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**Sponsor Investment:** $2,500
It took three years and an estimated 4,000 tons of steel to construct the Tappan Zee Bridge, which opened to the public on Dec. 14, 1955. According to historical sources, the bridge was designed with a limitation that made it unable to transfer its weight in the event one of its supports failed. This was due to a steel shortage caused by the Korean War. In 2019, after 62 years of service (12 years longer than its life expectancy), the Tappan Zee’s eastern half was demolished, and the western half was lowered and carried away on a barge. But while the bridge is no more, a small percentage of its steel has been used in the sculptures being installed around its replacement, the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge.

Artists submitting project ideas for the new bridge’s art program were encouraged to incorporate steel from the old bridge, and three of the 10 commissioned artworks do just that.

"It was an interesting challenge, and it was great to be able to use it," says artist Thomas Lendvai, who normally works in wood. "I had to think outside of my comfort zone." His sculpture, "Untitled, For Imre Lendvai (dedicated to his father)," is made from 90% reclaimed Tappan Zee steel. It consists of seven graduated octagons, increasing from three-feet to nine-feet wide, slightly askew to each other, with congruent interior angle sides. The sculpture was fabricated in Mount Vernon and painted a terracotta red. Lendvai, who has done large-scale work before but not public sculpture, says his piece was designed to put the viewer in mind of an echo or ripples on the water, a fitting concept considering its permanent home on the Westchester side of the Hudson River.

"Using bridge steel got me to think of the sculpture as being more like a skeletal form," he says, as well as giving him ideas for future projects. "It will be exciting to see what comes after this one.

Artist Cheryl Wing-Zi Wong’s sculpture, "Current," contains Tappan Zee reclaimed steel, both in its base and at the top of its 12 arches, which range in size from four-feet six-inches to 12 feet. Wong’s piece includes light animations and responsive LED illumination. Wong’s piece can be found at the bridge’s Westchester Landing.

Artist Fitzhugh Karol says you can still see stamps from Bethlehem Steel on the old bridge plates that make up his sculpture, "Approach," as well as dings from more than six decades of hard use. But he, too, was tasked with coming up with creative ideas for the steel.

"I designed it as a solid form at first," Karol says, "but when I saw the perforated planks, I decided to use a different type of sheet in the best way for the form." Earth’s sculpture also contains pieces of the new bridge. While touring a temporary exhibit designed to illuminate its construction, Karol noticed large metal rings on display and asked the steel contractor if he could have them for his piece, and the response was immediate. "They took them out and said, ‘Great!’ So, they are any part of Approach. See it on the Rockland side of the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge.

Recycled Steel Gives a Nod to the Old Tappan Zee

by Michelle Falkenstein

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"As the cultural cornerstone of our county, ArtsWestchester’s ArtsNews helps me reach the business and cultural community," says Sherry Mayo, Director, Center for the Digital Arts Westchester Community College.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>Reservation Deadline</th>
<th>Content Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>January 8, 2021</td>
<td>January 15, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>February 5, 2021</td>
<td>February 12, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>March 5, 2021</td>
<td>March 12, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>April 9, 2021</td>
<td>April 16, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>May 7, 2021</td>
<td>May 14, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July/August</td>
<td>June 4, 2021</td>
<td>June 11, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>August 6, 2021</td>
<td>August 13, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>September 3, 2021</td>
<td>September 10, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>October 8, 2021</td>
<td>October 15, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December/January 2022</td>
<td>November 5, 2021</td>
<td>November 12, 2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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