Outdoor Art Around the Denver Art Museum

Dan Ostermiller, *Scottish Angus Cow & Calf*, 2003
Located in Hindery Family Park on 12th Avenue outside the Hamilton Building.

What I find most rewarding and satisfying about creating a bronze is knowing every detail of the sculpture’s design and manufacture—inside and outside. –Dan Ostermiller

As the son of a noted taxidermist in Cheyenne, Wyoming, Dan Ostermiller [AH-ster-mill-er] grew up surrounded by animal forms. By training and working as a taxidermist himself, Ostermiller gained a strong understanding of the body language and anatomy of animals. Through the rigid discipline of creating animal molds for taxidermy, technical accuracy became second nature to him, and provided him with the foundation to create artwork that was both realistic and expressive. His love of animals prompted extensive travel to Africa, where his initial hunting safari did not sit well with him, and subsequent visits were restricted to photo safaris. In the 1970s he relocated to Loveland, Colorado, to be near the fine art foundries. Since then he has created over 312 original sculptures (over 40 at monumental scale, of which our Cow and Calf is the largest), and his studio works on 50 to 100 pieces at any given time.

Ostermiller was commissioned to create *Scottish Angus Cow & Calf* by Leo Hindery, a Colorado ranch owner who wanted to commemorate the cows of his own beloved Scottish Angus herd. Because his property near Larkspur, Colorado, is difficult to access, Hindery promised that he would donate the piece to a public institution if he ever sold the property.

In order to determine the scale needed for the sculpture to hold its own in the expanses of Hindery’s ranch, Ostermiller moved several trucks around on the site and viewed them from up to a half mile away. He met and photographed the cows and found he especially loved the way they lay out in the pasture.

Ostermiller returned to his Loveland studio to create a 30” bronze maquette (a small-scale version to use as a model). Once the form of the sculpture was determined, it had to be enlarged to colossal scale. From the bronze maquette, Ostermiller made a plaster version. He placed the plaster maquette on a grid, then cut it into thin sections. Each slice was reproduced large scale in Styrofoam (this was done by blowing each one up on the wall), then matched up on a giant grid. The slices were then carved down and smoothed together with saws, rasps and heat guns to recreate the form of the cow. Next, the
Styrofoam was coated with a one-inch layer of clay. The oil-based clay was made in California, and is recyclable, so the free clay was distributed afterwards to local sculptors and to schools.

By working with a New York foundry instead of a Loveland one, Ostermiller found that the cow could be cast in 13 pieces instead of 300 (because they were capable of casting larger pieces). By applying a layer of rubber and a layer of insulation, molds of the 13 panels were created and shipped to the New York foundry.

The pieces were cast using the sand casting process (not lost wax), the main advantage being much less warping of the cast pieces. The foundry used the rubber molds to make a plaster version, which was used to make the impression in the sand.

After being cast in sections, the bronze panels were sent unfinished to Loveland. In his studio, Ostermiller’s staff assembled the sections, welded and chased them (removed the rough edges and irregularities of casting), and the seams were smoothed over. Because it was winter, Ostermiller wanted to assemble the cow inside. But he knew that once she was put together in the studio, she wouldn’t be able to fit out the door. He had to cut her apart in sections that fit through the door, then reassemble her again outside. He then applied chemicals to the bronze to create the patina, or finish. Ostermiller created the black patina using sulphurated potash. The cow was transported from studio to ranch on a flatbed semi (also its mode of transportation to the DAM).

The whole sculpture is approximately 38 x 22 feet. The animals are three times life-size, making the cow 13 feet tall. It weighs about 10,000 lbs. (5 tons). As a joke while making the cow in his Loveland studio, Ostermiller placed his secretary’s desk inside the sculpture.

To Ostermiller, the quality of shapes and design are of the utmost importance for creating expression, character and charm. Notice, for instance, the roundness of the cow’s belly, folds of skin, and muscle contours. He says, “Information about animal anatomy is critical to sculpting, but for me, exaggeration of form for the sake of aesthetics is the goal. Whether or not the [animal] is ever in the position I’m using in my piece is secondary because the sculpture is my interpretation, my idea as to what makes a good design for the animal.”

Grouping two (or more) animals together is a technique Ostermiller uses to increase the expressiveness of a piece. It allows him to convey intimate involvement and emotional interaction between the subjects, and also provides interesting relationships of the forms from different viewpoints.

Ostermiller likes to retain the surface marks of his clay models once the sculpture is cast in bronze. Look for evidence of tools that were used, or a pounded surface, rather than the realism of cow hair. Ostermiller says, “Surface textures are important to me. Not the details of hair, for instance, but lines and serrations left by tools that direct your eye over the surface planes of the sculpture and throughout its compositions.”

Each of Hindery’s cows wore a bright yellow ear tag. Ostermiller’s cows also have ear tags, but their color comes from gold plating.
Zhang Huan, *Pilgrimage*, 2001
Located on Martin Plaza between the Hamilton Building and Mad Greens

*Pilgrimage* is a life-size granite sculpture of Chinese performance artist Zhang Huan lying naked and face-down. It is based on Zhang’s first performance after moving to the United States in 1998. The performance, *Pilgrimage: Wind and Water in New York*, was part of the *Inside Out: New Chinese Art* exhibition at P.S. 1, a contemporary art museum in Queens, New York. For this work, Zhang performed the remarkable feat of lying naked, face down, on a block of ice placed on a traditional Chinese bed for 10 minutes on a public street.

The work, Zhang says, is about his experience coming to America and his fear of New York City. Zhang explains, “I do like the city, but at the same time I have an unnameable fear. I want to feel it with my body, just as I feel the ice. I try to melt off a reality in the way I try to melt off the ice with the warmth of my body.”* Zhang’s performance is a test of endurance but also a kind of existential meditation. Zhang believes he had to be naked to feel the full severity of the ice against his body and to arrive at a spiritual state of being. When he puts his body in extremely uncomfortable situations, he tries to distance himself from his condition, or as he puts it, “let my mind leave my body.” When this happens, he can’t feel any pain. Zhang says for him, this is a spiritual experience.

A performance artist at heart, Zhang thinks of *Pilgrimage* as an active and interactive work: “...in the winter, the water keeps the form of the body as art, but in the summer, when the water is not frozen, I want people to just have a drink.”* Because of the continuous changes the sculpture will endure throughout the seasons, Zhang considers this sculpture to be a longer performance, one that never ends.

Located between the Hamilton Building and the Museum Residences/parking garage

With work located all around the world, Beverly Pepper is one of the foremost sculptors working today. *Denver Monoliths* was commissioned specifically for placement in front of Daniel Libeskind’s addition to the Denver Art Museum by Museum Board Trustees Jana Bartlit and Fred Bartlit. The sculpture, set on a triangle of grass, is sited on the museum’s exterior public plaza directly in front of the main entry of the Hamilton Building.

In the 1970s, Pepper developed a growing interest in monumentality that continued throughout her career. During this time she began to focus on mass as expressed through physically dynamic, geometric planes. This interest led to the conception of “Earthbound Sculptures,” works that seem to emerge or rise up from the earth. Because they were incorporated into their environments, Pepper’s colossal “Earthbound Sculptures” took

on an architectural quality. To accomplish this effect, she sought new materials, tools, and techniques. Such is the case with Denver Monoliths. Comprised of two massive vertical elements (measuring 42 feet tall and 31 feet tall, and weighing a total of 155,000 pounds) the work was made utilizing new stone casting technologies and modeling techniques developed by the artist.

**Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen, Big Sweep, 1999-2006**

Located on Martin Plaza outside the Hamilton Building

By changing the scale and substance of common, everyday objects, Claes Oldenburg amazes us with the unexpected: a 101-foot-tall steel baseball bat, a set of concrete pool balls each 11-1/2 feet in diameter, a 55-foot-long steel and aluminum spoon holding a cherry, and a 35-foot-tall broom and dustpan, among many others. Oldenburg’s creations—immediately christened “pop art”—arguably did more to change our way of looking at and thinking about the world than any other movement in 20th century art. Pop artists such as Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Jim Dine and Red Grooms asked us to take a gamble, to abandon the security of tradition, to open our minds to a new, unfamiliar and often absurd language of expression. Who, before Oldenburg, could have shown the formal beauty and commanding presence of a broom and dustpan?

Coosje van Bruggen and Oldenburg’s 35-foot-tall sculpture Big Sweep was inspired by the vastness, climate and topography of the Colorado plains and mountains, as well as by the dazzling light and cleanliness of Denver itself. Big Sweep was completed in 2004 and was shipped in pieces to Denver from the husband and wife’s studio in California. It is located on the south side of 13th Avenue underneath the prow of the Hamilton Building. This piece was commissioned by the museum in 1999 with support from Janus Funds and multiple donors who support the modern and contemporary art department.

**Joel Shapiro, For Jennifer, 2007-2011**

Located between the Hamilton Building and the Clyfford Still Museum

Joel Shapiro is an American sculptor renowned for his dynamic work composed of simple rectangular shapes. His 32-foot-tall aluminum work For Jennifer adorns the tree-dotted plaza between the Clyfford Still Museum and the Hamilton Building on the southeast corner of West 13th Avenue and Bannock Street. The sculpture was acquired in memory of Jennifer Moulton, who served as Denver’s Director of Planning and Development from 1992 to 2003 and played a major role in many projects around the city, including the expansion of the Denver Art Museum. Though she passed away before she could see the realization of the Hamilton Building, it was her vision that gave the museum the ability to expand the project well beyond the original assumptions.
Lawrence Weiner, *AS TO BE IN PLAIN SIGHT*, 2009

Located on the south wall of the North Building facing 13th Avenue

*This piece has been deinstalled as part of the North Building renovation.*

As a celebrated founding member of the conceptual art movement of the 1970s, Lawrence Weiner employs the immediacy and universality of language to break down the barriers of art-historical precedents by inviting viewers to interpret his work from their own associations and responses without the weight of historical allusions. First seen in the exhibition *Embrace!*, *AS TO BE IN PLAIN SIGHT* was installed on the vertiginous wall of the fourth level of the Hamilton Building. It was later installed on the south wall of the North Building.


Located outside of Duncan Pavilion on level 2 of the North Building

*This piece has been deinstalled as part of the North Building renovation.*

Red Grooms (born Charles Rogers Grooms on June 7, 1937) is an American multimedia artist best known for his colorful pop-art constructions depicting frenetic scenes of modern urban life. He was born in Nashville, Tennessee, in the middle of the Great Depression. He studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, then at Nashville’s Peabody College. In 1956, Grooms moved to New York City to enroll at the New School for Social Research. A year later, Grooms attended a summer session at the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts in Provincetown, Massachusetts. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Grooms made a number of ‘happenings.’ The best known was “The Burning Building,” staged at his studio in New York’s Lower East Side between December 4 and 11, 1959. Shortly thereafter, Grooms invented “sculpto-pictoramas” (such as his work, *Ruckus Manhattan* (1975))—the mixed-media installations that would become his signature craft. These vibrant three-dimensional constructions melded painting and sculpture, to create immersive works of art that invite the viewer to interact with them. The pieces were often populated with colorful, cartoon-like characters from varied walks of life.

*Shoot-Out* is a large sculpture of cast and fabricated aluminum colored with an all-weather paint as well as oil paints. Located on the Duncan Pavilion balcony in the North Building, *Shoot-Out* depicts a four-wheeled wooden wagon in which a cartoonish cowboy and Indian are firing bullets and arrows at one another. The figure of the Plains Indian wears buckskins and a feather while the cowboy sports a ten-gallon hat. The projectiles are mounted on uprights so that they appear to be flying past their targets or passing through the cowboy’s hat and the Indian’s feather in cartoon fashion, making perfectly round, bloodless holes. Grooms states that he derived the image from his life-long interest in Western movies and from the film industry in general. *Shoot-Out* is unique in Grooms’ body of work for a couple of reasons. It is the largest single, self-
contained, free-standing piece ever created by the artist. That it is a work of painted aluminum, intended from its conception to be placed outdoors, furthers the unique quality of this piece.

Grooms’ work has been exhibited in galleries across the United States, as well as in Europe and Japan. His art is included in the collections of 39 museums, including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 2003, Grooms was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the National Academy of Design.


Located on Acoma Plaza between the North Building and Denver Public Library

This piece has been deinstalled as part of the North Building renovation.

Located on Acoma Plaza between the Denver Art Museum and the Denver Public Library, Mark di Suvero’s soaring outdoor sculpture, *Lao-Tzu*, was not enlarged from a maquette, nor was it fabricated in a foundry. Instead, the artist purchased the materials necessary to realize his vision—a slender structure of lines and curves soaring into space—and began to build it in his studio. Using a construction crane and a platform capable of raising him 30 feet in the air, he assembled sixteen and a half tons of steel I-beams and sheet-metal arcs. For four years, he rearranged these components in his Long Island City studio until he was satisfied. In 1995, the Denver Art Museum purchased *Lao-Tzu* and over the following months, the artist and several assistants disassembled the work, painted each element “carnival orange” for maximum contrast with Denver’s blue skies, and shipped it to Colorado on a flat-bed truck, where it was resurrected in three days.

Di Suvero names all his works after musicians, poets, artists or good friends. “I’d never send a child to school without a name,” he explains. *Lao-Tzu* takes its name for the Chinese philosopher-poet who founded Taoism in the sixth century B.C. Like the Taoist *yin-yang*, *Lao-Tzu* suggests a union of opposites, of forms and voids.

Thirty spokes are made one by holes in a hub,
By vacancies joining them for a wheel’s use;
The use of clay in moulding pitchers
Comes from the hollow of its absence;
Doors, windows in a house
are used for their emptiness:
Thus we are helped by what is not
To use what is.

— Lao-Tzu
In 1996, after soliciting proposals from nine American Indian artists, the DAM commissioned HOCK E AYE VI Edgar Heap of Birds to create a work of art to be sited in front of the museum’s North Building. The sculpture was dedicated on June 21, 2005. *Wheel* consists of ten red, forked tree forms made of porcelain enameled panels on steel frames. Each tree is 12 feet high and positioned on a 50-foot diameter circle. *Wheel* is aligned to the summer solstice sunrise; Trees One and Ten form an opening to the east.

*Wheel* specifically addresses the history of Indian peoples from Heap of Birds’ perspective as a Cheyenne/Arapaho artist, whose ancestors have a long and often painful history in the region—as well as from the multiple tribes who have lived in Colorado for centuries. The Cheyenne phrase “NAH-KEV-HO-EYEA-ZIM,” which is on the curved wall in the background, translates to “*We are always returning back home again.*”

**The Form of Wheel**

In creating *Wheel*, Heap of Birds has drawn upon a number of Indian architectural forms, including the Sun Dance lodge and astral medicine wheels such as the Bighorn Medicine Wheel, an important ceremonial site in northern Wyoming. Heap of Birds saw the naturally forked branch used in everything from shelters to small curio stands and makeshift cooking structures. He notes that the stability of the forked branch is “symbolic of our inherent strength.” Notice the three different types of forked tree forms used in the sculpture.

Heap of Birds is known for the use of language in his art. He draws a distinct lettering form in many of his art works. The words used throughout the sculpture have a visual and poetic impact as well as provide the information of their literal references.

The spiral design is seen throughout *Wheel*. Heap of Birds used the spiral to represent perseverance. Common to many tribes, he found multiple examples of the spiral as petroglyphs. Among other sources for imagery were drawings by prisoners from Fort Marion in the mid-1800s. The surface of each tree is covered with images and text that chronicle the history of Indian people.

Themes of each tree are presented roughly in chronological order.

- Tree 1 as the starting point depicts imagery from the Ancestral Pueblos as a representation of ancient times.
- Tree 2 depicts the history of Bent’s Fort and explores themes of coexistence, specifically the relationships based on trade between the many nations. Bent’s Fort with a teepee shows the close relationship between the Fort and the tribes. The question marks on the reverse indicate that the peaceful trade relationships were not sustained.
- Tree 3 deals specifically with the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, who occupied eastern Colorado. Two historic massacres point to the destructive impact of the U.S. Army and railroad expansion on native people. The tracks can be read as wounds from the railway coming into native communities.
- Tree 4 examines the Colorado Gold Rush and some of the negative effects it had on the lives of Ute people including war, starvation, disease and the reduction of the Ute population and reservation lands.
- Tree 5 presents how issues of land influenced the lives of native people, especially the creation of reservations and later property laws. Tribes lost access to significant areas, including hunting grounds and religious sites, which had enormous impact on their lifestyles. The Dawes Severalty Act, which divided reservation lands into 160-acre allotments, was enacted as a protection of native property rights and a farming initiative for native people but had devastating effects on the lives of native people.
Tree 6 displays the acronyms of programs and organizations that are widely influential in Indians’ lives, ranging from social programs to government agencies, and Indian run non-profits to tribal enterprise associations. Many of these programs provide resources to meet basic needs. Some were created to increase tribes’ self-sufficiency. For example, the Native American Rights Fund asserts and defends the rights of Indian tribes, organizations and individuals nationwide.

Tree 7 explores the history of religious freedoms and specifically the American Indian Religious Freedom Act which protects and preserves the right of American Indians to believe, express, and exercise their traditional religions. The tree also depicts imagery from the Ghost Dance and the Native American Church.

Tree 8 presents how native people have coped with domination and indoctrination yet persevered. Examples of this history include the use of prisons and boarding schools as methods of subjugation. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act is an example of resilience related to increased rights of native people.

Tree 9 explores human rights movements of indigenous peoples through international collaboration. The flag flown upside down has long been an international signal for distress. The American Indian Movement (AIM) used this concept in their symbol. This flag represents the 1960s and 1970s human rights movement for native people.

Tree 10 concludes with the themes of renewal and growth. Using population growth and academic accomplishments, Heap of Birds offers an optimistic future for native people.

**Experiencing Wheel**

*Wheel* was composed to welcome you. Walk inside the circle. Walk around each tree to find something that you recognize.*Wheel* was aligned to the summer solstice. Visit the sculpture at sunrise on June 21. If you are standing at Tree 6 you will see the sun rise between Tree 1 and Tree 10. The artist reveals his perspective of the events of history through the use of words and images. His goal for this work of art is to stimulate discussion by exploring new perspectives on American history.

**Herbert Bayer, articulated wall, 1985**

Located offsite at the Denver Design Center, near Broadway and I-25

This piece is recognized as one of Denver’s major landmarks. The original developer of the Denver Design Center first saw Bayer’s earlier version of this sculpture, made for the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City and felt it was a perfect monument for his new Design Center. The 1968 version was one of several sculptures commissioned and sited along the “Route of Friendship” leading into the stadium in Mexico City for the Olympic Games, and still stands today, although in a state of disrepair. The developers commissioned the artist to build a sculpture exactly like the original, but larger.

The Denver sculpture was completed in 1985 and stands 85 feet tall. Shortly after its construction, *articulated wall* was gifted to the Denver Art Museum where it is the largest work in the museum’s Herbert Bayer Collection and Archive that now holds some 8,000 works by the former Bauhaus artist who spent almost three decades in Colorado.

The sculpture has become a Denver icon. Constructed of 33 pre-fabricated concrete elements, the wall is held together through the center with a refueling mast taken from an aircraft carrier. Two million pounds of concrete were used to create the 85-foot tall sculpture.


Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen, *Big Sweep*, 1999-2006. Stainless steel painted with epoxy primer, acrylic urethane base coat and acrylic polyurethane clear coat; 35 feet high. Denver Art Museum; Purchased in honor of Tom and Noël Congdon with funds from 1998 Collectors’ Choice, with support from the estate of Richard H. Bosworth, Cyprus Amex Minerals Company, Charles and Diane Gallagher, Jerry Gart Family Foundation, Frederic C. and Jane Hamilton, Hines, Jan and Frederick R. Mayer, Paul and Lilly Merage, Larry and Carol Mizel, Ken and Judy Robins, Titanium Metals Corporation, Carl and Lisa Williams, Ginny Williams, and an anonymous donor. Additional funding was provided by Mark and Polly Addison, Joan Anderman, Bruce and Marcy Benson, Nancy Lake Benson, Jim and Janice Campbell, Howard and Beulah Cherne, Steven and Robin Chotin, Tom and Noel Congdon, Peter and Philae Dominick, Suzanne Farver, Leonard and Kay Gemmill, Dorothy Strear Goodstein, Robert and Diane Greenlee, Heidi Hamilton, Mark and Diana Hayden, Harley and Lorraine Higbie, A. Barry and Arlene Hirschfeld, Grafton and Sue Jhung, Glenn Jones and Diane Eddolls, Mariner and Megan Kemper, Bill and Alma Kurtz, Ed and Margaret Anne Leede, Susan and John W. Madden III, Caroline Morgan, Trygve and Vicki Myhren, NBT Foundation, Denny and Judy O’Brien, Andrea Singer Pollack, and an anonymous donor, 1998.496


HOCK E AYE VI Edgar Heap of Birds, Cheyenne/Arapaho, *Wheel*, 2005. Porcelain enamel over steel. (Nah Kev Ho Eyea Zim—Cheyenne meaning “We are always returning back home again.”) Acquired by Denver Art Museum with funds from Charles J. Norton by exchange, and funds from the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, the AT&T Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Douglas Society. Installed in 2005 with funding provided by an Economic Development Initiative Grant made possible by U.S. Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell. 1997.1452


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