

Inside Movement vol 1 no 1
1966
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John Kearney

John Kearney was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1924, and was educated at Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. He is co-founder and co-director of the Contemporary Art Workshop, Chicago, Ill. Built with Cosmo Campoli an art bronze foundry. He has held one man shows in Chicago, New York City, Detroit, Provincetown, and Rome, Italy. Also Mr. Kearney has been featured in many group shows. Among his numerous prizes are 1st prize from the Magnificent Mile Festival in Chicago and the Sarasota Art Association "Top Sculpture Prize" in Sarasota, Florida. He was awarded an Italian government grant to work in sculpture for one year. Also a U.S. Government Fulbright Travel Grant for sculpture in Italy.

John Kearney has taught metalsmithing, painting and sculpture for over 15 years at the Contemporary Art Workshop in Chicago. He has traveled and worked in Mexico with his wife and two children. During the summer he lives in Provincetown, Mass. In 1963-64 he lived in Rome with his family while working and studying on the afore mentioned grants from the Italian and American governments. In 1962 he began to develop the field of motorized sculpture which has been called kinetic sculpture. He has incorporated motors in representational forms, using bicycles, vacuum cleaners, record machines to comment satirically on many aspects of modern life.

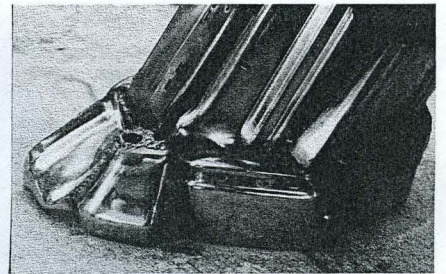
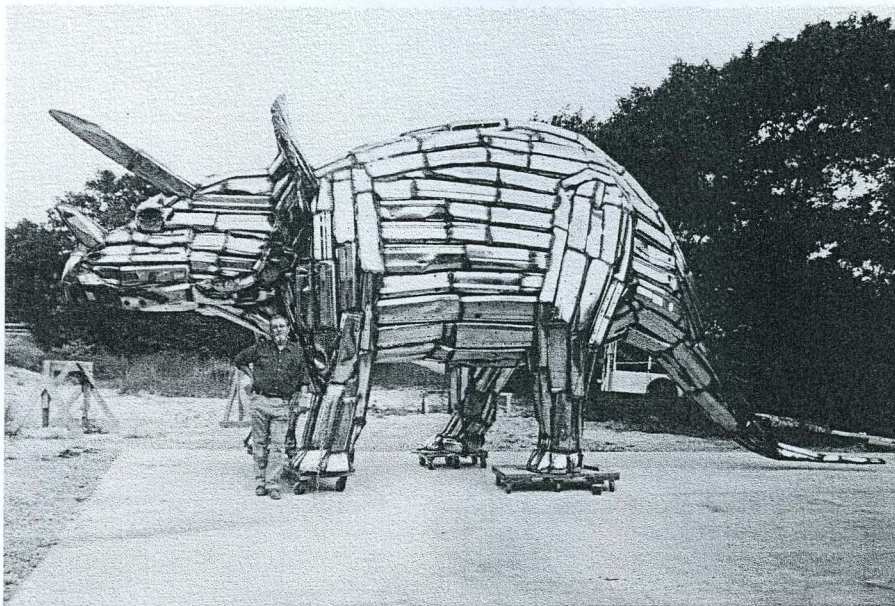
Mr. Kearney is listed in Who's Who in American Art. He has gallery affiliation ACA, New York and Rome. He was named "Man of the Year" in Chicago. He was the first person to be awarded this honor, in this annual award by the council.



Memento Mori

AY
Kearney's go

In the early '60s, not long after Jean Tinguely's contraption of bicycle wheels and whistles, "Homage to New York," blew itself up in the sculpture garden of the Museum of Modern Art, Jack Kearney delivered his seven-foot kinetic sculpture, "Emancipated Woman," to the Chrysler Museum in Provincetown. Accompanied by a police escort and a group of friends, Kearney made a sardonic pilgrimage down Commercial Street from the far east end of town. Painted a vivid yellow and mounted on a bicycle refitted with the wheels of a baby carriage, the robotic woman was fashioned from discarded oil drums, bed springs, a flour sifter, and welding rods, which represented her hair. When a doorbell button was pressed, she jerked her head from side to side and swung a hammer down upon a small refrigerator motor she carried in her left hand. She was eventually destroyed by the curiosity of children who kept pressing the doorbell button until it wore out. The owner of the museum, Walter Chrysler, appeared on the lawn to say that "Kearney has untangled Tinguely!"



In the summer of 1990, Kearney again put his hand-print into the wet cement of art history. On a hot day in August he invited a large crowd to his studio to witness the unveiling of his enormous dinosaur, three tons of chrome car bumpers welded into a facsimile of a three-horned triceratops. The creature was covered with tarpaulins when several assistants rolled it onto a paved area near the studio. Then Kearney removed the covering and the shiny facets gleamed in the sun with the force of many mirrors. All cheered and drank champagne. Kearney climbed a ladder, sat on the neck of the beast, and gave a little speech. He explained that dinosaurs were not his principal interest, they were just his largest commissions. He has created a two-ton elephant for the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago, where he lives in the winter, and a pair of one-ton fighting longhorns outside the Kansas Coliseum in Wichita. At the ground level of the tallest building in Dallas, beside a wide reflecting pool, his giant frogs are happy with the knowledge that they are loved in Texas.

He told the crowd about a group of first graders who visited him at his workshop in Chicago, making him wonder why they liked dinosaurs. They told him, "Because they're dead!" Kearney realizes that the very material he uses to make his commemorative sculpture, bumpers from cars made in the '60s and '70s, is itself endangered, almost extinct. In the days when they still burned everything at the Provincetown dump, before sanitary landfill, bumpers were plentiful. To gather them, he had only to wait for the smoke to clear and the metal to cool. Now he is down to nine or 10 tons in storage and plans to work in moderate sizes in order to preserve his supply.

He climbed down from the ladder and picked up a stainless steel colander placed near

the dinosaur's foot. A tiny wind-up dinosaur emerged, as if from an egg, and started walking into the crowd. Kearney announced that they were witnessing the first live birth of a dinosaur in 65 million years. A little later at least one person was still entranced. Kearney noticed a three-year-old sitting in the shade under the big dinosaur holding the baby in his lap, upside down with the legs still running steadily as if it were trying to get away. ■

— C. B.

Photographs: top left, Lynn Kearney; above, Al Wasserman.

INTERGALACTIC NEWS RELEASE: AUGUST, 5091. RARE KEARNYASSAURUS AUTOBUMPERUS FOUND.



The remains of this monstrous creature were unearthed this summer and carbon dated to the late twentieth century. After scrupulous and intensive examination, a team of eminent galactic scientists concluded that it is the EXOSKELETON of

an animal whose soft inner body was probably a food source for primitive local populations. Its immense size would seem to indicate that an entire town was fed throughout the harsh winter normally associated with the area in which it was found.

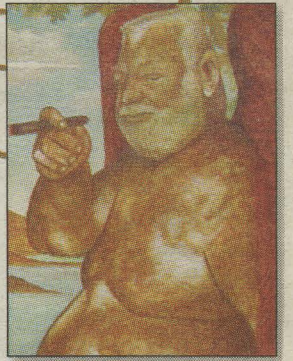
Arts & Entertainment

SECTION TWO • Thursday, August 11, 2005
 Clubs.....48
 Galleries.....50
 Classifieds.....58

Tammy Faye Starlite
 shines in a halo of
 irreverence...42



The new essence
 of male figurative
 art...45



Another bumper crop from Jack Kearney

By Ann Wood
 BANNER STAFF

About 40 years ago, when Jack Kearney needed metal from which to make sculptures, he went outside his East End studio and looked up into the sky toward the dump.

"When the smoke got to really light gray you knew it was cool enough to get them," he says. Kearney then headed over to the dump, picked up a pile of bumpers, brought them to his studio and dropped them on the ground. They fell into the shape of a ballerina.

"I was born as an artist, I say. That's how I see them," he says.

Today, in his foundry on Aunt Sukey Way, Kearney picks up a bumper lined with rubber on one side.

"You see how this looks like an animal? It looks like fur," he says.

Although one or two artists used bumpers to make sculptures before him, Kearney says, "I was the first one to work with recognizable subject material."

Berta Walker picked out about 20 of Kearney's pieces, what he calls "the best of the best," to show in an exhibition that includes work by Salvatore Del Deo and Nancy Whorf, and opens with a reception from 7 to 9 p.m. Friday at the Berta Walker Gallery, 208 Bradford St., Provincetown. The show runs through Aug. 21.

Kearney's exhibition, aptly titled "Heavy Metal," contains bronze castings and automobile bumper sculpture, many of which are animals. There are two skunks, one of which is in spraying position, a giraffe, and Kearney and sculptor John Keith are working on giving a rhino some eyes.

"It's not the only thing I do, but it's something I'm well known for," Kearney says.

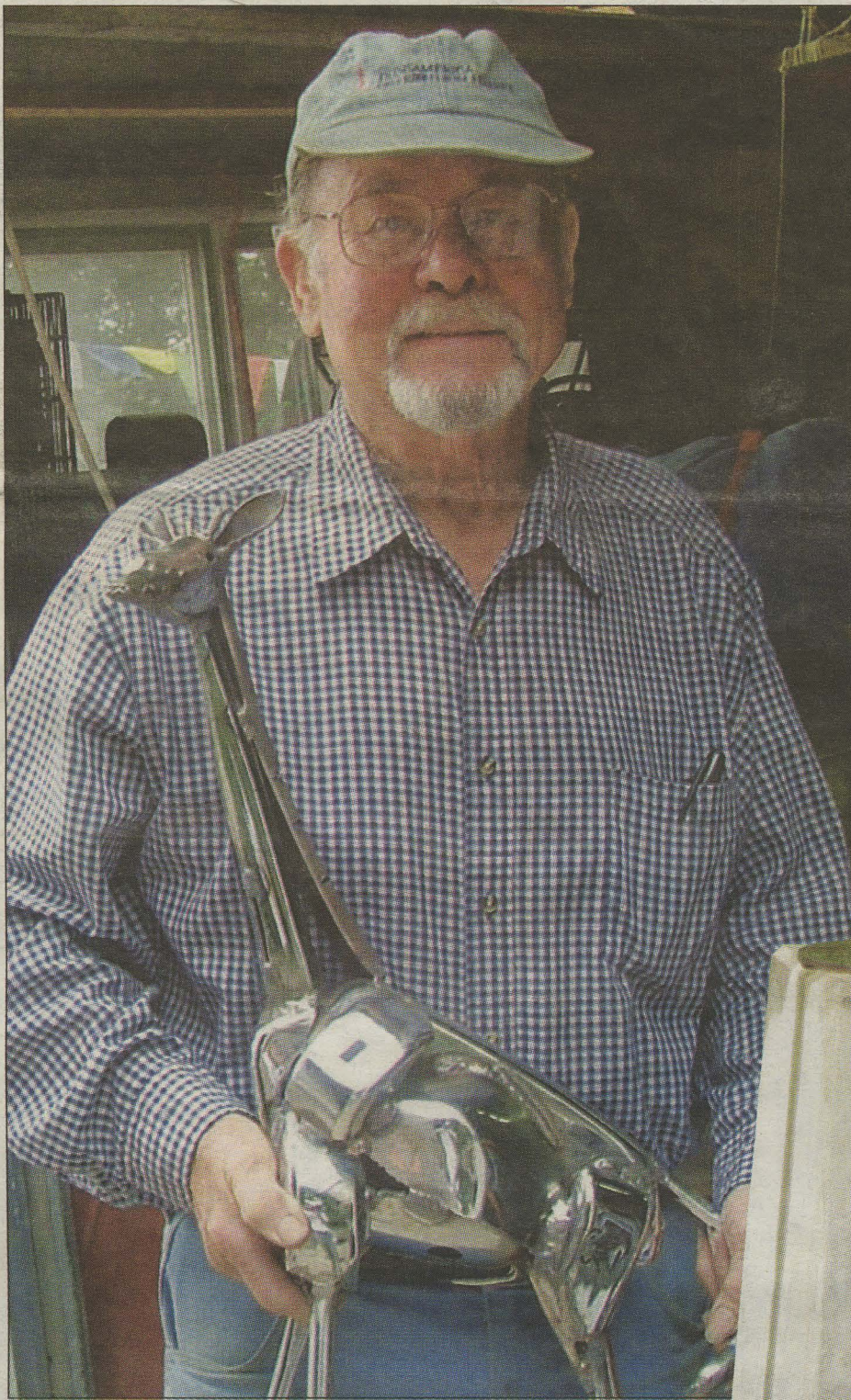


PHOTO ANN WOOD

Jack Kearney holds a small giraffe made from car bumpers. He works in sizes from compact to much larger than life.

The other thing he is well-known for are his commissioned large bronze pieces. Last year he finished a commissioned bronze Scarecrow, which joined a bronze Cowardly Lion and a Tin Man made from bumpers. They are

installed in Oz Park in Chicago, a park named in honor of Lyman Frank Baum who wrote "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." The park is located a block away from Kear-



The Scarecrow that Kearney made for Oz Park in Chicago.

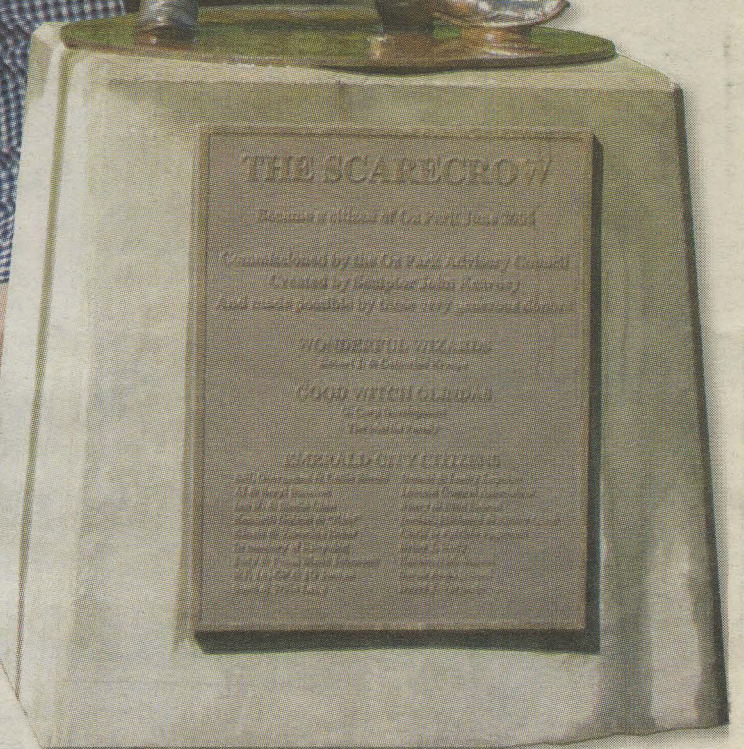


PHOTO COURTESY JACK KEARNEY

KEARNEY continued on page 46

KEARNEY continued from page 41

ney's winter foundry, the Chicago Contemporary Art Workshop. He began his Chicago workshop 53 years ago and his wife, Lynn, manages it. He learned last Thursday that he's been commissioned to finish up the Wizard of Oz series with Dorothy and Toto, and plans to start the moldings this summer in Provincetown.

When asked whether he likes bumpers or bronze better, he doesn't hesitate.

"It's like if you have two children. Do you like one better? They're both wonderful," he says. "Everything is spontaneous with me. I don't even like to plan today what I do tomorrow. First I look in the morning and see what I want to try."

Kearney says that sometimes he'll start a piece thinking it's going to be one thing and realizes it looks like something else. He doesn't worry about it. "I switch," he says.

Kearney began his formal art training with Carl Milles (a student of Rodin's) at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. He was a pilot of an amphibious landing craft on the U.S.S. Warhawk in WW II, during which he learned underwater welding.

"I never in my wildest dreams thought I'd use anything I learned in the Navy. But I did," Kearney says.

His many awards include a Fulbright Scholarship to Rome, and his bumper sculptures are held in the permanent collections of museums and universities around the

country, including Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry and Lincoln Park Zoo and the Detroit Children's Museum.

Painter Richard Florsheim, who taught at Kearney's Art Workshop in Chicago, suggested that he visit Provincetown because of its arts community. That was 49 years ago.

"We fell in love with Provincetown. We've come back every summer except for the two years we were in Italy on a grant from the United States and Italy," he says.

The Kearneys originally rented a half of a house in the East End which cost \$500 for the entire summer, but when the owner sold it the rent got so high the couple decided they had to buy something. They purchased a house from the cousin of an artist they knew — a house that had been a garage with living quarters up above.

"We turned around and made it a nice living space," he says.

Kearney later bought a half acre of property on Aunt Sukey Way on which to build a studio. He needed that much land, he says, so that all that banging and welding wouldn't disturb the neighbors. After all, he's working away every day.

On this day, Kearney's holding down the rhino. The bumper piece he wants to use as an eye doesn't quite fit. He hands it off to Keith, who takes a plasma cutter to it. Kearney tries fitting the bumper eye on the rhino again. It needs to be rounder. He hands it back to Keith. The exhibition may be coming up, but they're not done working just yet.

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