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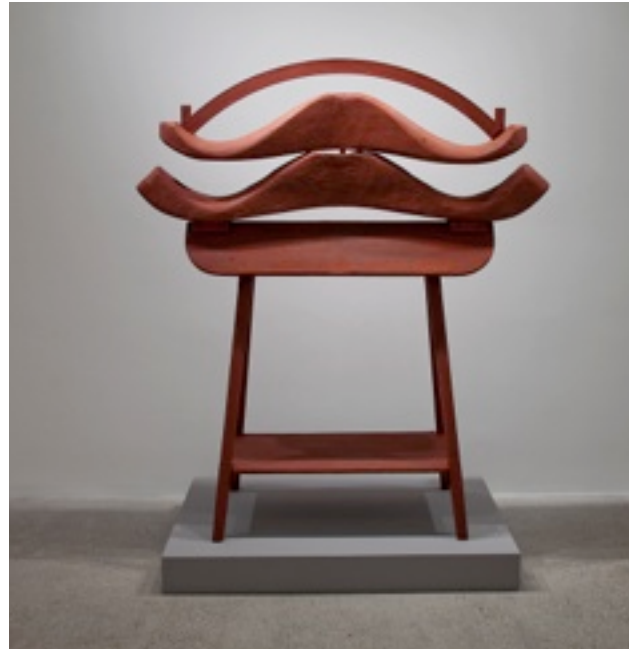
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Udvardy's Alchemical Creations on Display

At some level, all art is a form of creative alchemy. A sculptor takes a block of stone and turns it into an elegant nude. A painter transforms a piece of canvas and some tinted oil into an eye-catching portrait of landscape. In the hands of a master cabinetmaker, a shapeless hunk of wood becomes a Chippendale chair or a Townsend-Goddard chest.

Still, if you're in the mood for some serious artistic sorcery, it's hard to beat the mash-up of sculpture and collage known as assemblage. A mostly 20th-century invention, assemblage typically involves taking a collection of mostly mundane materials and transforming it into something more - sometimes much more - than the sum of its parts. Thinking of it as collage's hip 3-D cousin.

As it happens, one of the best artist-alchemists in the business, John Udvardy, is having a one-man show (May 10 - July 26) at Providence's Cade Tompkins Projects. A longtime professor at the Rhode Island School of Design, Udvardy has a knack for taking other people's castoffs - old toys, antique tools, bit of broken furniture - and turning them into elegant, one-of-a-kind sculptures. The result, more often than not, is sheer magic. -- Bill Van Siclen



"Scaramouche: The Samurai,"
by John Udvardy

