NORTHEAST FLORIDA SCULPTORS 2009-2019

WORDS BY
DAVID ENGDAHL

2026

ABOUT

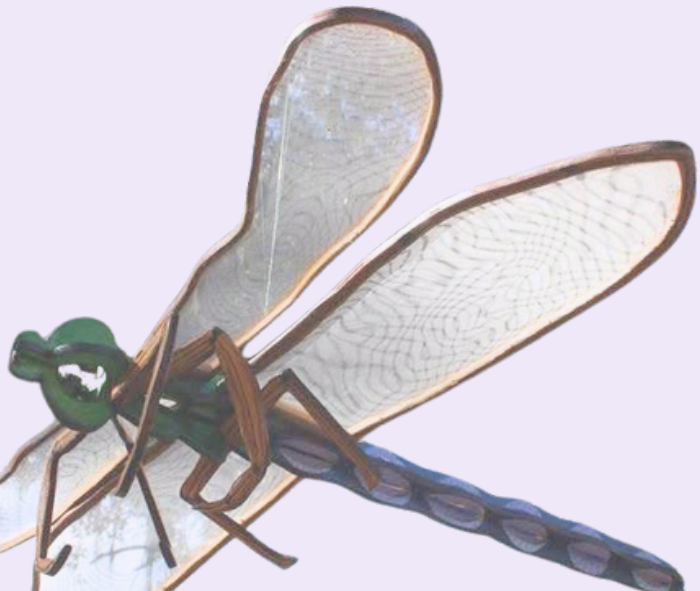


Image Credit (previous page):
Mindy Hawkins

ABOUT

Fellow Jacksonville sculptor and friend David Ponsler and I would see each other at art events in 2009, and we had repeated discussions as to not knowing many sculptors in the Jacksonville area, even though we were both longtime residents. We particularly didn't know many of the younger generation. Sculpture in gallery and museum exhibitions was not very prevalent. Together we knew about a dozen total sculptors. One such discussion led to the idea of creating a forum for 3D artists. We invited our friend and noted St. Augustine sculptor Enzo Torcoletti to join our discussions and the three of us co-founded the informal Northeast Florida Sculptors group. I became the ad hoc leader. To set up our first meeting, we contacted all of the area museums and art organizations to compile a list of Jacksonville area sculptors. Nobody had such a list, and we ended up cobbling together an email list of about twenty-five 3D artist contacts.

We scheduled our first meeting in the MOCA theater and invited the 25 on our list. We were surprised when about 40 interested artists attended including many 2D artists, some of whom later created sculpture. David Ponsler and I had no idea that there were so many 3D artists in our community. As notice of the group spread, we eventually reached a total of 175 artists on our email list. Jenny Hager maintained our list of area sculptors and sent out the communiques which I drafted. Prior to our first meeting Jenny created a Facebook page (still active) for the group. It is set up such that anyone can make a post there. At David Ponsler's suggestion, we wanted to minimize administrivia so that we could focus on our art. As a result, the group had:

- No formal status.
- No non-profit entity.
- No memberships.
- No bank account.
- No regular meetings.
- No regimented agenda.
- Open to any and all creatives.

At our first meeting, we introduced our idea and asked what the attendees would like to do in this forum. Those who attended clearly wanted to get to know the other artists and their work but also wanted opportunities to show their work. Based on the first meeting feedback, I created a mission statement which I repeated at the beginning of every subsequent meeting:

Mission

to share with each other, learn from each other, stretch each other, always do something different, and have fun.

We established about six from the group as a steering committee, open to anyone else who wanted to join. The steering committee met ahead of meetings to set up agendas and to brainstorm group activity ideas for discussion at our irregularly scheduled group meetings. The steering committee usually met at Miller's Ale House at Beach and Hodges Boulevards.

One idea which we implemented at our second meeting, and which became standard for new attendees, we named "Show Your Stuff". Artists were limited to four slides and three minutes presentation time to introduce themselves and their work to the group. That quickly allowed us to get to know each other, but more importantly, to associate the artist with his/her work. Typically, meetings were scheduled every few months. Meetings consisted of announcement of individual artist opportunities. I had knowledge of some opportunities, being a member of the Cultural Council and the Art in Public Places Committee. Others brought up opportunities from their knowledge. Group discussions followed as to exhibitions, projects and activities which we might undertake, with the group of attendees at each respective meeting making the final decisions.

Meetings were usually held in the training room at The Haskell Company Corporate headquarters on Riverside Avenue and included such agenda items as:

Presentations by members on their work and techniques.

Presentations on sculpture created by others (Meijer Gardens, Michigan; Alexander Calder's Circus; Jacksonville sculpture; etc.).

Art promotion and art business (which I presented).

"Show Your Stuff" (4 slides, 3 minutes talk) rapid presentations for new members, if requested.

Show and Tell mixers where artists brought examples of their work and informal discussions took place.
Panel Discussions.

In addition to these meetings, Northeast Florida Sculptors also took field trips to:

Bill Long Glass Studio

Haskell Steel Fabrication

Pedroni's Cast Stone

Haskell Residence
Outdoor Sculpture Garden

Enzo Torcoletti's Studio

MAJOR EXHIBITIONS



Image Credit (previous page):
Barbara Fryefield



7,8) Jacksonville Zoo & Gardens



12) Porchfest



1) Karpeles Manuscript Library



11) Veterans Memorial Arena



2) 301 West Bay St



10, 14) James Weldon Johnson Park



3) FSCJ South



4) 501 Riverside Avenue



6) Arboretum



9) UNF



13) Riverside Arts Market



5) 4939 Big Island Drive

EXHIBITIONS

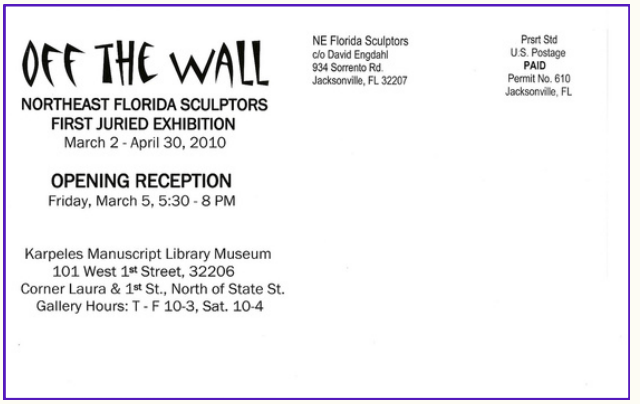
For each of our formal exhibitions, I engaged an out-of-town sculptor juror who knew little of the area artists and their work. I generated criteria for the submissions and developed a package that was promulgated widely. I received the artist submissions and organized them for the juror. The submissions were sent to the juror without the artist's name to assure that the work was independently considered. Upon receiving the list of sculptures selected by the juror, I sent out notices to those artists selected as well as those not selected. For mounting most of the exhibitions we used my personal pedestals.

All of our exhibition venues were at no cost. To cover invitation printing and drinks/snacks at our do-it-yourself exhibitions we collected contributions from those exhibiting. The group did not have a bank account, so I personally kept an income and expense accounting for each exhibition and equitably returned any leftover funds to the donors. NEFLS did not exist as an organizational entity, so we selected venues which had a managing organization that had liability insurance and made sure that our agreement included their naming the NEFLS participating artists as additional insureds.

For each exhibition an invitation postcard was designed and produced by a volunteer from the group. For the FSCJ and UNF exhibitions, those institutions created their own invitations with our input. We impartially featured a work by the juror for most of the juried exhibitions. The invitations were sent electronically to those artists on our list, and printed copies were made available at our meetings. Each artist had his/her own followers, resulting in an aggregate attendance at our opening receptions from 200 to 300.

1) OFF THE WALL





APRIL

2010

- Juror sculptor Michael Guadagno, Boston, MA
- Reception attendance 300
- Discussion led by Dr. Debra Murphy, Head, Art Department, UNF

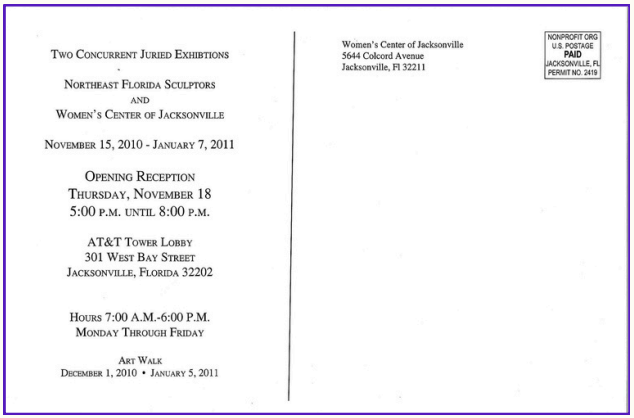
I had previously shown my sculptures at the Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum, so I contacted the museum director, Richard Minor, inquiring about NEFLS exhibiting in the facility. He was enthusiastic and encouraging. This was our first undertaking as a group. I really didn't know what to expect. I knew a few of the 3D artists and many others for whom I could not link their work to the person. As the artists showed up with their work, being able to link artists with their work was a big revelation to me and, I think, all others involved with the group. We scheduled only a three-hour window for sculptors to deliver their works on a Saturday morning, and all of the work was delivered during that time period, which impressed me. I encouraged each artist to select a location for their work and install it. I thought the artists, who barely knew each other, would drop off their work and leave. But they all began to hang around, gather in groups and discuss their work. That was a complete surprise, and a wonderful experience for me—that was exactly the reason we formed this group.

One of the directions to the juror for our first exhibition was to select Best of Show. The juror selected one of my works for this honor. This was a big embarrassment for me since I was leader of the group and handled the submissions. I thought about this for some time, but finally humbly announced it from the platform at the Karpeles Museum at the opening reception. We dispensed with the idea of having the juror select Best of Show in subsequent exhibitions.

I had arranged for Debra Murphy, then Head of the art department at UNF, to lead a discussion of the exhibition at the Karpeles one Saturday morning during the exhibition. Most of the 25 attendees were sculptors with work in the exhibition. Rather than providing a dissertation on sculpture in general, Debra asked the sculptors there to talk about their work and then led the discussion that followed.

2) CONCURRENCY





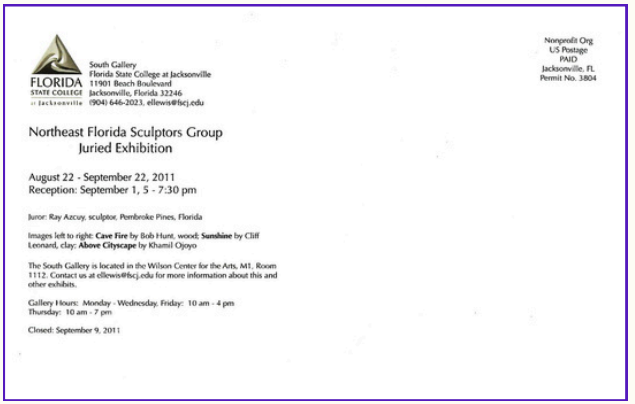
NOV
2010

- Joint juried exhibition with the Women's Center of Jacksonville.
- Sculpture Juror sculptor Allen Petersen, SCAD, Atlanta, GA.
- Reception attendance 200.

I was on the Art and Soul Committee at the Women's Center of Jacksonville, an organization that assists rape and domestic violence victims. Among the Art and Soul Committee's responsibilities were to stage art by women (including clients) in exhibitions in the Women's Center building. Because of this involvement, I conceived the idea of staging a joint exhibition with NEFLS outside the Women's Center building, which would be a first for them. We made agreement to use the busy second floor lobby space in the now named Everbank tower (formerly Bellsouth/ATT). The exhibition was named Concurrency. We had a juror for the sculpture and Cookie Davis, chair of the Art and Soul Committee, handled the wall artwork by The Women's Center. Being impressed by the exhibition, the building owner requested that some of the sculptures remain in place beyond the exhibit end. That invitation continued with some of the sculptures remaining there for years.

3) FSCJ JURIED EXHIBITION





SEP

2011

- Juror sculptor Ray Azcuy, Pembroke Pines, FL
- Reception attendance 150.
- Discussion led by Marcelle Polednik, PhD, Director of MOCA Jacksonville.

The FSCJ gallery Director, Lynn Lewis, approved of having our outside juror select the works for the exhibition, but chose to use images of works in the exhibition on the front of the invitation. FSCJ staff did the installation of the exhibition, printed and sent out invitations, and handled refreshments.

As a member of the Board of Directors of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Jacksonville, I asked MOCA director Marcelle Polednik, to lead an evening discussion in the gallery about sculpture. We first discussed the definition and the various qualities of sculpture in general. Then she asked attendees (most of those in attendance had works in the exhibition) to go stand by a work they liked and asked, each in turn, to explain how that particular work exhibited the qualities of sculpture that we had just discussed. What surprised me the most was that none of the artists stood by their own work.

4) INSTALLATIONS



Northeast Florida Sculptors
INSTALLATIONS!

May 19-May 27
Opening Reception May 19, 5:00-8:00 PM

Everbank Building
501 Riverside Avenue, 32202

Hours:
M-F 11:00 AM-2:00 PM
Sat, Sun 10:00 AM-4:00 PM (incl. May 19)

Garage parking Sat/Sun only, unreserved spaces

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
JACKSONVILLE, FL
PERMIT NO. 1617

19 Artists/Teams

Mary Atwood/Jim Smith
Ryan Barber
Claire Devoe/
Sara Brull
Russell Bailey
Danisha Edwards
David Engdahl
Kevin Ferrell
Barbara Fryefield/
Deborah Reid
Jenny Hager/
Amanda Campbell
Sara Brull
Erica Mendoza
Lad Hawkins
Robert Hunt/Ed Malesky
Courtney McCracken
Laura Mongiovi
David Montgomery
Robert Noelke
Jesse Nolan/
Grace Eitzenberger
Mary Homsby
Michael Quatromoni
Pablo Rivera
Brett Waller
Michael Bell

MAY
2012

- Panel discussion on installation art in February at MOCA.
- 19 installations by individual artists or teams in 5,000 s.f. unfinished space off lobby.
- Reception attendance 300+.
- Walk-through discussion by Marcelle Polednik and MOCA staff.
- Ten-day exhibition.
- Professional brochure produced.

Many of our exhibitions included small installation type sculptures, but most of our exhibition venues were not very compatible with installation work. Art installations are generally defined as temporary in nature, often use found or disposable materials, are of short duration and most of the artwork is not for sale.

In 2012 I conceived the idea of an all-installation exhibition. The group liked the idea, and one of the artists in the group had a contact at the just completed Everbank Plaza tower on Riverside Avenue. The building had a 5000 s.f. unfinished space just off the lobby that had quite a high ceiling. We negotiated use of that space for our “Installations” exhibition. The agreement included obtaining liability insurance for our non-group!

We first had a NEFLS meeting panel discussion on installations. When we solicited artist applications for this non-juried show, we received 19 separate submissions which included some artists working as teams, a total of 29 individuals. The criteria required $150 with each application to cover invitations, reception and mainly liability insurance. Most of the NEFLS artists, such as me, had never previously done an installation project. We reserved the space for two months so that artists could work there, and that allowed time for those creating offsite to produce their work.

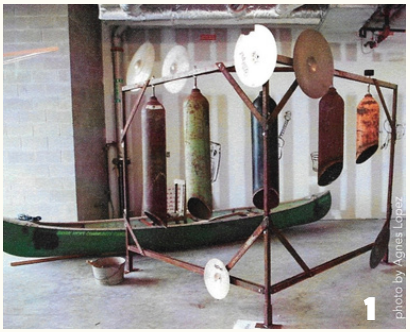
Brief descriptions of the work were required in the submissions, but I had no real idea of the size or configurations of the proposed works. As manager of the exhibition, how could I get appropriate space allocated for each of the installations? I invited all those who made submissions to meet in the space at the same time. I had each installation artist or team describe their plans with all present. Next I asked each artist or team to select a location, with consideration of their neighboring artists, and to mark their perimeter with masking tape. That worked very well with no disputes. Perfect, I thought, for an installations exhibition!

The installations were greatly varied, some designed for visitor participation. I allocated a space 10' wide and 35' long for my installation. I had been collecting the rigid and sculpturally shaped Styrofoam packing inserts from trash at the curb for weeks to assemble for my installation. I learned that the best time to collect those inserts was starting about 8:30 PM the evening before trash pick-up day and I got to know what the collection schedule was in every surrounding neighborhood. Many people don't put their trash out at the curb until after dark. One of my good artist friends helped me collect, and she brought safety vests for us. We learned that there is a trash-picker community out there—we saw the same people in the same trucks at prime time. They knew when to come to each neighborhood and I'm sure knew each other. We began to recognize them, and they noticed us. But they were not collecting Styrofoam in a large shiny car.

The inserts were easy to spot because they were white and at that time Jacksonville was recycling Styrofoam. Many people put the inserts out beside their recycling container. I collected enough interesting inserts to fill a bedroom, wall to wall and floor to ceiling. My installation concept was to attach the inserts together in my studio using construction adhesive, first creating panels for

easier transport to the space. Then in the exhibition space I assembled the panels creating two 30-foot-long walls tapered 3' high at the ends to 8' high at the middle, spread 8' apart at the middle and undulating vertically and horizontally to achieve a walk-through space where visitors could congregate in the middle and look through the various openings and translucent sections of the Styrofoam inserts. I was pleased with the result of two months of work. By the time the installation exhibition was over, the city had stopped recycling Styrofoam, and I was sad to see them hauled off to the landfill. The landfill calculates dumping fees based on weight, not volume, so dumping Styrofoam there was at minimal cost

More than 300 attended our opening reception. We asked the Executive Director of MOCA Jacksonville to walk through the exhibit with Associate Director Ben Thompson and other key staff and make comments. The exhibition was open to the public for ten days, and then the materials were quickly removed and disposed of or recycled.











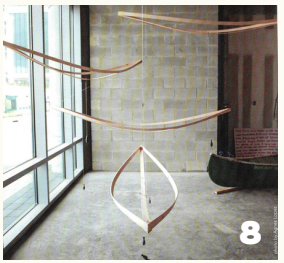






Image Credits:
1-4, 6, 8: Agnes Lopez
5, 7: Michael D. Glinski

An installations exhibition such as this had never been staged in Jacksonville. I leveraged my press contacts to receive an article on the exhibition in the Times Union newspaper. We had sufficient funds left over to print a professional catalog of the exhibition. Merideth Fordham Hughes undertook the design and printing of the brochure featuring each of the Installations works. We scheduled a special signing day for participating artists where we all personally signed the brochures. Signed brochures were then distributed to participants

This Installations exhibition was a lot of work and a lot of fun! Yea for creativity!

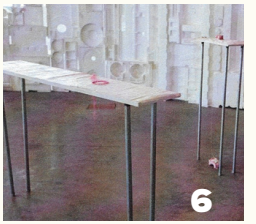


















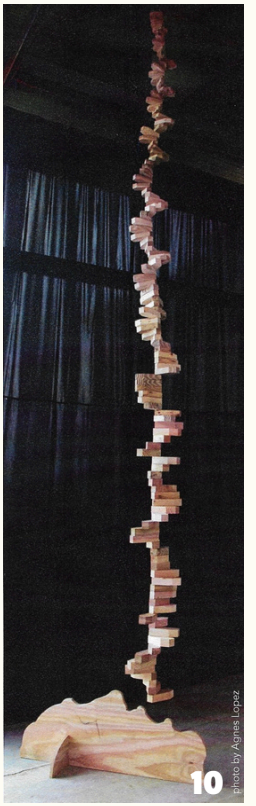


Image Credits:
1-2, 5, 7, 8: Michael D. Glinski
3-4, 6, 9-10: Agnes Lopez

5) IN SITU





MAY

2013

- Juror sculptor Deborah Lagrasse, FSU, Tallahassee.
- Reception attendance 100.
- Group discussion in exhibition.

I began thinking of people I knew who had artwork hanging on the walls of their home. Most! I thought of how many of those had sculptures in their homes. Almost none! Next I began thinking of how we could demonstrate that sculpture could be displayed in a home. I thought, let's have a sculpture exhibition in a furniture store. Being on the Cultural Council board I knew a fellow board member who was the area executive for Ethan Allen furniture. I discussed the idea with him, and he subscribed and lent his support. We selected the store at St. Johns Town Center in suburban Jacksonville, and we held a juried exhibition in the store amongst the residential furniture displays. We had 100 attend the opening reception and we held a NEFLS group discussion there during the exhibition.

6) ARBORETUM

JACKSONVILLE ARBORETUM & GARDENS PRESENTS

The Art of Nature

A COLLABORATION WITH THE NORTHEAST FLORIDA SCULPTORS

JACKSONVILLE ARBORETUM & GARDENS



"SYLVAN SPIRIT" CARVED CYPRESS LAD HAWKINS

Participating Artists

Mary Atwood & Jim Smith
Russell Bailey
Nicole Bovasso & Alycia Bren
Phil Collins
Michael Cottrell
Nofa Dixon
Amelia Eldridge
David Engdahl & Laurah Patrick
Kevin & Jeanette Ferrell
Barbara Fryefield & Deborah Reid
Gillian Harper
Lad Hawkins
Mindy Hawkins & Ashley Morrison & Lynda Aycock
Laura Mongiovi
Susan Gibbs Natale
Kyle Newsome
Robert & Shannon Noelke
Khamil Ojoyo
David Ponsler
Pablo F. Rivera

Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens'

5TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Saturday, November 9, 2013

9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

1445 MILLCOE ROAD JACKSONVILLE, FL 32225 - OFF MONUMENT ROAD JUST EAST OF I-295 EAST

NOV

2013

- One day exhibition in connection with Arboretum's Five-Year Anniversary Celebration.

One of the NEFLS sculptors was a key member of the Jacksonville Arboretum. Through his efforts, we were invited to exhibit our works around the park. Works were not juried, and most were installations.



















Image Credits:
1, 3-9: Mindy Hawkins
2: David Engdahl

7-8) ZOO LIGHTS, ZOO 100



Northeast Florida Sculptors
presents

Zoo 100 Celebration
located in the Asian Bamboo Gardens
September 26-December 31, 2014
Northeast Florida Sculptors
will sponsor an outdoor artwork exhibition in
collaboration with
Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens
in celebration of their 100th anniversary.
Zoo hours Mon-Fr- 9:00-5:00 Sat-Sun 9:00-6:00
www.facebook = Northeast Florida Sculptors

Cover Photo by Barbara Fryefield
Floating Sculpture: Jim Smith "100 Years of Buoyancy"

DEC , OCT - DEC
2013, 2014

Zoo Lights

- Collaboration of approximately 12 from the group, three-week event.

I had a meeting with then Executive Director of the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens, Tony Vecchio, to discuss possibilities of showing sculpture at the zoo. The director was excited about adding more creativity at the zoo. The most immediate opportunity was the upcoming annual Zoo Lights event. He invited our group to create lighted sculptures for that event. The event was not juried. Most memorable were the lighted white umbrellas with tentacles representing jellyfish that were handheld by Jenny Hager and her UNF students, all dressed in white. They staged a parade through the crowds.



Image by Ed Malesky

ZOO 100

- Collaborative exhibition in Asian Bamboo Gardens relating to milestones of Zoo's 100-year history.

For this exhibition, the NEFLS group first delved into the history of the zoo. The original Jacksonville zoo was initiated in Springfield when a red deer was donated to the city. The early collection consisted of mostly domesticated animals. The direction was clear to us that the basis of our sculptures should be animals, real or imagined. This basis was, of course, not exclusive so as to not stifle imagination. Working with the zoo staff, we settled on the Asian Bamboo Gardens as a venue for the sculpture exhibit. Some of the individual sculptures exhibited included a large metal dragon, an abstracted polar bear, a full-scale horse made from found sticks, a mesh bird, a full-scale abstracted giraffe fabricated from latticed plywood, an abstract display of colorful hand-blown glass globes, and a floating Z00 100 logo. Although the ZOO 100 was a limited time celebration, some of the sculptures remained in their location for more than a year.





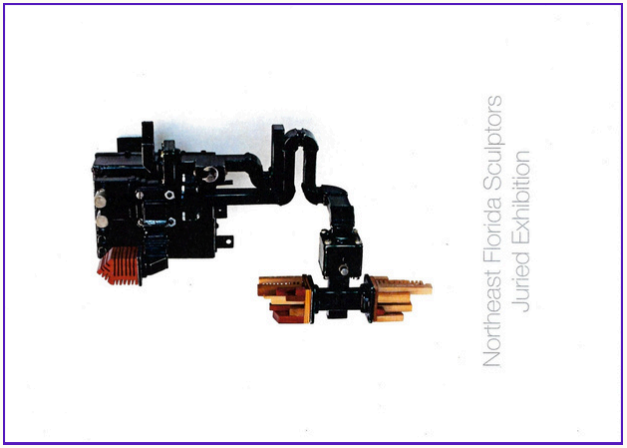






Image Credits:
1-3, 5: David Engdahl
4: Ed Malesky

9) UNF JURIED EXHIBITION



Northeast Florida Sculptors
Juried Exhibition
at the UNF Gallery of Art

UNF
UNIVERSITY of NORTH FLORIDA.

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
JACKSONVILLE, FL
PERMIT NO. 3558

OPENING RECEPTION
THURSDAY, SEPT. 17, 5-7 P.M.

EXHIBITION DATES
September 14 - October 16, 2015

GALLERY INFORMATION
M-F: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. • (904) 620-2534
All Gallery events are free
UNF charges $5 for parking (No charge after 5 p.m. Fridays)

GALLERY LOCATION
UNF Founders Hall / Building 1, Suite 1001
1 UNF Drive • Jacksonville, Florida 32224

Jim Draper, Coordinator, UNF Art Galleries

Image by juror Andrew Smith
Flushed I, 2013. Mixed Media

SEP - OCT
2015

- Juror Andrew Smith.

UNF Gallery Director Jim Draper invited NEFLS to stage a juried exhibition in the main campus gallery. As per our previous exhibitions, we engaged an out-of-town juror, sent out criteria and the juror selected the work for the show. UNF staff did the installation of the exhibition, printed and sent out invitations, and handled refreshments..









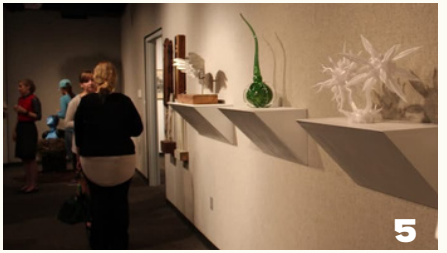




Image Credits:
1-3, 5-6: Nancy Holt Justus
4: David Engdahl

10-14) POP-UP ART MOB



SEP - DEC - JUNE

2016-2019

- Initially called the Shovel Project, the basis of this initiative was for participants to construct a sculpture to be attached to a shovel, dug into the ground at the venue.
- Approximately 20 from the group participated, some with more than one sculpture.

Our last and, I think, the most fun project NEFLS undertook was the POP UP Art Mob 2016-2019. One of the group artists suggested the idea of creating a sculpture that could be supported by a shovel anchored into the ground. We initially named it the Shovel Project. Group discussions led to the idea that we could program this project incrementally like a flash-mob. In a crowded venue one artist could appear in a grassy spot, yam a shovel in the ground and place their sculpture over it. Then successively other artists would follow. We never perfected the sequencing but were able to create an almost instantaneous sculpture show at quite a few locations around town. One member of the group created Pop Up Art badges for us to hang around our necks.

The group had no liability insurance and even stomping a shovel in the ground in a public space might slice through important cables, so we chose event locations where there was a responsible organization in charge, that organization had the insurance to cover us, and they were sponsoring us. As I put it at the time, I didn't want to put my personal net worth at risk by participating in this project. Twenty individual artists from the group participated with some very creative sculptures. We were requested by several organizations to participate in their events.

The venues where we showed:

- Jaxon's Night Market at James Weldon Johnson Park (formerly Hemming Park).
- Veterans Memorial Arena concert pre-function event.
- Porchfest in Springfield.
- Riverside Arts Market.
- Our last exhibition, again in James Weldon Johnson Park in June 2019.

Fun! Fun!











Image Credits:
1-4: David Engdahl
5: Ed Malesky

All NEFLS activity stopped in 2020 with the emergence of the pandemic, and we never continued our activities afterward. We maintain a list of about 170 artists many of whom would be willing to participate again if another creative would be willing to show the necessary leadership and do the hard work. I learned as group leader that I had to create many of the activity ideas and generally organize them for the group. After I had accomplished that, the artists in the group would enthusiastically volunteer for the tasks and participate. I believe that we met our mission on everything we did during our ten years of activities. Prior to the formation of the Northeast Florida Sculptors group there was little sculpture and 3D art in Jacksonville galleries and exhibitions. Now that inclusion is routine and common largely due, I believe, to the existence of NEFLS.

PRESS



THURSDAY · MAY 17, 2012 The Times-Union

Installing 'Installations!' exhibit

Jenny Hager, a sculpture instructor at the University of North Florida, walks past an entrance to a corridor
Styrofoam packing material. "Each piece [of material] is a sculpture in itself," Englahl said. Work was unde
In the atrium of the EverBank Building on Riverside Avenue on "Installations!," a group show of 19 large-s
artists. The exhibit, organized by members of the Northeast Florida Sculptors, is scheduled to open at 10
scheduled from 5 to 8 p.m. Saturday. The exhibit is free and will continue through Sunday, May 27.

THE EYE »»»



Lane Maris, Scott Murray, Natalie Halpern



Trudy and Patrick Bryant



Frank and Gail Beveridge, Sheila Page



Bill McQuaid, Jim Draper, James Draper



Mark Lietch, Mary Lou Hughes



Tommy Dobbs, Samson Mandrick



Mindy and Lad Hawkins

Chipping Away

Northeast Florida Sculptors, a new art collective, gave Karpeles Manuscript Museum a 3-D makeover last week as the museum opened the group's "Off the Wall" exhibit. Featuring sculptures in a wide variety of media — wood, alabaster and metal — the 30 sculptures on display ranged from animal and human replicas to tactile interpretations of heartbreak and other abstract ideas.

The crowd swelled to unexpected numbers, much to the delight of the sculptors. Artist David Engdahl, event coordinator and group member, said NFS members have two goals: to indulge their creativity and produce three-dimensional art.

Seen ogling the sculptures were Museum of Contemporary Art curator Ben Thompson and R. Roberts Gallery owner Jennifer Jones along with art fans Jean Shepherd, Cliff Leonard, Larry and Jaquie Davis, Margaret D'Angelis, David and Mary Gobelman, Ken Hatcher, Anna DeLoach, and Priscilla and Marcia Mederos. □

For more photos of this and other events, go to folioweekly.com/photos.php

FOLIO WEEKLY, March 2010



mar 2 - april30

Off The Wall: First Juried Exhibition of Northeast Florida Sculptors

Northeast Florida Sculptors was formed in 2009 under the leadership of David Engdahl, David Ponsler and Enzo Torcoletti as a forum for 3D artists to exchange information and communicate ideas. This informal group, which now includes over ninety members, will hold their inaugural juried exhibition in March and April at the Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum. Juror for the exhibition will be sculptor Michael Guadagno of Danvers, MA.

Reception, Friday, March 5, 5:30–8:00 p.m., Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum, 101 West First St., Jacksonville. For information contact David Engdahl, 398-4915.

ARBUS, January 2010

Northeast Florida Sculptors

'Off the Wall' exhibit opens at Karpeles today

By CHARLIE PATTON
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When sculptors David Engdahl and David Ponsler began discussing starting an organization for three-dimensional artists in Northeast Florida, they estimated potential membership at 12 to 15 people, Engdahl said.

They were wrong.

At the first meeting of Northeast Florida Sculptors last May, 40 people showed up. Today, the informal group has a membership of 95 artists in a five-county area.

Engdahl, a retired architect who has been sculpting primarily in laminated wood for 39 years, said he was "blown away by the quality of 3-D work" being done in Northeast Florida.

So with help from Ponsler and Enzo Torcoletti, he organized the exhibit and arranged to have Michael Guadagno of Danvers, Mass., serve as judge.

Beginning this week, the organization also has its first public show, a juried exhibit of 30 pieces by 21 artists. The exhibit, titled "Off the Wall," will be at the Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum through the end of April.

Engdahl said he felt a mix of pride and slight embarrassment when his piece "Lamelliform 200" was named best in show.

Honorable mention went to "Quiet Repose" by Nancy Holt Justus and "Fibrin" by Michael Cottrell.

A reception will be held from 5:30 to 8 p.m. today at the Karpeles, 101 W. First St., Admission to the Karpeles is free. Its regular operating hours are 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday.

FLORIDA TIMES-UNION, March 2010

Installing 'Installations!' exhibit



Photos by Bob.Self@jacksonville.com

Jenny Hager, a sculpture instructor at the University of North Florida, walks past an entrance to a corridor David Engdahl created with Styrofoam packing material. "Each piece [of material] is a sculpture in itself," Engdahl said. Work was under way Wednesday morning in the atrium of the EverBank Building on Riverside Avenue on "Installations!," a group show of 19 large-scale sculptures involving 29 artists. The exhibit, organized by members of the Northeast Florida Sculptors, is scheduled to open at 10 a.m. Saturday. A reception is scheduled from 5 to 8 p.m. Saturday. The exhibit is free and will continue through Sunday, May 27.



UNF student Erica Mendoza repairs one of the roughly 150 small sailboats created by Jenny Hager. The UNF sculpture instructor made the boats, which will be featured in "Installations!," from recycled glass, bamboo and fabric scraps.



Erica Mendoza (from left), David Engdahl, Sara Brull and Jenny Hager look over a large nest made of long strips of cypress. The work in progress is a team effort by Barbara Fryefield and Deborah Reid.

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if you'd like to catch a glimpse of "an animal that the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens was unaware they had in residence" be sure to plan a visit there before the year is out. As part of the zoo's One Hundred Year Anniversary celebration the artists of Northeast Florida Sculptors (NEFS) are showcasing some of their work in the cool shade of the zoo's elegant Asian Bamboo Garden. Featured pieces include a green polar bear fashioned from wood, a peafowl assembled with bits of wire and painted fabric, a thirteen-foot giraffe fabricated with unfinished plywood, and the aforementioned elusive creature whose tail you might spy before it slips into the garden's koi pond.

The NEFS exhibition is one of the numerous arts collaborations that Tony Vecchio, executive director of the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens, has championed throughout his successful five-year tenure. Vecchio, a passionate supporter of the arts, says, "Preserving art and culture or raising it up in the community is as important to me as saving wildlife in wild places. I'm always looking for opportunities to get art in the zoo so people can start to experience it."

The NEFS is an informal group of 3-D artists who have been meeting and pulling together well-received exhibitions since 2009. One of the co-founders of the group is David Engdahl, a retired architect and well-known local artist, arts advocate, and tireless community volunteer. Engdahl is thrilled to be working with the zoo for this exhibition: "Tony is just a really creative guy and he's so easy to work with," he says.

Ed Malesky, a member of the NEFS who is helping to organize the exhibition (and is the artist who dreamed up the green polar bear), also feels strongly about Vecchio and the zoo staff's efforts to seamlessly incorporate the arts into the fabric of the zoo, "He has a really creative team and they seem to embrace new ideas, a lot of stuff that hasn't been tried before. People like Bob Chabot [the zoo's direc-

tor of horticulture and facilities] that are just willing to throw everything in to help."

Another member of the NEFS helping to organize the event, Barbara Holmes-Fryefield, who created the wire-and-fabric peafowl sculpture now gracing the Asian Bamboo Garden, was primarily a 2-D artist before joining the group. She explains the group's goals and how they convinced her to give 3-D art a try: "This group is about growing and having fun and about education. Dave Engdahl said, 'I think there's a 3-D artist somewhere in there.' It's also about inspiring each other and when I had no idea of what I was going to do Dave said, 'Be audacious!' So I built a fourteen-foot bird nest. Now, I think going to the zoo and getting a bunch of us together to create some animals is also pretty audacious." Engdahl says that the basic premise of the NEFS is to always be doing something new. "That's where I am with my life in general ... to constantly be doing new things that challenge me. The group has the same emphasis – to challenge people to do things they haven't done before."

Many of the artists who participate in the group's activities and exhibitions come from our local high schools and universities, and according to Engdahl, "Not many cities can say they have the number of sculpture programs that we have. A lot of the works we have in our shows come from not only the

teachers of these programs, but also from their students." Malesky is especially impressed by the level of talent represented by the group: "I have to say that the people in this group blow me away. These are the really talented artists in town – people who do some really directed things."

The other artists contributing to the exhibition are: Phil Collins, the artist who imagined the resident that the zoo never knew it had; Dave Engdahl, who constructed the plywood giraffe (in addition to a horse made of sticks that he created in collaboration with Lurah Patrick); Tiffany Whitfield Leach, who designed multiple ceramic bird nests, and Debbie Driggers, whose full-size resin jaguar may be mistaken for an escapee from the zoo's Range of the Jaguar exhibit. Not all of the pieces will be sculptures of animals: Robert Noelke created a steel, copper, stone, and leather mandala and the zoo's stunning botanical gardens that are interspersed among the animal exhibits will be represented by David Ponsler's painted steel sunflower and Brian Frus's stacked "glass" stones. The zoo's milestones throughout its one hundred year history will be commemorated with Henry Gonzales's interactive sculpture, Susan Natale's mixed media scroll, and Jim Smith's floating sculpture. Vecchio is delighted that the NEFS is helping to celebrate the anniversary and hopes that zoo goers enjoy the exhibition and, "...appreciate the art and culture as much as they appreciate the animals and nature."

Now that fall is upon us, it is an especially glorious time to enjoy all that the zoo has to offer, from its most recent addition, the spectacular Land of the Tiger, to the magnificent array of gardens that includes the Asian Bamboo Garden – temporary home for the creations of some of Northeast Florida's most talented sculptors.

The Northeast Florida Sculpture Zoo 100 Exhibition will be on display at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens Sept. 26 to Dec. 31. See jacksonvillezoo.org for zoo hours and admission.

NORTHEAST FLORIDA SCULPTORS 2009-2019