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Andrew DeVries celebrates 30 years

By Laura Corona, Berkshire Eagle Staff
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LENOX -- From a Rochester, N.Y. family farm, to a Denver ballet studio, to Paris and the Berkshires, Sculptor Andrew DeVries' artistic journey has traversed time, place and even medium. This year, DeVries celebrates his 30th anniversary as a sculptor.

DeVries' work, which began once upon a time with drawings made from Polaroid photos of PBS programs, can now be seen across the country -- most recently in a two-block sculpture tour in Lenox.

The outdoor Lenox Sculpture Walk, which went up May 29 and will continue through Nov. 1, shows 25 of DeVries' largest figurative sculptures in bronze. The tour spans decades of his work, with early pieces from the mid 1980s through to "Innocence," which he finished just two days before the show was installed. The pieces, as a whole, draw attention to local businesses while prompting viewers to continue walking the entire two blocks to see the next sculpture on the path, always visible farther down the street.

To DeVries, the sculpture tour is a way to give back to the community and the area that have inspired him since he arrived in the Berkshires in 1985.

"There is a movement to get creative people together with industry. I started to wonder what I could do that would integrate what I do -- my work -- with the community," DeVries said as we walked together through Lenox. "I hope that this sculpture walk helps all the businesses."

According to Lenox Town Manager Greg Federspiel, the

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sculpture tour is having the desired effect of drawing attention to local businesses. "We'll only see it more as the summer progresses," he said.

Federspiel added that the project imagined by DeVries is also stimulating other art galleries to think about collaborating to have art displayed throughout Lenox. "We're hoping this will grow into a more inclusive and annual event that can add to the town," Federspiel said.

While the Berkshires have been DeVries' home for many years, much of the influence for his sculpture comes from his early years, both at the farm where he grew up and in the ballet studio, where he went after leaving home at the age of 20.

"The farm was the best training. I was welding at the age of 13," he said. "Life on the farm was all about using your hands, understanding life and death, learning how to build things and seeing the beauty of

nature."

Nonetheless, his sculpting did not begin until an instructor at the Denver dance studio suggested that DeVries turn some of his drawings into three-dimensional art.

"I put clay in my hands, and that was it," DeVries said. "It was like angels came out of the sky and said 'this is your calling.'"

Many of the pieces on the sculpture tour, as well as those in his Church Street gallery, showcase the early influence of the ballet studio. DeVries' sculptures are fluid and energetic. Many, like "Sparrow" and "This Man Who Flies," appear as though they will lift into space at any moment. Others illustrate the sheer energy of dance, such as "Other Side of Eden."

According to DeVries, the inspiration for the piece struck as he watched a friend perform a series of grand jetés in the ballet studio.

"On the last one, he hit the wall, but I saw him go right through the wall," DeVries said.

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