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Interlude' Sculpture Article

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LEADER

'Interlude' portrays the 'bronze' of all women in outdoor sculpture

Brad Winter
Staff Writer

It's 10 p.m. on campus, and you find yourself walking along past the Northeast front of Picken Hall. Slowly, you come along to a person sitting on a park bench. You may be startled by this figure at first, but don't be. After all, it is just art.

The “person” sitting on the bench is actually a bronze statue that is attached to the bench itself, which is also made of bronze. The work is titled “Interlude,” and it was made by Gary Coulter, former head of the FHSU art department.

Coulter, who is now retired and resides in Trinidad, Colorado, started the statue shortly after he came to FHSU in the 1991-92 school year. The statue was finished two years later in 1994. According to Coulter, the statue was, "...done on nights and weekends."

A grant from the Jean Stouffer fund at FHSU paid for the cost of molding and casting "Interlude." The labor was donated as a gift from Coulter. "After working at the university, I wanted to leave something on campus of aesthetic value," Coulter

that the 357 pound sculpture was, "...probably done in 16 pieces." Coulter estimated that the sculpture took about 1,000 hours of work.

Coulter explained that the placing the figure off the center of the bench was not an accident. "The piece was designed so it could be used," said Coulter. "It's a welcome for people to sit down with her."

"I've seen some students there reading,... I've even seen some students taking a nap with her," Coulter said.

The inscription on a plaque beside the sculpture states that the sculpture "...is meant to portray the strength of all women." According to Coulter, this explanation has troubled some people because of the way the statue looks. The statue portrays the woman lying down and sleeping on the bench, which makes the woman seem passive, and not strong.

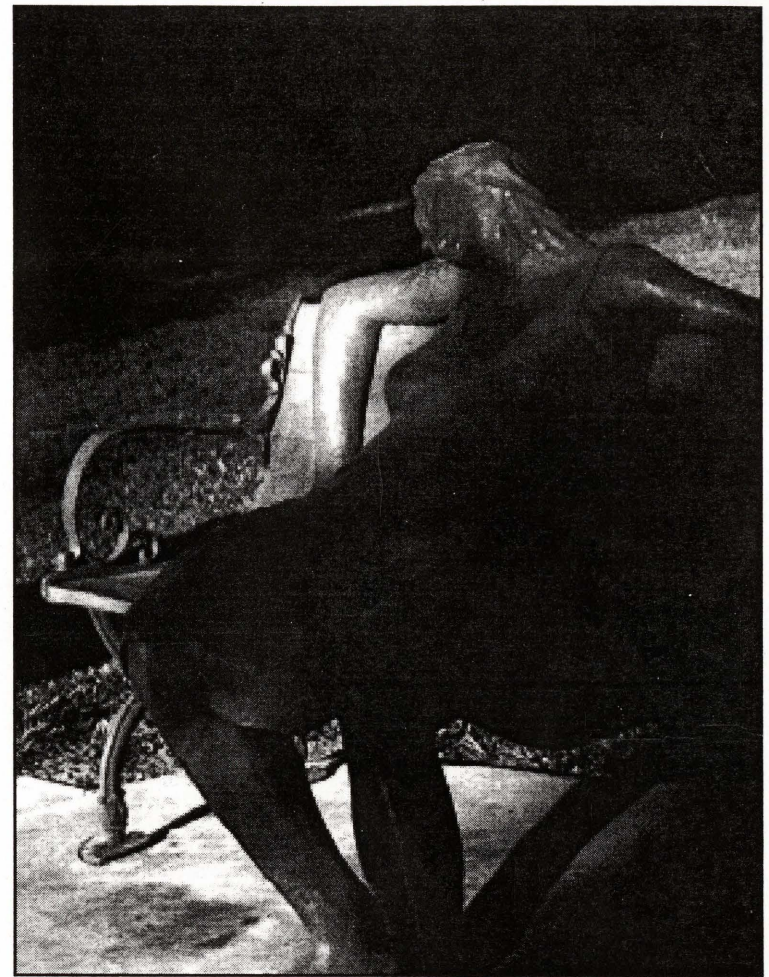
"I've taken some criticism for the depiction of the woman," said Coulter. To Coulter, the strength of the figure comes from the fact that she is over 6 feet tall.

"Sculpture has to have some weight and volume to it. I like working with voluptuous figures; She's somewhat heavy, but she's a strong woman," Coulter said.

But why is the woman lying down then? "She's just taking a nap," Coulter explained.

Coulter retired from Fort Hays State University in 1997 due to illness. In his retirement, he has kept busy doing sculptures. Last November, he dedicated six life size bronze statues at the Hays Medical Academy, and more recently, he dedicated two bronze busts at Tomanek Hall on June 23.

"They can retire me as chair of the art department, but they can never retire me as a sculptor," Coulter said.



"Interlude" created by Gary Coulter, former head of the art department, sits between Rarick and Picken Hall. **Photos by Kris Hart**

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Where did the idea for "Interlude" come from?

"Years ago I created a small woman on a bench that was 6" tall and 12" long. It was a small study done in clay," Coulter said. He liked the piece so much that he wanted to do it life size. Coulter had no live model for the "Interlude" piece.

"It just came from my head," Coulter said.

When asked why he did the work in bronze, he said, "I've worked in bronze for 35 years." Coulter says that he enjoys modeling more than carving, and that bronze is his favorite medium.

According to Coulter, when working with large bronze sculptures, the bronze has to be cast in small pieces, welded together later, and finally smoothed out. Coulter said

that the 357 pound sculpture was, "...probably done in 16 pieces." Coulter estimated that the sculpture took about 1,000 hours of work.

Coulter explained that the placing the figure off the center of the bench was not an accident. "The piece was designed so it could be used," said Coulter. "It's a welcome for people to sit down with her."

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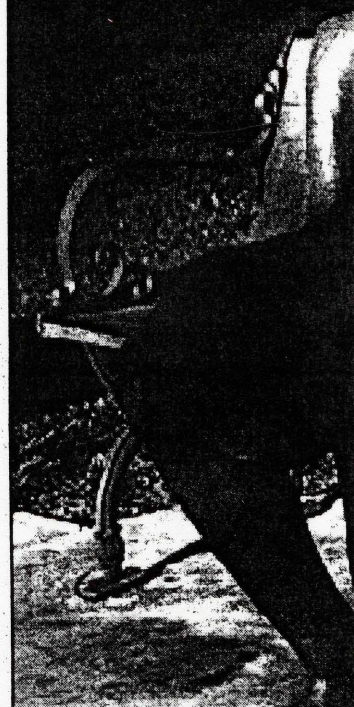
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