commissions works from artists he admires, sometimes entering into what is almost a collaboration with them. Third, Seven Bridges displays much of its holdings in two gallery buildings on the Greenwich property and throughout its sculpture gardens.

Considering how geographically close Seven Bridges is to major urban centers, its 80-acre setting is unexpectedly bucolic. At its heart is a large lake, and its hilly, rocky terrain is spanned by — no surprise — seven bridges that allow visitors to walk through it with ease. This sylvan locale is an ideal place to encounter large contemporary sculptures in natural light — there are currently more than 150 of them sited on the property. The two gallery buildings are larger than they appear, encompassing a combined area of roughly 30,000 square feet. Gallery One (“G1”) is an Adirondack lodge-style building inaugurated in 1998. Gallery Two (“G2”) opened in 2012, somewhat later than planned because it had caught fire in January 2010 while being constructed. Architect Laura Kaehler devised a sleek structure that deftly integrates artworks, natural light, and the landscape





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**LINDEN FREDERICK** (b. 1953), *Three Houses*, 2002, oil on linen, 50 1/4 x 50 1/2 in.

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(OPPOSITE PAGE) **BRYAN DRURY** (b. 1980), *Vic*, 2012, oil on wood, 36 x 28 in.

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(ABOVE) RALPH GOINGS (b. 1928), *A1 Sauce*, 1995, oil on canvas, 28 x 38 in. ■ (AT RIGHT) F. SCOTT HESS (b. 1955), *The Architect*, 2000, oil on canvas, 48 x 64 in.





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CHERYL KELLEY (b. 1968), *Orange Cadillac*, 2012, oil on aluminum panel, 36 x 48 in.

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KAREN LAMONTE (b. 1967), *Young Maiko*, 2010, bronze and lead, 38 1/2 x 20 1/2 x 16 1/2 in.



JOSEPH MCNAMARA (b. 1950), *Steam Engine 3750*, 2012, oil and alkyd on panel, 96 x 60 in.



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**RICHARD MAURY** (b. 1935), *Closer*, 2003, oil on linen  
mounted on panel, 27 1/2 x 24 3/8 in.

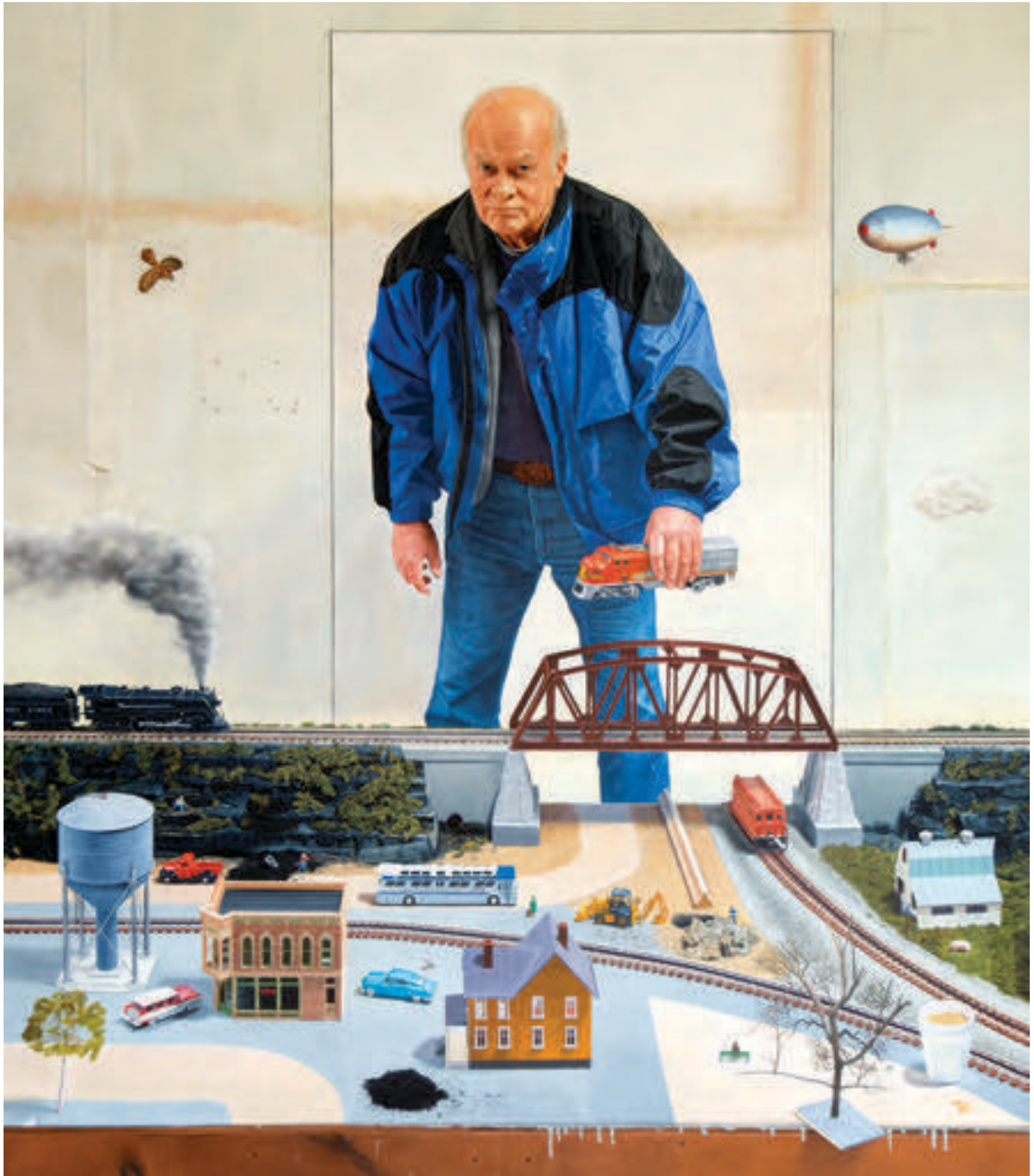
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NELSON SHANKS (b. 1937), *Mandolin*, 2003, oil on canvas, 38 x 34 in.

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JAMES VALERIO (b. 1938), *Toys*, 2009, oil on canvas, 96 x 84 in.

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WILL WILSON (b. 1957), *Entr'acte*, 1997–98, oil on canvas, 40 x 34 in.



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MAX FERGUSON (b. 1959), *Popcorn*, 2016, oil on panel, 30 x 44 in.

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SEAN HENRY (b. 1965), *Standing Man*, 2000, painted bronze, 78 x 28 1/2 x 15 in.

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**ODD NERDRUM** (b. 1944), *Three Name Givers*, 1990, oil on canvas, 89 x 81 in.

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STONE ROBERTS (b. 1951), *Child with Flowers*, 1994–97, oil on canvas, 28 x 30 in.

visible all around through enormous plate-glass windows. More than 300 trees were planted around G2, carefully chosen for how they would relate to the building in size, shape, and coloring. Both buildings make the artworks inside look their best through savvy choices in wall color, placement, and lighting; the latter was especially challenging in G2 as the team installed the contemporary glass pieces Seven Bridges began acquiring in 2008.

#### THE COLLECTION

Today Seven Bridges holds works by more than 300 artists. Their names are too numerous to list here, of course, but several areas of strength can be highlighted. The paintings section is particularly rich in photorealism, cityscapes, and scenes of industrial and mechanical activity, be they construction sites, locomotives, automobiles, or cameras. McKenzie has formed an especially close friendship with Joseph McNamara, the New York painter well known for scenes of modern life. There are comparatively few “pure” landscapes, perhaps because the property all around is so scenic. Especially notable are the large figurative paintings with psychologically powerful, sometimes even astonishing, themes—for example, some of the largest and most striking works ever made by Steven Assael, Vincent Desiderio, Odd Nerdrum, and Will Wilson are here. Seven Bridges, in fact, holds the largest collection of Nerdrum’s art in America, a distinction that will grow in significance as this Norwegian artist (b. 1944) evolves into an Old Master for our times.

Among the many other master painters represented — often with numerous examples — are Bo Bartlett, William Beckman, Claudio Bravo, Robert Cottingham, Carl Dobsy, Bryan Drury, Paul Fenniak, Max Ferguson, William Fisk, Linden Frederick, Greg Gandy, Ralph Goings, Raymond Han, F. Scott Hess, David Kas-

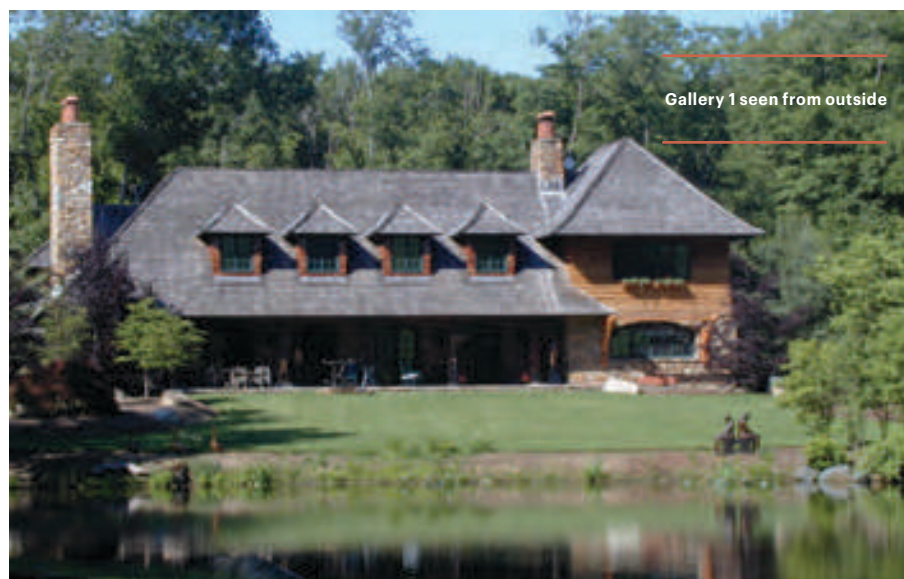
san, Cheryl Kelley, David Ligare, Richard Maury, Catherine Murphy, Stone Roberts, Nelson Shanks, Burton Silverman, Daniel Sprick, and James Valerio.

As noted above, sculpture is highly visible at Seven Bridges, and not only outdoors. Among the representational sculptors are Nicolas Africano, Hanneke Beaumont, Paul Day, Barry Flanagan, Eric Goulder, Sean Henry, and Francisco Zuñiga. A highlight of G1 is one of the collection’s few historical works — Auguste Rodin’s seven-foot-high bronze *Jean de Fiennes*, acquired in 2000 and arguably the most memorable figure in the master’s renowned *Burghers of Calais* group. Not all of the glass works are abstract, by the way. A particular standout is Karen LaMonte, who casts ethereally beautiful figures in both translucent glass and bronze.

Seven Bridges has been evolving since 1993, when McKenzie began reshaping this 80-acre tract of undeveloped “Backcountry” into a coherent estate. He started with several dozen paintings, including ones by Will Wilson, Robert Cottingham, and Odd Nerdrum, as well as half a dozen sculptures by Paul Suttman. McKenzie has worked closely with several important dealers, among them John Pence (San Francisco), Schantz Galleries (Stockbridge, MA), Bernarducci Gallery (New York City), and David Austin (Palm Desert, CA); the latter was crucial in guiding acquisitions of glass, even organizing a buying trip to Prague, which remains a key center of glassmaking.

The fruits of their efforts can be enjoyed by visiting the foundation’s website ([sevenbridges.org](http://sevenbridges.org)), and a fascinating DVD film about the collection and site can be obtained by e-mailing business manager Linda M. Williams at [info@sevenbridges.org](mailto:info@sevenbridges.org). Coming up this season at Seven Bridges are talks by Will Wilson (July 19) and Richard McKenzie himself in September (date to be confirmed). I look forward to seeing you there. ●

PETER TRIPPI is editor-in-chief of *Fine Art Connoisseur*.



Gallery 1 seen from outside