Public Sculpture at the Livingston Campus

The expansive Livingston Campus, the youngest and largest of Rutgers–New Brunswick’s five campuses, is home to many first-year students. Extensive building under way on the campus will result in new hubs for learning, living, and researching. The sculpture found here expresses a forward-looking personality, an academic feel, and a delightful eccentricity.

1 Education Is an Open Book (1987) by Melvin Edwards

Education Is an Open Book, the creation of Melvin Edwards, a sculptor of international renown and a former professor at Rutgers, stands tall in its new location outside of the Kilmer Library. Prior to recent construction on Livingston Campus, the piece stood outside of the Livingston Student Center. In a university setting, books are most often associated with information and knowledge. An open book implies that the reader is able to access this knowledge. Edwards’s book, which he displays to the viewer on a pedestal of various geometric forms, is a powerful reminder of the presence and importance of learning. This sculpture, which emphasizes the prominence of education, was generously donated by Philip and Muriel Berman in 1987.

2 Don Quixote with a Flower (1976) by Nikolai Silis

Installed in 2012, Don Quixote with a Flower is the creation of Russian sculptor Nikolai Silis, whose works in the post-World War II era appeared in Soviet-era buildings. Conflicts with the Soviet bureaucracy led to his banishment from official art shows. He began exhibiting again in 1956. In this abstract work forged in copper, Don Quixote sits in a relaxed position, legs and arms bent, as he examines a flower. Throughout Cervantes’s Man of LaMancha, Don Quixote is referred to as the “flower of knights-errant.” Comprised of circular and near circular parts, the piece has a fluid sense; one feels as if Don Quixote could shift his head or torso at any moment. Mr. and Mrs. Igor Gomberg donated the sculpture to Rutgers in 2012.

3 Calligraph KC III (1968) by Herbert Ferber

Installed on a concrete base in 1968, Herbert Ferber’s sculpture Calligraph KC III stood between Brower Commons and Stonier Hall on the College Avenue Campus for more than 40 years. Recently removed from its original home for restoration, Calligraph KC III has been reinstalled on Livingston Campus. The abstract piece of art may initially appear to be no more than a towering configuration of flattened and curved copper pieces welded together to form three-dimensional beams. However, this arrangement creates the image of a “K” and a “C” in midair.

4 Zhu’s Helper (2012) by Gary Kuehn

This sculpture by artist and Rutgers professor Gary Kuehn was built under the artist’s supervision by four undergraduate visual arts students in the Mason Gross School of the Arts. Comprised of treated lumber and steel, the 7-foot-high structure was installed in 2012 outside the Visual Arts Building on the Livingston Campus where Kuehn spent many hours teaching. The work is a nod to Zhu Rong, a god from Chinese mythology who is said to be responsible for separating the sky and earth. A visual arts professor at Mason Gross for more than four decades, Kuehn has had an enduring interest in strong symbols that cross cultures. The artist, who was asked by Mason Gross colleagues to take on the project, says he was delighted and honored to mentor the four students, especially as he nears the end of “a very satisfying academic career” at Rutgers.

5 Finding a Way in This World (2002) by Roger Borg

Sculptor Roger Borg created Finding a Way in This World when he was a graduate student at Rutgers’ Mason Gross School of the Arts. Borg conceived the piece after discovering a beech tree, felled in a storm, on his father’s property in Massachusetts. To form the work, Borg chose an intact limb that made a single path from the tree’s trunk to its tip. He wrapped the limb in steel tubing and burned the tree out from the inside, leaving a steel casting of the limb—a “lone pathway.” To the artist, the “curves and twists of the tree’s limb stand as a visualization of the many interactions, events, circumstances, and choices made in life.”

6 Untitled (1973) by “People’s Painters”

This mural is one of several on the Livingston Campus that were created during the early days of the former Livingston College. The murals were painted by “People’s Painters”—a largely student-run group established under the guidance of James Cockcroft, a sociology professor during the 1970s, and his wife, Eva Cockcroft, a noted muralist of the period. Livingston College was founded in 1969, in part as a response to the political and social awareness of the 1960s that called for greater access to higher education. In keeping with Livingston College’s motto, “Strength through Diversity,” the mural celebrated Livingston College through its depiction of several intertwined figures representing people from different backgrounds. The mural, recently restored, is painted on a wall that students once used to play handball. As a piece of art in historical context, it draws upon the Chicago and Chilean muralist movements and reflects the cultural and social awakenings of the day.

To learn more about public sculpture at Rutgers–New Brunswick, visit nb.rutgers.edu/sculpture.