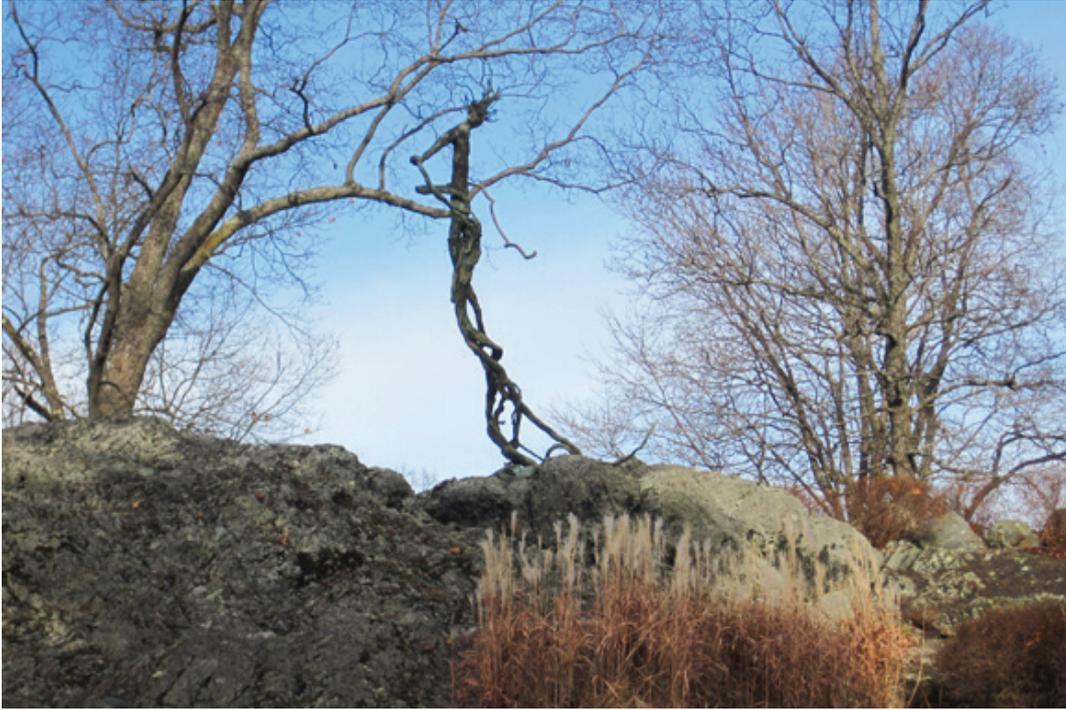


Richard Rosenblum



Richard Rosenblum, *Venusvine*, 1990
bronze, 16' x 5' 6"
deCordova Permanent Collection 1996.77, Anonymous Gift

George Hagerty, former studio assistant **Working with Vines**

He was trained figuratively and he was a figurative artist right to the end. The figure or some sort of representational narrative was always the starting point. He wasn't an abstract artist per se. When I arrived to work with him in the late 80's, he had embarked on a series of pieces that were made from found or collected wood forms. He has a piece up in the collection of the Addison Gallery at Phillips Andover, which was really this sort of set piece of this new or developing series of natural forms and it was made from a fallen-over oak tree. And from underneath the entire root system, he saw an entire figure of a man, and it worked with the studio assistant at that time to create the image, or finish the image of a figure out of what was normally just a tangle of roots. And *Venusvine* is very much in those veins, and we began by assembling segments of an extraordinarily large wisteria vine that was in the neighborhood that had fallen down. And the working process was to simply to try many, many different arrangements to get some sort of a spark of a figure happening with this just really series of twisted vines.

George Hagerty, former studio assistant **"Flipping"**

When I went to see if I was interested in this job and see who Richard Rosenblum was, he toured me through the studio, and he toured me through the house, and he took me somewhere in the living room and showed me a particular framed piece.

And it was an illustration by Charles Allan Gilbert, called *All Is Vanity*. It's a picture of a woman sitting at her dressing table combing her hair, and the mirror and the dressing table, and the fixings on the table are also suggestive of a grinning skull, and you see them simultaneously. He called it "flipping." It was the flipping back and forth. It wouldn't just stay on one side of the coin, it would always do both. And I think with pieces like *Venusvine* you still get that. You get this sense that, well that's a natural wisteria vine, it's not hanging on a tree per se, but it's just growing. And then you see this beautiful, dancing, spinning figure. And it keeps going in and out of those two realities. His aesthetic was to try and make those kinds of optical illusions and suggestive plays in three dimensions, which is certainly much harder in some senses than two dimensions.

George Hagerty, former studio assistant **Installing *Venusvine***

The piece is installed in a ledge outcropping. And ledge is extremely hard. Usually people have to blast it to remove it. We didn't want to change it much. We wanted the piece really to settle in and look as if it has inevitably grown there. We had to chip open a few areas just to give us enough location to anchor it. The piece is anchored I believe in only three locations with stainless steel threaded rod that come out of an armature that's integral that was installed inside during the casting process, so it's quite rigid and robust. And then we created a small concrete pad to level the piece out and epoxied it in place while it was hanging from a crane.

Michael Mazur, artist and friend **Rosenblum and Chinese Scholar Rocks**

I got a call from a sculptor friend and he said, "Go over and see Richard. He's doing very strange and interesting work." And I did, and what I found was that he was essentially playing with root sculptures. Now root sculptures have a long, long, long tradition in China and they had many of the elements which he had used in his figure sculpture, but in this case he essentially used what was available to him in a root, and he began a series essentially of clarifying, clearing out, and organizing these root images. But it wasn't really until another friend of his introduced him to Chinese rocks. And when Richard saw what was going on with Chinese rocks, he was completely taken over by what he found in them. And he became essentially obsessed by them. He stopped essentially making figurative sculpture in the traditional sense, and he began collecting this collection which you must know about, which become ultimately one of the largest international collections of these Chinese rocks.

Mystery Family Tour

You are looking at a sculpture by Richard Rosenblum called *Venusvine*. Listen and look carefully to see if you can figure out what this sculpture is made out of. What do you think this piece is made out of? At first I thought it was made out of wood, but when I got closer, I wasn't sure anymore. The piece is actually made out of a type of metal called bronze. It is amazing that the artist got metal to look so much like wood, bark, and vines. Let's use the path to walk around this sculpture and see it at

different angles. Wow! At some points during my walk, I can see a figure clearly, but at other angles, it simply looks like vines. Do you see this too as you walk around? The artist thought it was interesting that things in nature like trees and vines can sometimes look like people or figures. He created many sculptures that looked like vines *and* figures. Richard was particularly inspired by the way some vines are long and twisty and look like moving figures. He often felt that vines looked like they were dancing. Do you think that this piece looks like someone dancing? If this were a figure dancing, what kind of dance would they be doing? Try moving the way you think the figure would. As you walk around deCordova, see if you find trees or branches that look like something else.