



Wood Sculptures Donated by Gene Delcourt to Dane County Government

PROPOSED LOCATION FOR INSTALLATION IN
CITY-COUNTY BUILDING ENTRANCE AREA



COUNTY BOARD OFFICE

7/23/25

Harry Whitehorse International Wood Sculpture Exhibit September 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

In partnership with the Friends of San Damiano, the Harry Whitehorse International Wood Sculpture Festival was the first biennial weeklong artist-in-residence program, celebrating art, culture, and community. This unique festival brought Indigenous and international artists together to create remarkable wood sculptures, fostering cross-cultural exchange and preserving the legacy of the late Ho-Chunk artist Harry Whitehorse.



A Tribute to Sculptor Harry Whitehorse

Harry Whitehorse (1927-2017) was a Madison-area artist known for his remarkably varied work across multiple mediums, including wood sculpture. Wood was one of his first mediums, reflecting the cultural practices and natural environment that shaped his early life. His work deeply connects to his Ho-Chunk heritage, natural surroundings, and cultural history. The Madison area is home to more than 10 of his public sculptures, several of which are from historic trees that had significant meaning for the community.



Mission of Festival

- Highlight the cultural importance of Ho-Chunk ancestral land in DeJope (Madison, WI area), emphasizing the need to preserve this beautiful location for future generations.
- Celebrate indigenous cultures and to bring international ideas and culture to the Midwest.
- Honor an indigenous artist, celebrating Harry's legacy as an artist and teacher alongside his Ho-Chunk identity.
- Create art using wood as the medium, to counter the historical misconception of wood carving as a craft.
- Foster relationships and collaboration between artists and the community.
- The Harry Whitehorse International Wood Sculpture Festival invited artists to participate from across the nation and abroad. Artists filled out applications, submitted images of their previous work, and created a proposal that addressed the theme of the festival, Nature and/or the Environment. All the logs were sourced and generously donated by local tree companies Maplewood Tree Service and Heartwood Tree Company. Artists used a variety of tools to complete their sculptures including chainsaws, chisels, grinders, and sanders.



San Damiano

Dejope, an ancestral home of the Ho-Chunk, was the site of the waterfront Festival Village, known in modern times as San Damiano Monona in Monona, WI. At just under 10 acres, and with nearly 1,500 feet of Lake Monona shoreline, the property has been described as epic, iconic, and even magical. The natural beauty of the property showcases a small arboretum of trees, a variety of native and migratory wildlife, and a natural spring. San Damiano is culturally significant and has a rich history and close connection to the Ho-Chunk nation.



The Donation to Dane County

- For a limited time, Olbrich Botanical Gardens and Garver Feed Mill exhibited the eleven wood sculptures created during the Harry Whitehorse International Wood Sculpture Festival. Five sculptures were displayed outside at Olbrich Gardens, and six sculptures were displayed at Garver Feed Mill, both inside the building and outdoors near The Patio.
- Now, through the generous donation of Dene Delcourt, artist and founder of the Harry Whitehorse International Wood Sculpture Festival, Dane County has the opportunity to share a selection of these artworks with the public who visit the City-County Building in the future.



No More Stolen Sisters

Artist | Gene Delcourt

A red hand over the mouth has become the symbol of a growing movement, the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW) movement. It stands for all the missing sisters whose voices are not heard. It stands for the silence of the media and law enforcement in the midst of this crisis.

#NoMoreStolenSisters.

Material: Basswood

Location: Olbrich Botanical Gardens - Atwood Ave Garden





Gene Delcourt

WISCONSIN, ABENAKI/ PHILIPPINES

Gene Delcourt is a wood sculptor, who during his MFA studies at University of Wisconsin-Madison sought the guidance of Ho-Chunk artist Harry Whitehorse to further his education. During this time, Harry convinced Gene to attend wood carving symposiums abroad – leading Gene to participate in six European events. Honoring his mentor, Gene is a founder of the Harry Whitehorse International Wood Sculpture Festival.

FACEBOOK



Flow

Artist | Michael Rofka

My main theme in making art is nature and the red oak used fits nicely with my theme. When making art, I think about geometry and above all the flow and form found in water, air, and shapes in nature. With these components I start an open creative process. I am influenced by the wood, the place, and the environment. There is no defined meaning in my work. An explanation would destroy my intent. My hope is that visitors can find a dialogue with the sculpture by feeling and finding her/his own meaning.

Material: Red Oak

Location: Garver Feed Mill





Michael Rofka

LAATZEN, GERMANY

Michael Rofka had a deep affinity for trees and the natural world as a child. He would look for and gather stones. At first he wanted to become a scientist and studied biochemistry, but he couldn't see or experience nature. He therefore chose to enroll in a multidisciplinary academy to study fine arts. Painting and installations are included in his work, but sculpture has taken center stage. In more than 20 nations, he and his Ukrainian wife Anna, who is also an artist, have created stone and wood sculptures as well as land art pieces. While Michael doesn't use figurative art in his creations, he nevertheless views art as a means of artistically exploring and comprehending nature.





PROPOSED LOCATION FOR ONE SCULPTURE:
CCB ENTRY VESTIBULE ON MLK, JR. BLVD. –
BETWEEN SOUTH AND MIDDLE INTERIOR GLASS DOORS



(Approximate dimensions: Over 6' tall and 2' wide)



PROPOSED LOCATION FOR OTHER SCULPTURE:
CCB ENTRY VESTIBULE ON MLK, JR. BLVD. –
BETWEEN MIDDLE AND NORTH INTERIOR GLASS DOORS
(Approximate dimensions: Over 6' tall and 2' wide)



QUESTIONS?

