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Dozens of stunning 'wind sculptures' at new Hill exhibit

Posted on April 7, 2017 (<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/2017/04/07/dozens-of-stunning-wind-sculptures-at-new-hill-exhibit/>) by Len Lear (<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/author/len-lear/>)



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(<http://www.chestnuthilllocal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Arboretum.jpg>)

By Len Lear

While our president and his aides deny that climate change exists and dismantle protections for our precious environment, many brave pioneers continue to do their best to inform and alert the public to the supreme importance of conserving the environment for the long-term health of the planet, not just for short-term profits.

One such pioneer is Lyman Whitaker, 75, one of the world's foremost creators of Wind Sculptures whose new exhibit, "Morris Arboretum in Motion: The Kinetic Sculptures of Lyman Whitaker," featuring more than 50 wind sculptures, opened April 1 and will continue until Oct. 9 at the 92-acre horticultural display garden in Chestnut Hill.

Lyman, a native of Salt Lake City who still lives in southern Utah, earned a B.A. from the University of Utah, although it took him 16 years to graduate "as I lived life in-between." He has been a practicing sculptor for over 50 years, the past 30 of which have primarily been focused on creating Wind Sculpturestm, each of which is produced by hand.

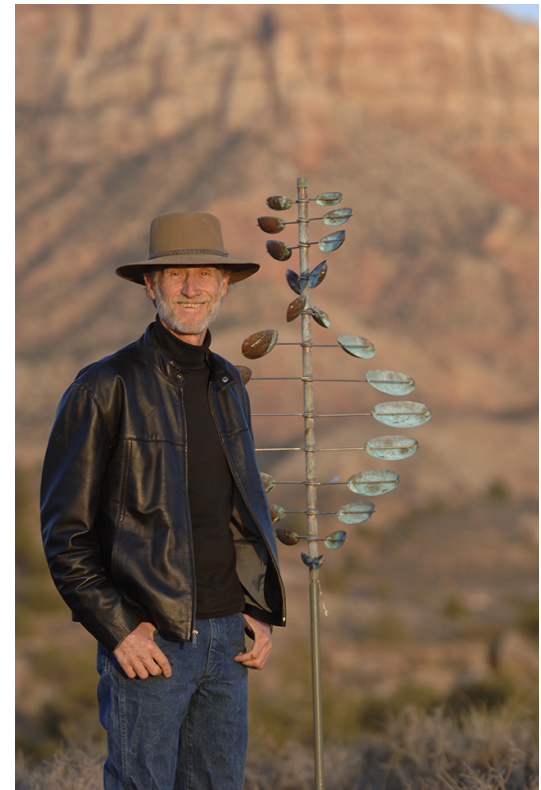
As a master in the kinetic sculpture discipline, Lyman is known round the world. His work is represented at dozens of fine art galleries and in private collections throughout the U.S. and in Canada, Europe and Australia. His sculptures are seen in museums, at the seaside, in urban areas, in public venues and back yards.

The Wind Sculpturestm are kinetic artworks that respond to the changing currents of the wind. His compositions can vary from single, 5-foot tall pieces to "Wind ForestsTM" consisting of groups of sculptures standing up to 27 feet tall. They are intended to make observers think about their surroundings and their own relationship to nature.

Following is our recent interview with Whitaker:

- Did you always want to be an artist, even as a child?

"No. I wanted to be a scientist or an engineer, but my mother thought I was better suited as an artist. Between high school and college while working up on a transformer for a local TV station, I found a piece of soft sandstone. When my coworker went off, I took this rock shaped like a head and sculpted a face into it and reburied it. When he dug it up, he thought it was an artifact. That was fun. I decided to take a sculpture class that first quarter, which focused me into art. I did well and continued."



- What kind of art did you do before the kinetic art and wind sculptures?

"Everything from pottery to bronzes to fountains to jewelry to 'found' object colleges"

- How did the kinetic art and wind sculptures come about?

"In a moment of curious play when I was not focused on doing serious art. Many elements of the sculptures came from my college days and from working with another fluid water. I put the first one out for sale at an art show. It sold, and as I was setting the third one up at a local gallery, it sold right away. It caught my attention as something I should continue."

- How do you want viewers to feel about nature when they see your organic constructs?

"I would hope that it would help the viewer connect from their machine-driven world to the plant kingdom. I want them to notice their natural surroundings and realize that the breath of the planet propels my sculptures. It is something we all share — air. My sculpture's job is to generate joy."

- Does the artist have a role to play in alerting the public to the threats to our environment?

"Yes. I have thought a lot about this and have been an activist and was a key player in stopping a coal-fired power plant in my area. My art doesn't lend itself to this kind of alert. My hope is that my art connects the viewer to the elegance of the natural world."

- What is your idea of perfect happiness?

"The nature of happiness is not perfect."

- If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?

"No job."

- What do you consider your greatest achievement?

"My family, my wind sculpture business and staying alive and in good health at 75."

- Who are your own favorite artists, living and/or dead?

"Alexander Calder and Rodin."

- Who are your heroes in real life, living and/or dead?

"I never think of heroes."

- What is your biggest pet peeve?

"That OSHA mandated backup beepers on construction equipment."

All of Whitaker's sculptures will be available for purchase through Leopold Gallery (<http://www.leopoldgallery.com/>), and 25% of all sales will benefit Morris Arboretum. The exhibit is free with regular garden admission. For more information, visit www.morrisarboretum.org (<http://www.morrisarboretum.org/>)

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