

*Pam Rosenblatt*

**The Meredith Sculpture Walk 2015 - 2016 with Chairman Bev Lapham**

**W**hat do you get when you have silver painted polar bears standing on a small area of iceberg that is placed on some grass near a lake and next to a town's Main Street? Or a bronze river otter situated on its hind feet with realistic whiskers poking out from his face as he grasps a fish in his mouth on the shoreline of this same lake? Or a painted oversized purple flower with a yellow jacket motionlessly hovering over it? Or an extra-large sized green with yellow painted frog standing in a courtyard between retail stores and restaurants?



You don't simply get views of various pieces of public art. But you get the unique and exciting Meredith Sculpture Walk 2015 experience!

On August 1, 2015, Meredith Sculpture Walk 2015-2016's Chairman Bev Lapham sat down at an outside table with *Wilderness House Literary Review's* Pam Rosenblatt to discuss the Meredith Sculpture Walk that is now in its second year and Meredith, New Hampshire, the town that accommodates the annual event. Lapham is retired and heads the voluntary committee that runs the Meredith Sculpture Walk. He was recently voted in as a Town of Meredith selectman, which is also a volunteer position. Liz Lapham, his wife, is the executive director of the Greater Meredith Program, which sponsors the Meredith Sculpture Walk.

"This community has a real sense of pride in their town. I think what cements Meredith apart from so many of the other towns is that there is a very, very high level of volunteering," Lapham said. "There are literally hundreds of volunteers in this town. They do a job, contribute some of their own money into it, and certainly enormous amounts of their time just for the pleasure of volunteering and trying to move Meredith forward as a nice place to be."



And for a town whose population is about 6,000 people in the wintertime versus roughly 35,000 residents during the summertime, Meredith seems to be headed in a positive direction. Many artists are even moving into this area of Lake Winnepesaukee. Lapham believes part of this draw of artists is due to the creative atmosphere that Meredith is

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developing, especially with the type of public art that the Meredith Sculpture Walk displays and the art galleries that are situated in Meredith.

"The feedback from the [Meredith Sculpture Walk] sculptors particularly has been terrific. They love to have their artwork here for two reasons really," Lapham commented. "The first reason is we've got beautiful places to put their artwork. How can you beat a location along a lake? How can you do it? Their alternative is if they want to put it [some place other than] in their own studio is [to put it] in their front yard. So here they put these sculptures out and loan them to us for a year. They have them sitting



next to a lake! Or they have them in a nice little park up on Main Street. Or they have them on a place that really makes them look good."

Artists appreciate showing their sculptures in the Meredith Sculpture Walk for another reason, too. "They're in business," Lapham remarked. "They're in business to sell these things or to get commissions to do additional pieces."

All of the sculptures on the Meredith Sculpture Walk are for sale. The lowest priced artwork ranges between \$4,000 to \$5,000 with the highest cost item being about \$35,000. "Of course," he said, "The price is negotiable."

Located right next to Lake Winnepesaukee, The Meredith Sculpture Walk is a juried exhibition. Most of the pieces are purchased by private collectors. There is no commission. There is no tax. The artists do not have to pay any fees for showing at the Meredith



Sculpture Walk, a non-profit organization. "We don't want any part of the transaction. That's why we put a brochure out and our website has all the information about each artist," said Lapham.

The Meredith Sculpture Walk has received much support from the town's residents, tourists, and businesses. "This is our second year, and this year didn't seem to have any less enthusiasm for it. In fact, we went from 24 locations to 32. I don't think we'll go any higher because the land spots we have are perfectly spaced so there's no reason for us to put more in," he said. "Sometimes you can have too much. What we have now with the spaces in between the [sculptures] is perfect."



There has been tremendous support from local newspapers like *Laconia Citizen*, *The Laconia Daily Sun*, and *The Meredith News*. The Town of Meredith, the Historical Society, the land owners, the volunteers, and the docents are very upbeat about the Meredith Sculpture Walk. There have been no negative comments about the exhibition, Lapham said.

A former Meredith business owner, Lapham himself enjoys energy that has been generated from the Meredith Sculpture Walk. He likes how people appreciate seeing the different sculptures and do not favor them all equally, as is what public art should do.

"Everyone comes up with their favorites. That's always fun... Last year we put 'American Dog' by Dale Rogers of Haverhill, Massachusetts, in. It's still up by the Post Office. It's a dog with a shape of a bone. That was probably the show stopper for us last year. People love that! They took family pictures and everybody was hanging out with the dog. This year I think probably the polar bears in ['The Discarded'] is the one," Lapham said.

Like most public art pieces, "The Discarded" (Morris Norvin of Boston, Massachusetts) is not without its faults. "Some people don't like it," he said. "Maybe you're uncomfortable with how shiny it is. Maybe I'm uncomfortable with the subject matter – 'Discarded' – you know you've got your climate change.... On the other side, tons of people say, 'Wow! That's great!'"

"The Discarded" is made out of steel drums that were once filled with maple syrup. Sculptor Morris Norvin's studio was across the street from the Sam Adams brewery. The brewery makes specialized beers, and some types of beers required maple syrup. So the brewery purchased barrels of maple syrup from somewhere. After the maple syrup was drained from



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the steel drums, the barrels were of no use. Norvin walked over to the brewery and requested to have the empty barrels. Then he transported them back to his studio, cleaned them, and then figured out what to do with them. "The Discarded" was the end product of these steel drums, explained Lapham.

The late Beverly B. Seamans from Newbury, Massachusetts, has three sculptures exhibited in this year's Meredith Sculpture Walk: "River Otter", "Osprey", and "Wendy". "Beverly died about four or five years ago. Her son, John, inherited all of the beautiful, beautiful bronze sculptures," Lapham praised. John is advocating his mother's work.



"River Otter" is located on the shoreline of Hesky Park, right near the still-standing heron sculptures from the Meredith Sculpture Walk 2014-2015 exhibit by Vernon, Connecticut's Roger DiTarando. "Osprey", a statue of a bird made out of bronze and flat bluestone piece, and "Wendy", an artwork of a young girl reading a book, are found near the Mills Falls Inn courtyard.

Another artwork that has intrigued viewers this year is "Ribbit" by Richard J. Foster of Bristol, New Hampshire. This somewhat "whimsical" sculpture consists of two wheel barrels placed together and is painted in green and yellow colors to look like a frog. It's located on the community park. "The kids love it!" he said. "Some people would say that's not really public art. Why is it there? Others say, 'My kids loved it! And take their picture with it.'"

That's what wonderful about public art, Lapham said. Some of the artwork in the Meredith Sculpture Walk is extreme modern; some of the pieces are whimsical; some of them may have political overtones. But all of the sculptures make the viewers try to figure out if they like one piece more than another and if they understand the artworks.

The materials used in the different sculptures include metal scraps, steel, iron, stainless steel, found objects, bronze, granite, bluestone, clay, steel barrels, paint, shovels, aluminum, stone, aluminum rods, copper, and more.<sup>1</sup>



1 Meredith Sculpture Walk 2015-2016, Greater Meredith Program, Meredith,

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The Meredith Sculpture Walk is not the only sculpture walk in the United States. There are hundreds of them. But each one seems to vary at least slightly. In southern New Hampshire, there is a sculpture walk within the attractive gardens and nature trails found around The Fells located in Newbury, New Hampshire. From Saturday, May 23 – Monday, October 12, 2015 there is an exhibition titled “Art in Nature: Outdoors Sculpture”. Contemporary New England sculptors have grand sized artworks incorporated into the natural environment found in the woods of The Fells.<sup>2</sup> In North Bennington, Vermont, there is another public art show, which is a permanent installation, with the main concentration of art pieces located

on a large green with other sculptures displayed at different locations in town, Lapham acknowledged.

And in Lincoln, Massachusetts, there is the Decordova Museum and Sculpture Park where visitors can walk around the grounds at their leisure and take in the rather grand sculptures dispersed throughout the property.



For prospective viewers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Meredith Sculpture Walk 2015-2016, docents are available to give tours during July, August, and September on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, and by appointment. The tour is free of charge and lasts approximately an hour and a half. Without a docent, the Meredith Sculpture Walk should take about an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes.



Meredith Sculpture Walk sponsors include: Meredith Village Savings Bank, Greater Meredith Program Beautification Fund, Mills Falls at the Lake, NHEC Foundation, Oglethorpe – Fine Arts & Crafts, Meredith Rotary Club, and Shaheen and Gordon, P.A.

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New Hampshire, (brochure), August 1, 2015.

2 “Calendar and Events”, The Fells, August 11, 2015, [www.thefells.org/calendar-and-events/](http://www.thefells.org/calendar-and-events/)

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