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## Somerset Sculptor Ohio Bound with 'Skybound' Art

Barton Rubenstein, who designed the stainless-steel sculpture outside Somerset Elementary School, will be taking a 30-foot-high sculpture to a sculpture park in Ohio next month.

By [Laura L. Thornton](#) | [Email the author](#) | 6:00 am

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Barton Rubenstein's "Skybound," as it is projected to look in its home at the Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park in southwestern Ohio beginning next month. Credit: courtesy of Barton Rubenstein.

When Somerset residents [Barton Rubenstein](#) and his daughter head to Ohio next month, they'll be taking more than just a little luggage with them.

In the U-Haul that Rubenstein is renting for the trip will be the giant, gleaming pieces of a 30-foot-high sculpture weighing 2,000 to 2,500 pounds. It's Rubenstein's latest artwork, and it's headed to the 265-acre [Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park](#) in southwestern Ohio.

Rubenstein is a sculptor nationally known for his stainless-steel pieces, which he designs and fabricates in his home studio in the Town of Somerset, in Chevy Chase. Many of his most well-known pieces are water sculptures, although he is also known for kinetic sculptures (with parts that move in the wind or in conjunction with a water fountain) and sculptures that appear to be in suspension, such as *Skybound*, the piece headed to Ohio next month. *Skybound* is Rubenstein's tallest work, so far, and its destination at a public sculpture park is a milestone in Rubenstein's career.

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Rubenstein's pieces begin as ideas and drawings, then go through a CAD phase on the computer (so that he can get a sense of what they'll look like from all sides and angles). Rubenstein produces small models in stainless steel or silver paper before finalizing the details and crafting the final version of a sculpture.

*Skybound* is a series of hollow, diamond-like shapes connected by an inner architecture that Rubenstein has carefully concealed so that the diamond-like shapes appear to be floating above the ground. Rubenstein crafted the sculpture by cutting out the pieces for the sides of the diamond-like shapes out of sheet metal with a plasma cutter, and then carefully welding the pieces together with an argon-gas welder. (The argon gas ensures that the metal won't bubble up during the welding process.)

Rubenstein, who attended the [Sidwell Friends School](#) in DC as a child, studied neuroscience at the [Weizmann Institute of Science](#) in Israel. He decided to take a year off between his neuroscience studies and a position at the [National Institutes of Health](#) to focus on creating art, but that year turned into an entire career.

"I miss science, but I'm really happy doing what I'm doing," he said.

As a child, he was always "making things"—Morse code telegraph machines, tree houses, motorcycles out of bicycle frames. He often accompanied his father, a developer, to construction sites, learning how buildings were designed and constructed. Those early lessons have had lasting significance: Rubenstein designs all of his sculptures' inner workings, including the pumps for the fountains, the mechanics of the moving pieces of the kinetic sculptures and the interior framework for otherwise weightless-seeming sculptures like *Skybound*."

The finished pieces, of course, betray none of the hard work that goes into creating them. Nor do they appear to be as heavy as they really are. Rather, they "create a feeling of simplicity and lightness"—an escape from the gravity of everyday life.

\*\*\*

Many of [Rubenstein's pieces](#) are already well-known to the Washington, DC-area community, and include:

- [Field of Dreams](#), at [Somerset Elementary School](#) (5811 Warwick Place, Chevy Chase)
- [Familia](#) (a kinetic sculpture) and [Tower](#) (a water sculpture) at [Strathmore Music Center](#) (5301 Tuckerman Ln., North Bethesda)
- [Crossroads](#) (a water sculpture) at the [Jewish Community Center](#) (Q and 16th streets NW, Washington, DC)
- [Carpe Diem](#) (a kinetic sculpture) at [Sidwell Friends School](#) (3825 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, DC)
- [Blairs Gateway](#) (a water sculpture) at [The Blairs](#) (an apartment building at 16th Street and Colesville Road Circle in Silver Spring)
- [Screen](#) (a water sculpture) at [Brookside Gardens](#) (1800 Glenallan Ave., Silver Spring)
- [Eden](#) (a water sculpture) at [Van Ness East Condos](#) (2939 Van Ness St. NW, Washington, DC)

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