Habitat’s original sculpture “Icarus Was Here” stands 12 feet high. Additional feathers have now been added and are suspended at different heights among the forest canopy at the Price Sculpture Forest in Coupeville.

Art goes airborne at Price Sculpture Forest

By Kathy Reed Whidbey Weekly

One has only to cast their eyes up into the trees at the Price Sculpture Forest near Coupeville to discover the latest addition to one of its displays.

The original piece, “Icarus Was Here,” by Whidbey Island artist Pat McVay, was installed last November, but the piece wasn’t finished until this past Sunday.

To understand the story behind the art piece, it’s helpful to dip into one’s knowledge of Greek Mythology. Icarus was the son of Daedalus, the craftsman. The two were imprisoned by King Minos in a tower above his palace. Daedalus created two sets of wings for himself and Icarus, made from feathers held together with wax. He taught Icarus how to fly and the two escaped the tower using the wings. However, even though Icarus had been warned not to fly too close to the sun, he did, causing the wax to melt. His wings fell apart and Icarus tumbled down into the sea and died.

So, as one looks at McVay’s colorful piece, it represents the feathers from Icarus’ wings floating to earth. The initial sculpture is about 12 feet off the ground. McVay and Price started adding additional feathers in January, but there are now 30 separate, hand-carved, cedar feathers gracing the completed piece. They range in size from two feet to 10 feet in the forest and are suspended at various levels in the canopy – some as high as 80 feet in the air – held in place by cables mounted in the trees by artist Jesse Brighten.

“Intertwining the art with the natural habitat was always part of my vision for the sculpture forest,” said its creator, Scott Price. “The sculpture forest’s tagline has even become ‘Where Art Enhances Nature and Nature Enriches Art.’ If you ask me why any particular sculpture is located where it is installed, I have a location-specific reason for it. There are no examples of ‘Here’s an open spot, so let’s put it here.’”

Price said he has focused on and prioritized sculptors such as McVay, artists with great ideas which, in some cases, could only be constructed from a specific location within the forest.

“A month ago, Anthony Heinz May flew out here from New York City and was onsite for a week creating a fascinating sculpture from a large tree that was blown over in our big windstorm that occurred a couple of weeks before he arrived,” Price said. “That sculpture has become a new favorite among visitors. The reactions we heard from visitors who walked by Pat’s sculpture were similarly enthusiastic.”

Since its opening, the Price Sculpture Forest has drawn a steady stream of visitors, something Price anticipates will only grow as the pandemic slowly recedes and people are able to travel more freely.

“The number of visitors has been steady and actually growing, and of course we are not even in official tourist season yet,” he said. “Many locals have repeat visits as a pleasant place to walk or a fun outing with family. Many off-island tourists are hearing about it and coming to Whidbey specifically to visit it.”

Price said they are saving up donations to expand the small parking lot, which fills up rapidly and means the overflow of cars must park along the street.

Price Sculpture Forest is open daily from 9 a.m. to sunset. It is free to visit and a self-guided tour of the entire forest is available for those whose phones have internet/data access. Donations are gladly accepted. The sculpture forest is located at 678 Parker Road in Coupeville. More information is available at sculpturenforest.org or on social media.

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Pat McVay, tree sculptor and a helper adjust cable rigging to suspend feathers for Whidbey artist Pat McVay’s sculpture, “Icarus Was Here” at the Price Sculpture Forest in Coupeville.

Price Sculpture Forest is a 10-acre sculpture forest for those whose phones have internet/data access. Donations are gladly accepted. The sculpture forest is located at 678 Parker Road in Coupeville. More information is available at sculpturenforest.org or on social media.

We’re here for you, ready to listen and navigate this together.

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