

A MOMENT IN TIME WITH ROBERT ADZEMA

SUNDIALS

Story by Paul Clark



It was the dance of dust in sunlight that first and forever interested Robert Adzema in space defined by shadow and light. It's something we've all seen ourselves: Sharp shafts of sunlight streaming through curtains or blinds in a dimly lit room. Suddenly, things once hidden or unnoticed become the sole focus of that moment in time. Putting everything, literally, in a whole different light.



He was just a boy when he first absorbed that sight. And in that moment, a lifelong passion for light began.

Today, Robert Adzema is one of the most admired and accomplished abstract sundial sculptors in the Lower Hudson Valley. His smart, environmentally engaged designs are in place and working in several locations near his Palisades home and studio and in places throughout the New York/New Jersey area - and beyond.

One such design is just a few steps from his house. It's a quiet, thoughtful work of brass and steel affixed to the center of a tranquil manmade pond on the grounds of the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. Commissioned and built as a peaceful memorial to seven departed souls of people connected to the observatory, it faithfully tracks the movement of sun and shadow from dawn until dusk. Day after day. Season after season.



Above: Brooklyn Children's Museum - Analemmic sundial. Right: Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University - Equatorial sundial.

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Another is the striking, nine-foot-high sundial set close by the Suffern Library. A setting where anyone can approach, locate a simple mark cast in shadow, and personally experience their own moment in time.

Standing in his bright, sunny studio, surrounded by drawings, drafting instruments, and shelves and tables filled with meticulous scale models of works in progress and works long completed, he talked about the path that led him to the present day.

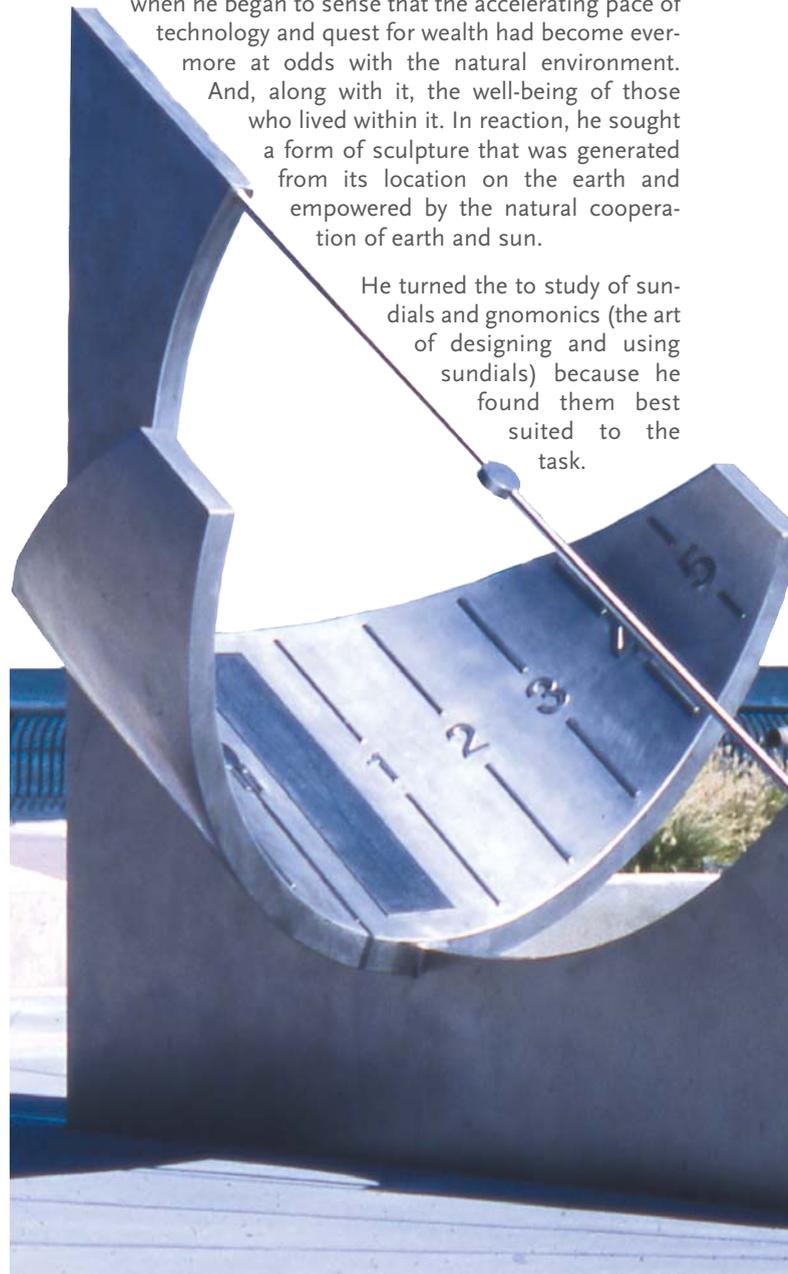
"It's funny how one thing leads to another," he mused. "As a kid I loved geometry. The way shapes and proportions worked together so precisely. It all made sense. I loved woodworking, too, because it enabled me to work with my hands and build things."

Later on, he studied industrial design at the Pratt Institute and went on to receive a Master of Fine Arts in Figurative Sculpture from Indiana University. He worked and taught after that, and developed an enthusiasm for architecture along the way.

His attraction to sundials took form in the early '70s when he began to sense that the accelerating pace of technology and quest for wealth had become evermore at odds with the natural environment.

And, along with it, the well-being of those who lived within it. In reaction, he sought a form of sculpture that was generated from its location on the earth and empowered by the natural cooperation of earth and sun.

He turned to the study of sundials and gnomonics (the art of designing and using sundials) because he found them best suited to the task.



"From a sculptor's point of view," he said of the time, "sundials provide a basic form and geometry on which to build. Solar time flows in a smooth movement of shadows from sunrise to sunset. This daily rhythm and the rhythmic changing light of the seasons became a powerful directive in my work."

Thus, his passion for light, together with an artistic amalgamation of sculpture, industrial design and time found contemporary expression in one of the most lasting and ancient examples of form and function.

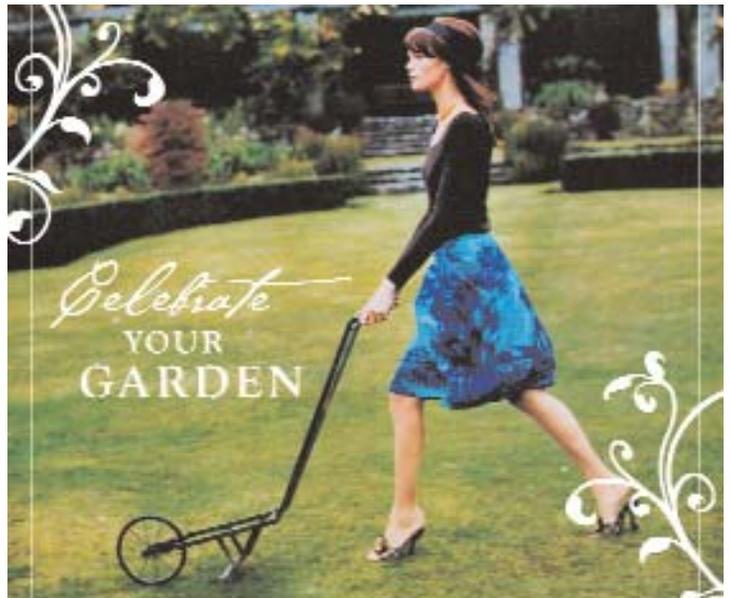
For 30 years now, Adzema has designed scores of sundials in different sizes, configurations and places. They are creations cast or fabricated in bronze, steel or stone, then assembled, positioned and set permanently in place for unwavering presence and accuracy. In addition to sundials in Palisades and Suffern, his mathematically precise designs are also captivating people in public and private spaces in Rockland, the boroughs of New York City, New Jersey, California and as far away as Maribor, Slovenia.

His work is included in several public collections and he recently submitted a large-scale sundial proposal for consideration in the World Trade Center Memorial. He also co-authored *The Great Sundial Cutout Book*, an illustrated guide to the art and science of sundials that includes several pages of diagrams for cutting out, constructing and placing functional scale-model sundials.

His passion has also found expression in the more spontaneous and free-flowing medium of watercolor. "For me," he said, "painting in watercolor provides a balance to the more exacting nature of my work with sundials. Besides it's also a nice way to rest my brain."

But it is a lifetime of fascination with the art and power of light, and its seamless transition to sundial sculpture that has - and always will - define Robert Adzema's many impressive moments in time. Moments that are seen and appreciated by everyone who stands before one of his creations, and feels that same art and power for themselves.

For more information about Robert's sundials, visit www.robertadzema.com. For more on the study, development, history and preservation of sundials, visit the official site of the North American Sundial Society at www.sundials.org.



Start planning your outdoor landscape now.

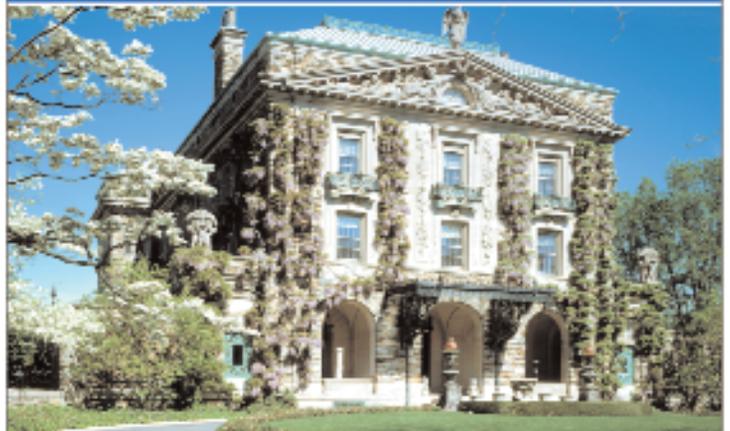
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