



MID-SOUTH SCULPTURE ALLIANCE



'26-'28 Outdoor Sculpture Exhibition

Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark in Birmingham, AL



Thank you for visiting the Sculpture Garden

Here you'll find an overview of the garden's history, its thoughtful expansion over time, and details about the artwork currently on display—including our rotating exhibitions and permanent collection.

This 2-year exhibition, curated in partnership between Sloss Metal Arts and the Mid-South Sculpture Alliance (MSA), showcases work from contemporary sculptors from around the country.

Founded in 2006, the Mid-South Sculpture Alliance is a non-profit organization formed to promote the creation and awareness of sculpture in its many and varied forms within our communities while providing a supportive environment for sculpture and sculptors. MSA advances the understanding that sculpture educates; affects social change; and engages artists, art professionals, and the community in dialogue. its membership is open to anyone, anywhere, with an interest in and commitment to the field of sculpture - including sculptors, art educators, patrons, collectors, galleries, museums, and more.

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HISTORY OF THE SCULPTURE GARDEN

Before the Sculpture Garden was established in 2023 with support from the Alabama State Council on the Arts, this area housed two important pieces of industrial equipment.

One was a Slag Granulator, a machine that ground slag into various sizes for use in concrete, insulation, and other products. A similar granulator can be seen near the #1 Furnace and Water Tower.

The second was a Recuperator, none of which remain at Sloss today. The adjacent Hot Blast Stoves were heated using reclaimed furnace gases. Rather than letting the heat escape through the smokestacks, the gases were diverted into the Recuperator, which captured and reused the heat to preheat the cold blast of air before it entered the Hot Blast Stoves. This process improved energy efficiency and reduced operating costs.

To learn more about Sloss Furnace history visit: www.slossfurnaces.org



The No. 2 Furnace, Slag Pit, and Recuperator. 1936.



Keeper
Ellis Barber

Waco, TX
Steel

This figure represents the current largest piece in my box construction figure series. This series culminated in my undergraduate BFA show, with multiple figurative sculptures with unique finishes. This series is heavily inspired by the humanoid figures found in ancient petroglyphs and pictographs found on cliff faces in the American West. I am struck by the otherworldly depictions of these artworks and what they leave to our imagination. In this series, I am exploring my own experiences with stress, anxiety, and loneliness. I often find it difficult to understand and relate to others, with these sculptures I aim to create figures that represent my interpretation of humans; monolithic, impenetrable, and cryptic. By creating these figures, they help me to understand those around me. Through this process, I believe it is not unreasonable to suggest that by creating my work, those that may have difficulty understanding me may be able to relate to me through my sculptures. With these figures, I hope to bridge the gap between us, to show others what I can create that represents me to them, and them to me.

Surrounding myself with these figures, they act as my guardians and protectors. When I may feel uncomfortable or afraid of others, being in the presence of these sculptures brings me comfort. The long, meticulous nature of welding, grinding, and sanding each joint to a perfect edge gives me an intimate connection with each piece, imbuing them with a unique personality to me. With this sculpture in particular, its immense height compels me to stand in its shadow, feeling its protective presence as it stands over me. Its name, *Keeper*, reflects this feeling, and I hope others feel comforted in its presence as I have many times.

***Fragmented
Section 1***
James Wade
Harrodsburg, KY
Cast iron, steel



As an artist, I am invested in how material, location, and intent shape the meaning of a work. My sculptures engage a sense of place, drawing on the histories and observations embedded within specific sites.

Fragmented Section originated from a steam radiator removed from a land-grant home in Lexington, Kentucky. Molds taken from this object form the foundation of the sculpture's pattern. As inverse impressions, these molds transform the radiator into negative space within the composition. The resulting fragmented and repeated forms emphasize presence and absence, evoking memory and the sense of loss that accompanies the passage of generations.

With an heirloom quality, the sculpture recalls grandmother clocks—obelisk-like forms that mark time. Cast from a broken radiator, the work acknowledges both the integrity of the original form and its destruction. Fine details from the original casting are preserved, honoring the technical skill of the foundry. This connection is further reinforced by casting the sculpture using metal recycled from the original radiator itself.

Fragmented Section builds upon the complexity of mold-making in both method and metaphor. The work celebrates the history, material legacy, and enduring residue of iron casting.



High on the Hog
Luke Sides
Oak Point, TX
Cast Iron, Welded Steel

High on the Hog takes its title from a colloquial phrase associated with prosperity, excess, and elevated status. Historically, the expression refers to access to the most desirable cuts of meat—those taken from higher on the animal—linking consumption directly to hierarchy. The sculpture literalizes this idiom, constructing a vertical system in which privilege, authority, and surveillance are materially stacked.

At the apex stands a vividly pink pig, elevated beyond practicality on a narrow platform. The figure reads as both emblem and caricature—abundant, indulgent, and conspicuously placed. Its exaggerated position suggests entitlement without vulnerability, reward without exposure. The pig does not labor or enforce; it simply occupies the highest point.

Supporting the figure is a tall, white steel structure reminiscent of surveillance towers, guard posts, and institutional oversight. The tower functions as a mechanism of control and visibility, elevating power while remaining structurally neutral and impersonal. It is designed not for comfort, but for monitoring—an architecture that sees without being seen. The pig's placement atop this form merges indulgence with oversight.

At ground level, the sculpture resolves into a rusted steel cage containing cast sheriff badges made from bacon and sausage. These forms collapse symbols of authority into materials tied to consumption. Enclosed within the cage, they appear both preserved and imprisoned—authority contained, yet stripped of permanence.

Material contrasts reinforce the work's tension: artificial pink, sterile white, and oxidized steel. *High on the Hog* presents a frozen hierarchy—indulgence elevated, surveillance normalized, and authority rendered consumable.



Beacon
Andrew Light
Lexington, KY
Aluminum

Beacon is part of a body of work, in which I am exploring ideas of abstraction, derived from my photography practice of capturing cast shadows. The transition from momentary ephemera to durable object, is a journey of discovery and possibility. Rendered in metal, this work commemorates the little moments in between, that make up our lives.



Liberte
Chris Wubbena
Jackson, MO
Stainless Steel, acrylic,
& spray paint

Liberte, inspired by classical figurative sculpture along with geologic and Neolithic rock formations, takes a closer look at the individual, the person, and the weight they assume. The abstracted figurative forms exist in a state of perpetual action and reaction as their stainless-steel bodies construct and twist under large, painted, rock-like masses. The painted, layered histories accumulated atop the figurative forms express the here and now with the use of applied text and imagery. Left under the weight of ever-changing burdens, in the moment infinito, the artwork, like ourselves, exists in its own admix of realities, reasons, and selective memories.



Trails Wreath
Kristen Tordella-Williams
Auburn, AL
Cast Iron

Trails Wreath is a cast iron sculpture created in 2018 at Sculpture Trails Outdoor Museum in Solsberry, IN, where artists gather each summer for an intensive cast iron workshop. The process of casting iron is physically demanding and highly collaborative: it involves breaking raw iron, constructing molds from resin-bonded sand, melting the material in a custom built furnace, and pouring molten metal heated to over 2,400 degrees Fahrenheit into prepared forms.

Trails Wreath is the twenty-second in casting in an ongoing series of iron wreaths. Earlier works in the series are smaller in scale, while recent pieces expand into larger, community-engaged forms. The artist's interest in the wreath as a form began during a 2014 visit to Latvia for the International Conference on Contemporary Cast Iron Art Practices, where I encountered traditions of midsummer wreath-making tied to the celebrations of Līgo and Jāņi. These practices, rooted in pre-Christian rituals, honor cycles of nature, memory, and communal gathering.

By translating the wreath into cast iron, a form historically associated with domestic labor and often created for free by women actively combines a feminine-coded tradition with an industrial material and process historically dominated by men. In *Trails Wreath*, this dialogue is further expanded through impressions of feet cast directly off of participating artists in that year's workshop. Made using alginate, a dental casting material capable of capturing fine detail, these forms were combined with forest debris gathered from the site, embedding both human and environmental traces into the work. The traces of the environment and labor are woven together into a cohesive casting representing the community who made the sculpture possible.

Installed outdoors since its creation, *Trails Wreath* reflects on the marks we leave behind be it physical, communal, and ecological, and asks viewers to consider our enduring impact as we walk through our lives.



Monument to Laborious Mundanity

Kevin Vanek

Greensboro, NC
Cast aluminum

Monument to Laborious Mundanity is a cast aluminum sculpture composed of a pallet, push broom, and bag of sand. The work honors the sand mold-making process widely used in metal casting by recontextualizing the often-overlooked tools and materials essential to its execution. Through the act of casting these objects in aluminum, items typically regarded as utilitarian—the humble pallet, the indispensable bag of sand, and the trusted push broom—are elevated to a status of permanence and visual significance.

The sculpture foregrounds objects that are frequently perceived as disposable or insignificant within the foundry environment, yet are relied upon extensively in daily operations. By transforming these tools into enduring metal forms, the work challenges conventional hierarchies of value, positioning the mundane as worthy of recognition and reflection.

These objects are also closely associated with forms of labor often categorized as unskilled within blue-collar industries. In this context, the sculpture extends its focus beyond material culture to acknowledge the individuals whose labor sustains industrial processes. These workers are integral to the functioning of industry, yet their contributions often go unrecognized.

Following the casting process, the objects are manipulated in ways that subvert their original function, encouraging viewers to reconsider their role and meaning. Ultimately, the work serves as a reminder that without these ordinary tools—and the labor they

SLOSS METAL ARTS PERMANENT COLLECTION



Ladleman Blues
Erik Johnson
1999



Untitled
Vaughn Randall



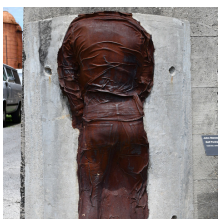
Turtle Island Drum
Wayne Potratz



Lake Effect
Daniel Hunt



Wedges
Hana Jubran
2001



Self Portrait
John Stewart
Jackson
2005



**It's All Down
Here From Here**
Matt Crane
2019



Ladleman Blues II
Erik Johnson
2000



**Momentary
News**
David Lobdell
2000



Aspire
Ira Hill



Naked
Marshall Christie
2019



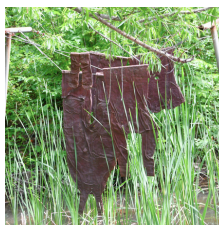
Time Sieve
Allen Peterson
2000



Scoop
Forrest Millsap
2007



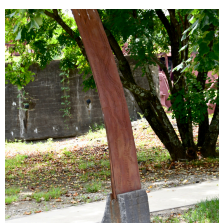
Vertical Shed
John Stewart
Jackson
2010



**Clothesline
Birds**
Michael Bonadio
2007



AMUK
Ira Hill



Sail
Julie Ward
2006



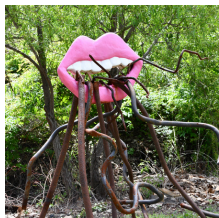
Untitled
Ian Skinner
2018



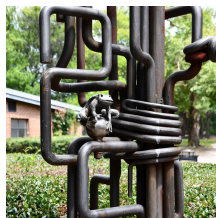
Toys for Boys
Michal Staszczak
2025



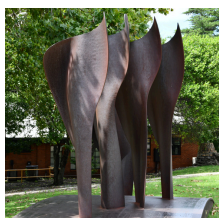
Untitled
Francis Akosah
2025



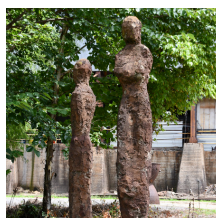
People Pleaser
Alexandra Rose
2024



Bredohl Gate
Manfred Bredohl
Forged during
the 1986
Birmingham
Blacksmithing
Festival



The Exiles
Tony Buchen and
Jeralyn Goodwin

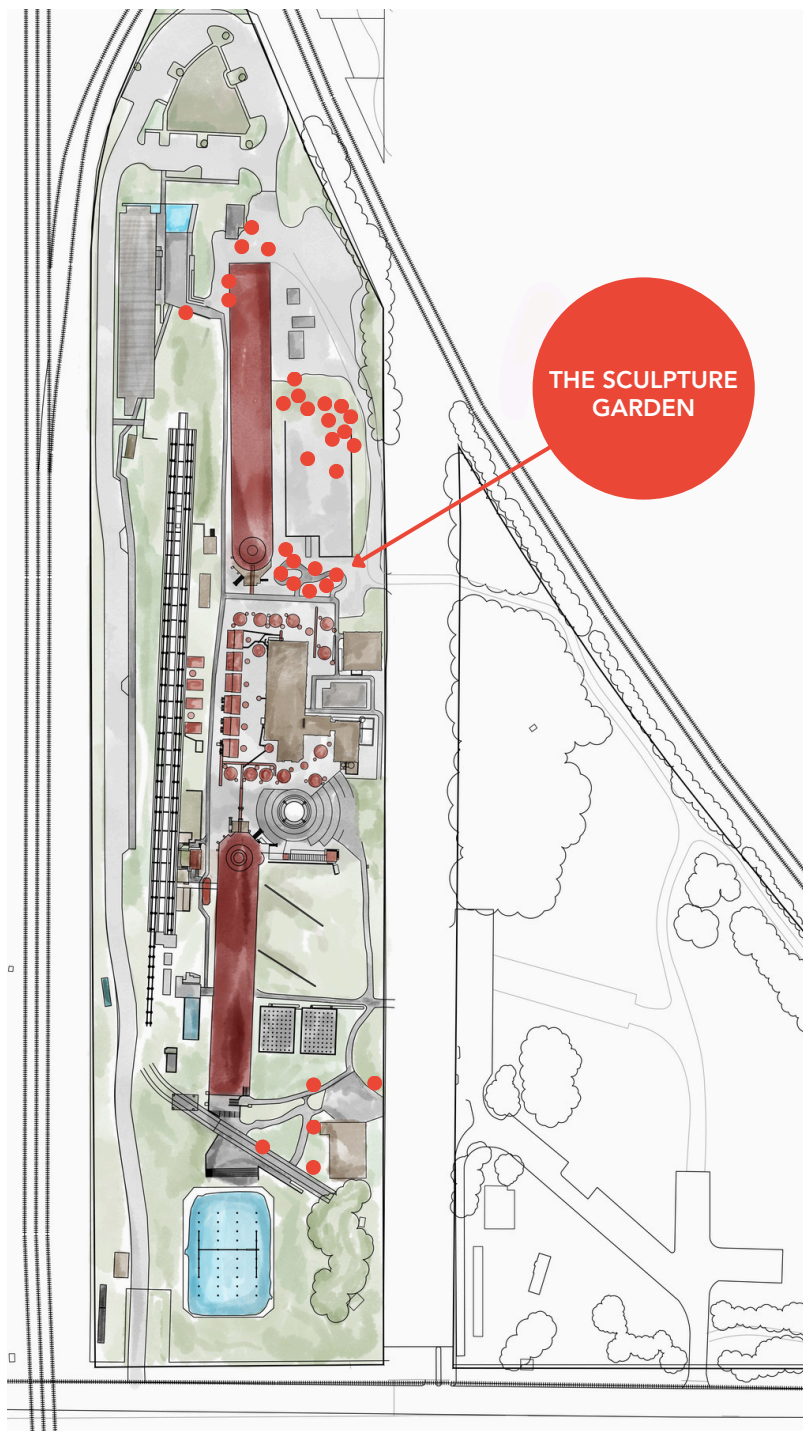


Mother and Child
David Crook



**Smelting
Furnaces**
Wayne Portratz

SCULPTURE LOCATIONS





This project has been made possible by
grants from the Alabama State Council on
the Arts



@midsouthsculpture
midsouthsculpture.org

@slossmetalarts
slossmetalarts.com

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slossfurnaces.org

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Donations help support our mission through public programming, exhibitions, artist residencies & more

