

Reno welcomes six-piece sculpture garden to Riverwalk

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Carolyn Guerra's "Rhino Man" is one of the pieces included in the sculpture garden in Bicentennial Park. (Photo: Jenny Kane/RGJ)Buy Photo

Reno is fast becoming Sculpture Town, U.S.A.

More than 170 public art pieces already are hidden in Reno's urban landscape, and another six have been tacked on to the total this week.

The city of Reno and the downtown Reno Rotary Club have been working together to create a permanent sculpture garden in Bicentennial Park, an effort to add some extra character to the riverwalk. The grand opening of the sculpture garden is at 1:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 4.

In the pouring rain on Thursday, artists installed the works, all of which are local and will call the First Street park home for about a year. Each year, the Rotary will work with a new partner to curate a fresh set of pieces.

"People can become complacent going by the same art each year, but knowing that it will keep changing..." said resource development and cultural affairs manager Christine Fey. "It will be a different voice every year."

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This year's collection includes: "Bow Series," by Grant Miller; "Beckon," by Eileen Gray; "Rhinoman," by Carolyn Guerra; "Step Forward," by Brett Moten; "Nesting," by Jeff Schomberg; and "Winter Mouse" by Colin O'Bryan. Some of the them -- such as Moten's and Miller's -- are more abstract, whereas others are more realistic, such as O'Bryan's granite kangaroo rat and Guerra's cigar-smoking jolly man with the body of a rhinoceros.

Fey envisioned a sculpture garden at Bicentennial Park about five years ago, but it was not until about two years ago that she connected with the downtown Reno Rotarians, who wanted to celebrate their club's 100th anniversary with a special project. Their individual club is the oldest in Nevada, according to Marlene Olsen, chairwoman of the club's centennial project.



Eileen Gray's "Beckon" is one of the sculptures that has been added to the sculpture garden in Bicentennial Park. (Photo: Jenny Kane/RGJ)

"We wanted to give back to the community and we wanted it to be family friendly," Olsen said.

The sculpture garden cost about \$200,000, which includes the artists' stipends, engineering, concrete work and landscaping to accommodate the sculpture garden. The Reno Arts and Culture Commission contributed about \$50,000, in addition to the artists' stipends, and the Rotary Club

raised about \$70,500 for the project and enlisted contractors who also donated work and supplies.

"Any city I go to, I seek out a sculpture park, and now Reno has one," said Schomberg, who is best known for his word sculptures that he creates with his wife and co-creator, Laura Kimpton. The city purchased their piece, "Believe," which now is on the waterfront at the city plaza, also on First Street.

Schomberg bought the steel elements for his piece, "Nesting," a decade ago when he had the idea for the metal nest perched above the ground. With the nest is a pair of found-object birds.

"I thought this would go well with all the nature," Schomberg said while standing in the park, which was filled with gold- and scarlet-leaved trees and raindrop covered flower beds.

Eileen Gray, whose piece "Beckon" is more abstract, is a great contrast to Schomberg's rusty installation across the grass plot.

"It's just a playful, positive sunshine kind of a thing," said Gray, who created what looks like a yellow mosaic wave embedded with discarded keys.



Carolyn Guerra's "Rhinoman" is one of the sculptures in the Bicentennial Park sculpture garden. (Photo: Jenny Kane/RGJ)



Colin O'Bryan's "Winter Mouse," is a granite sculpture of a kangaroo rat curled up in the Bicentennial Park sculpture garden. (Photo: Jenny Kane/RGJ)

Gray, who also is an illustrator, said that sculpture is more accessible to certain audiences because you can touch the pieces and sometimes interact with them. In recent years, the city has come to more readily embrace sculpture as a key tool for beautification of the downtown area -- a transition that the city largely has organizations such as Artown and Burning Man to thank for, Gray said.

In the future, the Nevada Museum of Art and Burning Man likely will be partnering with the Rotary to curate some of the next installations.

"It was fun to be in the first raft, but I can't wait to see what's in the next bunch and the next bunch," Gray said.