



BLACKFOOT PATHWAYS: **SCULPTURE IN THE WILD**

Press Release

Blackfoot Pathways: Sculpture in the Wild **A new direction for Lincoln, Montana**

LINCOLN, MONT. – As Montana’s logging and mining industries declined during the last two decades, the small mountain town of Lincoln found itself languishing in the economic doldrums, but an unlikely project to bring internationally renowned artists to town for a sculpture symposium that will lead to the establishment of a sculpture park this fall may move the town’s fortunes in a new direction.

The project, known as the Blackfoot Pathways: Sculpture in the Wild International Sculpture Symposium, was born in April 2013 while Ireland’s top silversmith Kevin O’Dwyer was visiting Lincoln to collaborate with Rick Dunkerley, an award-winning master bladesmith who specializes in Damascus steel. The pair first met at the Pratt Fine Art Center in Seattle in 2010, when O’Dwyer, then Artist in Residence took a bladesmith master class Dunkerley presented there.

O’Dwyer, who in 2002 spearheaded the development of Sculpture in the Parklands at Lough Boora Parklands in Ireland, saw parallels between that area of the Irish midlands and Lincoln. As in the midlands, he saw an area at an economic and cultural crossroads, an area slowly losing its identity to forces beyond its control. Lough Boora was hit hard following decades of peat harvest that left vast tracts of cut away bogs and few economic options, while Lincoln’s historic mining and logging industries have effectively ceased to exist.

Dunkerley, a 20-plus year resident of Lincoln, was initially skeptical when O’Dwyer broached the idea, but as it took hold he realized bringing some of the world’s top symposium sculptors to create site-specific, monumental abstract sculpture that honors the industrial and cultural heritage of the Blackfoot Valley could re-invigorate the town. In addition to economic benefits, he sees it as a catalyst, creating a future for Lincoln as an artistic and cultural center in the state.

Dunkerley said community support is vital to making such a project come to life. “That was critical to what they accomplished in Ireland,” he explained. They involved the school heavily. These artists, they were artists-in-residence. They gave lectures at the school; they engaged with the whole community. They got them to participate. They got the community totally involved in it so they felt some ownership in it.”

Since last spring the symposium has developed the artistic direction, infrastructure and political support necessary to become a reality. Dunkerley, who heads the effort as project director, has slowly built support for the idea within the community and has worked tirelessly to bring the project to life. His first step was to hold a small meeting at the library with a few select people. The positive response there to the idea of a sculpture park in Lincoln convinced Dunkerley it was an idea that had enough traction to move ahead. Working with people who saw the idea’s potential, he formed a steering committee to develop the project.

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Locally the Lincoln Council for the Arts, Lincoln Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Upper Blackfoot Valley Community Council, The U.S. Forest Service, the Lincoln School Board and the Lewis and Clark County Commissioners have all embraced the sculpture symposium as a unique opportunity to revitalize the area by creating new economic, educational and cultural opportunities.

The project has also earned the support of the Blackfoot Challenge, the Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Montana State University, University of Great Falls, the University of Wisconsin, the Montana Historical Society, and Montana's First Lady, Lisa Bullock.

O'Dwyer, the projects' artistic director, brings his connections with the international art world to the table and has built interest for the project with several world-renowned sculptors from Finland, Denmark, Ireland, USA and England. He has been instrumental in helping the Sculpture in the Wild steering committee develop their symposium strategy and fundraising efforts and will both curate and participate in the symposium scheduled for September 2014.

A focus on education will play a major role in the future of the project. Artists will be invited to work in the sculpture park during spring and autumn residencies. The residency program provides a building block for delivering a strong arts education program that will benefit not only the Lewis and Clark County school system, but also schools and universities from around the state. The training of local artists to deliver the on-site education program will also provide needed economic support and foster their creative expression.

At the end of the International Sculpture Symposium, the Sculpture in the Wild sculpture park, planned for a 26-acre tract of land on the east edge of Lincoln, will be open to the public. Once established, it will be open throughout the year, providing artists, educators and the business community with new and exciting cultural and economic opportunities

"The sculpture park will give us the opportunity to honor the history of the Blackfoot Valley," Dunkerley said. "Having the eyes of world renowned artists respond to the beauty and heritage of our home can make us all look differently at what we take for granted in our daily lives."

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Or visit Sculpture in the Wild on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sculpture-in-the-Wild/443462522429266>

For more information and a chance to look at the area, a snowshoe hike through Natures Playground, the proposed site of the Sculpture in the Wild sculpture park, scheduled for noon, Saturday, Feb. 15. The Sculpture in the Wild steering committee will also have information on hand during a snow sculpture contest that same day at 4 p.m. in Lincoln's Hooper Park.



Rick Dunkerley – Project Director

Rick Dunkerley first started making knives in 1984, and interest in the craft grew after moving to Montana in 1985. He made stainless steel hunters and utility knives until 1991, when he began forging carbon steel knives and creating Damascus steel.

Dunkerley joined the American Bladesmith Society a year later. Since receiving his journeyman smith rating in 1995, his main focus has been Damascus steel, particularly mosaic and composite bar blades. Dunkerley attained the American Bladesmith Society Mastersmith rating in 1997 and in 2002 was appointed to the Board of Directors. In 2005 he was awarded the "maestro" rating by the Italian Knifemakers Guild.

Dunkerley specializes in Damascus folding knives, and also enjoys making Bowie or Persian style straight knives and has been extremely influential to the makers of folding knives throughout the United States.

Dunkerley was born in Sharon, Pennsylvania, and graduated from high school in Hermitage, PA in 1977. Rick then spent four years in the U. S. Air Force, stationed mostly at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, where he trained guard, drug, and bomb-sniffing dogs.

Dunkerley was recently elected to Montana's Circle of American Masters and brings management and organizational skills learned in the military and honed through his work with the Bladesmith Society and in coordinating "Forge-Ins" to Blackfoot Pathways: Sculpture in the Wild. A long-time resident of Lincoln Montana, he has been instrumental in building support for the project within the community and the state.

Rick's knives have been featured with photos and articles in knife publications worldwide, including appearances on the covers of *Blade Magazine* and *Knives Illustrated*.



Kevin O'Dwyer – Artistic Director, curator

O'Dwyer's artwork reflects his strong interests in ancient landscapes, industrial archaeology and architecture. His symposia installations respond to the industrial and environmental heritage of the landscape. Industrial artefacts, historical references, folklore and archival interviews are the building blocks in the development of his installations.

O'Dwyer has had numerous solo exhibitions of his studio based work as well as representing Ireland in over 40 international exhibitions. As artist-in-residence at the World Archaeology Conference (2010) he created a site specific sculpture for University College Dublin. His work is in private and public collections including The High Museum (USA), Victoria and Albert Museum (U.K.), Racine Art Museum (USA), The Ulster Museum (N. Ireland), University College Dublin (Ireland), Espace Paul Ricard (France) and the National Museum of Ireland.

In 2002 O'Dwyer initiated and directed the Lough Boora International Sculpture Symposium in a disused peat harvesting site in Ireland. The sculpture symposium led to the development of Sculpture in the Parklands, a 50 acre sculpture park that has commissioned over 25 site specific installations. O'Dwyer, as artistic director and curator from 2002 until 2011, directed the development of the arts and education programmes that won four national awards and received critical acclaim in Ireland, England, USA, China, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands.

For more detailed information see:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kevin-ODwyer-MetalsmithSculptor/365315270211454>.