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**Ronnie M. Ward  
Contributing Writer**

Contrary to popular belief, the large rocks with the mysterious markings in front of the Glickman Family Library are not an alien map guiding us to an unknown land. They are an installation piece, commissioned by Maine Percent for Art.

"Grid Stones," is the creation of Massachusetts artist David Phillips. The project represents the basic ideas of map-making. The bronze lines in the boulders are placed exactly on the east-west and north-south axis. Phillips first experimented with the idea of nature interweaving with art more than ten years ago. He finds rocks that are the size, shape and texture that he wants and visually links them to the man-made world. To do this, he often cuts out certain parts of the rock and fills it with bronze.

With "Grid Stones," it was Phillips' intention to continue his theme of integrating nature and the manufactured by making a grid map of bronze and then adding in nature by placing the rocks down. If you look at the stones, you will notice that some of the rocks have the bronze straps cutting right through to the ground.

Phillips has been known to take a very small rock and, using modern materials, will visually increase the rock's size two or three times over. Through his

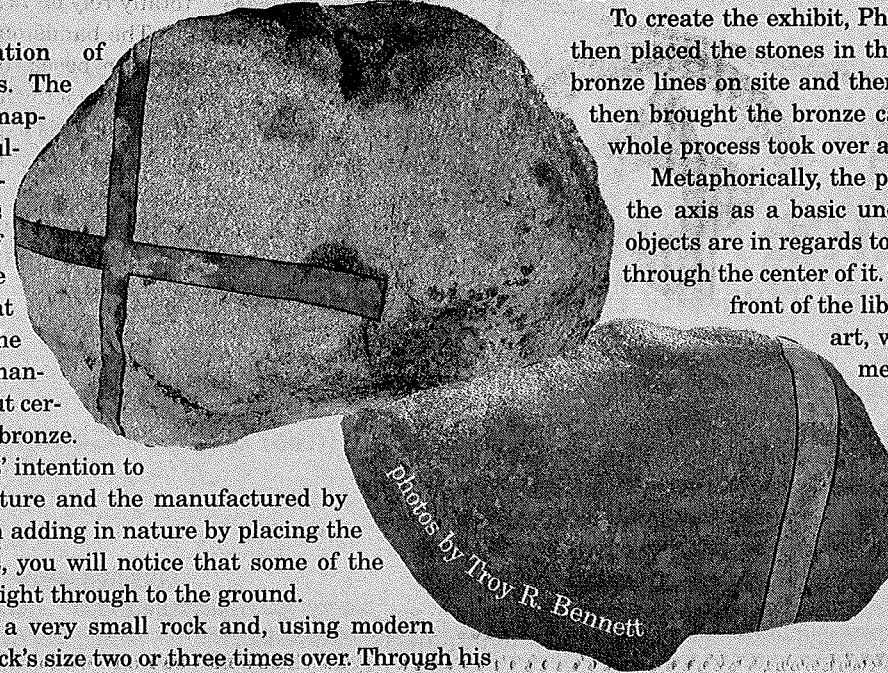
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art, Phillips shows how nature and our man-made world are constantly working both together and against each other. In our quest for stability, man and the world he creates appear to be the calm and orderly staple in the unpredictable bowls of nature.

To create the exhibit, Phillips first selected the stones and prepared the sight. He then placed the stones in the grid and cut into the rocks. He made the molds for the bronze lines on site and then brought them to his Somerville studio to cast them. He then brought the bronze castings back to Portland and installed them on site. The whole process took over a year and was completed in 1996.

Metaphorically, the piece can be seen as cartography. In cartography one uses the axis as a basic understanding of where the landscape is and where other objects are in regards to each other. The Earth's axis is the invisible line that runs through the center of it. The Earth rotates around it. When you walk in the area in front of the library, it is sometimes obvious that you are inside a piece of art, while other vantage points leave you unaware. This "element of discovery" was a part of the initial design.

The stones are physically separated from one another, some by several yards, but remain connected through the alignment of the bronze markings. From one stone to the next, they line up perfectly. A bronze plaque on the outside of the library gives the exact coordinates of your location; one small spot in the world around which everything revolves.



Photos by Troy R. Bennett

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