

THE heart of it IN LOVELAND

by Maryjo Faith Morgan

Loving the Moment
by Kathleen Caricof

SCUPTURE IN THE PARK has put Loveland, Colorado on the map. According to *The 100 Best Art Towns in America*, Loveland is second only to Santa Fe. Since the author John Villani is based in Sante Fe, he should know!

As a grass-roots movement that grew into something internationally noteworthy and reads as a who's who in the community, Sculpture in the Park was born from a dream, nurtured by many, and has come to fruition as a million-dollar-a-year event. You would think that everyone involved would want to take credit but each points to several others. All put tireless energy into the fledgling project that expanded into the single largest outdoor juried sculpture show in the country, spawned the Loveland High Plains Arts Council, and branched off to include the non-juried Loveland Invitational Sculpture Show.





Spanish Daggers by Jack Kreutzer

Annually, in order to provide a fresh and diversified show, a quarter of the selected artists are new to Sculpture in the Park and a show policy requires returning artists to exhibit newly produced work. Almost 900 artists have participated since the first show. There are a huge number of volunteers and visionaries involved in the show. In 1991 the Loveland High Plains Council honored those hundreds with a sculpture, *Keep the Ball Rolling*, by Jane DeDecker.

The "Founding Five" consists of artists George Lundeen, Dan Ostermiller, George Walbye, Fritz White, and Hollis Williford.

In 1984, this original group of five invited their friends to exhibit and sell their sculpture on the same weekend as the Art in the Park. Land located one block east of Taft on 29th street and donated by the Ralph Benson family developed into the sculpture park through the generosity of local philanthropists Doug and Lynne Erion, First National Bank President Darrell Brubaker, and City of Loveland Mayor Ray Reeb.



Sculptor George Walbye says it all works because Loveland has been exceptionally good to the artists, and the artists have been good to Loveland. "Don't forget, without the foundries being right here, none of this could have happened. Bob Zimmerman's foundry cast my first piece as an experiment. The foundry is now known as Art Castings of Colorado and has become nationally recognized."

He cites the immense amount of effort from the community as the backbone of the show, from the people who serve on the Loveland High Plains Art Council to those who volunteer during the show. "It's really tremendous! It's a whole lot of work and all around, the neatest, most fulfilling thing I've ever experienced in art. Benson Park is a people's park. No matter who you are, you will find something there that you like."

Susan Ison, Director of Cultural Services for the City of Loveland Museum Gallery, is convinced that ideas came together almost as a universal consciousness that brought about a huge community involvement from several directions simultaneously. She also mentions that the natural beauty of the area beckons artists and others to settle here. "Loveland has the visual appeal for people to want to move here."

Loveland draws nearly 25,000 people annually for the weekend of the show. In addition, many visitors come to Loveland year round to visit the sculpture gardens, the foundries, and the galleries. Ison believes the first Sculpture in the Park generated a new appreciation for art in general. In 1985, this public awareness coupled with a progressive city government helped Loveland become the first Colorado city to pass an Art in Public Places ordinance. Since then the city designates that one percent of its capital construction projects of \$50,000 or more be used for the purchase of art. The all-volunteer Visual Arts Commission, which has seven City Council appointed members, supervises the city's art acquisitions, donations, and placements. The 2005 commission members are Chairman James Baldwin, Vice Chairman Susan White, Randy Amys, Roger Clark, Doug Erion, Kevin Gibbs, and Betsy Ostermiller. Their inspiring goals include enriching the public environment, nurturing and enhancing the

Loveland art colony, and promoting understanding and awareness of the visual arts in the public environment. Currently, the city's art collection is valued at more than \$6 million, with approximately 83% of the total value of the collection donated by organizations and individuals. Guides to the collection and a new DVD produced by Connie & Bill Schlelein entitled *Loveland ~ A Work of Art*, which details the story of how the arts grew in Loveland, will be available in April at the Loveland Museum/Gallery, 503 N. Lincoln. Schlelein's exhaustive research includes many interesting interviews.

Polly Juneau, long-time volunteer and president of the nonprofit Loveland High Plains Art Council, praises Sculpture in the Park as an amazing collection of people from widely differing backgrounds. "I think of it as a three-legged stool: the artists, the patrons, and the volunteers." The primary mission of the Loveland High Plains Arts Council is to develop and produce the annual Sculpture in the Park show in order to generate funds for the purchase of sculpture, landscaping, and other permanent improvements within Benson Sculpture Garden. Board Members include Roger Bates, Dee Clements, Doug Donahue, Sharon Downing, Pat Farnham, Dan Herlihey, Greg Hoff, Mac Juneau, Polly Juneau, John Polansky and Kim Summitt.

Mark Lundeen remembers his brother George's active participation from the beginning: "He held one of the first meetings upstairs on the back deck of our studio. Now between Sculpture in the Park and the Loveland Invitational Sculpture Show there are over 1000 volunteers." Some participate through the "Adopt-a-Sculpture" program, planting and maintaining flower gardens around pieces of sculpture. Because the ground needs to be solid and thoroughly dried out to endure the



Breeze by Blair Buswell

Out of the Mystic Past
by Fritz White



weight of heavy equipment used to install temporary exhibits for the show, the automatic watering system is turned off a week or so prior to the show. In the August heat, faithful volunteers hand carry water to keep their gardens at peak for the event.

Another visionary for the arts in Loveland is Solveig Lark, who opened Gallery East in 1972. She knew it would come. "There was interest in making something happen in Loveland; the artists all threw in their ideas. We had meetings and parties to celebrate everything and Bob Torson even brought the not yet introduced Chicken McNuggets as hors d'oeuvres to one of those parties. It all came together."

Each year over the second weekend in August the shows bring roughly 25,000 visitors to the area, and many more visit throughout the year to see the Benson Park Sculpture Garden.

They bring a cultural awareness that wallops a positive economic impact. Unseen but equally as pivotal as the foundries are the multiple support industries in the area, which also generate art-related revenue. "There is a substantial number of supportive businesses in our area." Tom O'Gorman, of Bronze Services of Loveland, who has sixteen years in bronze casting, verifies spin-off businesses are a result of the art focus in Loveland. Tony Workman, general manager at Art Castings of Colorado, says, "We pour an average of 1250 pounds of bronze a day,

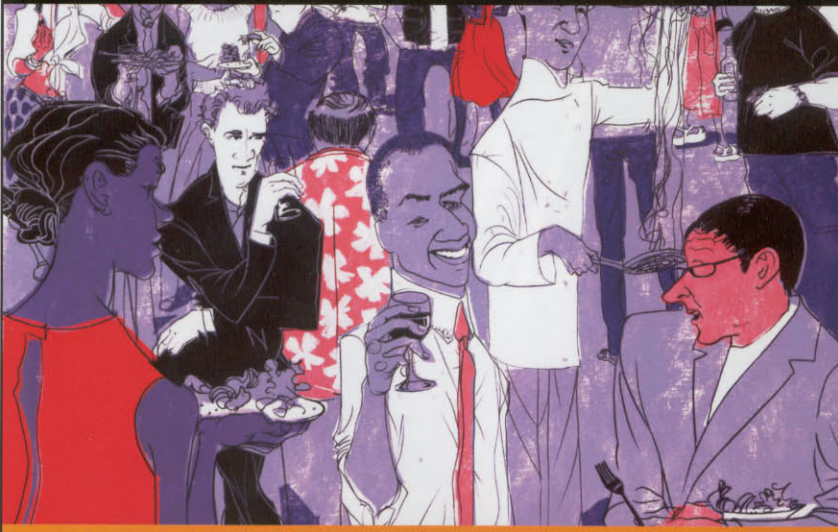


producing approximately seventy bronze pieces a week, every week of the year, and employ 47 people full-time." Artists utilize the services of four local foundries and a multitude of corroborative businesses and freelancers around town who provide other pieces of the process, including making molds, wax, welding, wax or metal chasing, patina services, and making the base for sculptured pieces. With 18 years in the

industry, he believes what is most interesting about the bronze casting business is the multi-faceted process. See step-by-step pictures detailing the casting process at www.artcastings.com. Workman addresses the community's notoriety, "Everybody who knows anything about art knows about Loveland. We're world famous for our sculptures, the artists who live here, the foundries, and for the public art display."

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