



Towering To Our Future

By Kiersten Dahl-Shetka

Towering To Our Future is comprised of a sturdy concrete foundation, a welded steel tower, a colorful, recycled plastic roof cap, and a “lost wax method” bronze lion, in the spirit of the Czechoslovakian heritage of New Prague. Artist Kiersten Dahl-Shetka shares her approach.

The Bronze Lion

The idea for the cast bronze lion atop the tower grew from artist’s sketch, to welded skeleton, to clay figure, in preparation for bronze casting. The artist then created a plaster mold around the lion, broke the mold away, and then filled that mold with micro crystalline wax to form a “sprew and vent” wax sculpture, with a vein



breakage, and poured in 2000-degree liquid bronze. After just 15 minutes, she broke away the cement, and then cooled the sculpture in a special water tub.



Removing any left-over cement, sprews and vents, and any unwanted bumps with grinding and chipping tools, the artist

prepared the lion for its final stages. She bathed the lion in acid, then applied a patina finish, and finally applied 24K gold leaf



his crown, trumpet, and directional letters. The lion was ready for his home atop the tower.



system to the bottom of the sculpture and a vent system out the top. She encased this in foundry cement and fired it overnight to burn out the wax and leave a perfect mold of her lion figure.

When it was ready, she buried the mold up to its rim in a bronzing sand pit to prevent

The Tower



The artist sought the expertise of Scott Equipment's Ron Simon, Glen Jeurissen, Bob Church and Richard Lucas for the center tower phase. Glen created a computer-aided design (CAD) drawing from the artist's vision and sketches. Bob built the main frame, which was then powder coated with the roof cap at Landscape Structures™ in Delano, MN.



The Roof Cap



In the spirit of using pieces of our past to inform our future, the artist designed panels for the roof cap to include recycled playground equipment from her husband Stan Shetka of Collateral Healing, Inc. This colorful highlight also required a system for attaching and removal, so that future panels can be added to the statue. The artist sketched and welded the roof cap with functional attachment/detachment system.



The Future

The sculpture in place is just the beginning of this effort. The artist plans to tile the concrete base with heirloom Czech china fragments. Classes begin in the fall for community members to create bronze sculptures to complete the sides of the tower. The artist hopes this tower will spur progress on a planned walking path through Philipps Park.

The artist designed the tower from ground to roof cap to be exactly the height of the tallest recorded human – 8 feet 10 inches

Assembly

Mike Johnson, Dennis Seurer, Ken Ondich, and Bruce Reimers of the City of New Prague identified a site and coordinated pouring of the



concrete footings in Philipps Park.

Bob Hrabe and Jeff Smith used a crane to place and attach the tower. Steel plates were inserted to hold spots for future bronze "bais relief" sculptures that community



members will create with the artist. The artist then attached the roof cap and the lion.



About the Artist



Kiersten Dahl-Shetka holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts with majors in Biology and Art from Gustavus Adolphus College and Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture from the University of North Dakota. She is also a certified Forgiveness Facilitator from the Midwest Institute for Forgiveness Training.

Kiersten has worked in a variety of roles, including artist, teacher/lecturer, merchandizer, environmentalist, and business owner. Her current pursuits include teaching art at Holy Cross School in Webster, working with clients as a Forgiveness Facilitator, creating independent art works through her Heart Park Studio, and being a wife to Stan and mom to Cairo (10) and Sagan (8).



Volunteer work has also shaped Kiersten's life. She has acted as museum docent at the North Dakota Museum of Art, served as a swim coach at the Courage Center in Brooklyn Park, and enjoyed sharing her spirit and talents with a variety of churches and organizations.

According to the artist, "These words from Ghandi inspired me, 'We must be the change we wish to see in the world.' As I am working with each student, I hope to see a glimpse into their spirit and how they connect with the community and their world. I want to empower them with the knowledge that they can create change in their world and affect people by what they envision, what they say, and what they do."



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