

Stephen Friedman Gallery

WOWT
Unusual sculpture finds permanent home in Council Bluffs
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After a nearly identical temporary sculpture was removed late last year, an anonymous donor commissioned a bigger, site-specific piece for the River's Edge area. Known for unique sculptures and public art placed all around the city, Council Bluffs is welcoming another piece.

"Looking up," was placed on the River's Edge by the Iowa entrance of the Bob Kerry Pedestrian bridge on April 13, where it will now reside for the rest of its days. The 33-foot-tall silver statue depicts a very tall man peering up into the sky, seeming watching the stars or passing clouds.

The texture and shiny color of the man is familiar — like tinfoil — because it is.

"When you walk up to it you see that this silver structure is actually roasting pans, it's crumpled up aluminum," says Brenda Mainwaring, the president and CEO of the Iowa West Foundation. "It's sort of a recycled sculpture in that sense, so it makes it this alien feature that looks like something you've used in your own kitchen."

The Iowa West Foundation, one of the largest nonprofit organizations in the Midwest, and is funded in part by the Iowa West Racing Foundation. The organization seeks to fund various charitable community projects or other nonprofit organizations with the goal of improving the quality of life and standard of living for community members and businesses in the area.

Although many wouldn't think of Council Bluffs as a destination for art, Mainwaring says they've proven to be. "A couple years ago, it was declared number six on the list of mid-sized communities for vibrant arts and if you drive around town, you see some really remarkable art," she says. The piece is technically new to the area, but it's familiar to many. That's because an almost identical version - a shorter twin - of this statue sat in the same spot for about a year, and then left in December.

"The original was on Park Avenue in New York and on lakefront in Chicago," Mainwaring said. "PACE, which is our local arts consortium, arranged to bring it here through an anonymous donor and it was on display here in Council Bluffs until it went back to the donor's collection."

Pottawattamie Arts, Culture and Entertainment, or PACE, is a community partner with the Iowa West Foundation and a blanket organization for other arts programs in the Council Bluffs area. Once the sculpture left, the community missed his presence, Mainwaring says. The anonymous donor commissioned sculptor Tom Friedman to create a site-specific permanent statue for the River's Edge area. The donation was matched by the Iowa West Foundation.

"It's nice to see people excited about having this art home, you know. It feels like it's ours now — it belongs to Council Bluffs." Mainwaring says the sculpture is the first step in a major revitalization project at the River's Edge. She says even more family-friendly parks and attractions will be coming to the area in the coming months and years. You can learn more about the sculpture from the artist himself, using an app, Otocast, that maps out locations for Council Bluff's public art and includes audio guides.