

**PRESS RELEASE – EVENT CALENDAR**  
**February 3, 2026**



**ANNOUNCING—**

**True North 2026, sculpture + heights blvd**

- **The 13<sup>th</sup> installation.**
- **8 sculptures by Texas artists on Heights Boulevard, Houston**
- **March to December, 2026.**
- **Open to the public.**

**MEDIA CONTACT**

**Chris Silkwood**

**832.969.5345**

**Kelly Simmons**

**team@truenorth**

**heightsblvd.com**



## **Announcing**

True North is excited to announce the nine extraordinary Texas artists whose works have been selected for its 2026 exhibition (bios below):

**Robbie Barber, Waco**

**Roger Colombik, Wimberley**

**Keith Crane & Damon Thomas, Houston [Heights]**

**Hans Molzberger, Houston/Hilmsen, Germany**

**Suzette Mouchaty, Houston**

**Mark Nelson, Houston [Heights]**

**Jimmy Phillips, Houston**

**Jim Robertson, Trinity**

## **About True North**

Named for the compass bearing of Heights Boulevard, True North installed its first exhibition in 2014—a temporary outdoor public art installation, free and open to the public, on eight designated sites along the winding foot trails of that boulevard’s beautifully forested esplanade. True North is organized by an all-volunteer team and works in cooperation with the City of Houston Parks and Recreation and Public Works Departments. The Houston Heights Association is True North’s nonprofit/fiscal sponsor/partner.

A wide range of eight sculptures is chosen each year—based on media, theme, color and visibility—and the works remain in place for a nine-month permitted period from March to December. With this 13<sup>th</sup> installation, True North has exhibited over 100 unique sculptures by established and emerging Texas artists. Large enough in scale to be seen from passing vehicles and bicycles, with more intimate views on foot, True North sculptures are seen by hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors to the Houston Heights each year.

Team members behind the sculpture project are Donna Bennett, Gus Kopriva, Dean Ruck, Chris Silkwood and Kelly Simmons—all longtime community- and arts-advocates. The project is underwritten entirely through private donations from individuals, businesses and professionals in the community and beyond who wish to support the popular public art project and its ongoing success.

Heights Boulevard’s esplanade is a designated City of Houston park which runs directly through the heart of Houston Heights. Originally patterned after Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, the historic boulevard’s 60-foot-wide esplanade was the site of Houston’s first electrified streetcar system, ferrying Houston Heights residents the “considerable distance” of four miles to the big city. Fast forward and thanks to the Houston Heights Association and extensive community activism, volunteerism and fundraising over the years, the esplanade is now home to show-stopping architectural gardens, pavilions, old-growth treescapes and one of the most popular foot trails in Houston.

**Social Media/Website**

[Facebook](#) @TrueNorthHeightsBlvd

[Instagram](#) @truenorthheightsblvd

[Website](#) www.truenorthheightsblvd.com

**True North Mission Statement**

True North’s mission is to organize and install a temporary public sculpture exhibition on the esplanade of Heights Boulevard – representative of works by prominent and emerging Texas artists – to advance the accessibility, understanding and enjoyment of contemporary art for the community and its visitors.

**Sculpture Photos, Kolanowski Studio**

[available mid-March 2026]

**2026 UNDERWRITERS** (as of 1/29/2026)

**NOGUCHI** HOTEL DAPHNE

**MIRÓ**



JUNE & STEVE  
BARTH



**CALDER**

Donna & Jim Bennett – Jerred & Rita Blanchard – Braun Enterprises – Tyri & David Centanni  
Craft Chu PLLC – District Dental, Dr. Andres & Mrs. Erin Villaseñor – Diane & Mike Easley  
ENGIE – EQ HEIGHTS/ ELEVATE HUMANITY, Inc. – Eye to Eye, Dr. Michelle Hung &  
Mr. Robert W. Raney III – Linda & Simon Eyles – The Anne Caroline Fant Charitable Fund  
Greenwood King Properties – Sue & Ken Korthauer – Dion and Lisa Laurent  
Lucas Craftsmanship Inc. – Laura Menefee & Paula Johnson – Morris Strategic  
Investments, LLC – MouerHuston PLLC – Shunney & Shaji Nair –PrimeWay Federal Credit  
Union – Cathy & Brian Richard – Chris Silkwood & Gary Milnarich  
Kelly Simmons & Keith Crane – Carol & Buddy Welter

**FISCAL/NONPROFIT SPONSOR**



# **True North 2026**

## **Artist Bios**

## Robbie Barber, Waco “Goddard Nomad V”

**Robbie Barber** is Professor of Art at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and has taught Sculpture there since 2000. Born in Williamston, North Carolina, he was raised on a farm near the Roanoke River in Martin County. He earned his BFA from East Carolina University and MFA from University of Arizona. Barber gained notoriety as a sculptor working in a variety of media and is the recipient of numerous awards, including the North Carolina Arts Council Fellowship and the Southern Arts Federation/NEA Fellowship in Sculpture.



He has held exhibitions at Grounds For Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey, Jule Collins Smith Museum of Art, Auburn, Alabama, Redbud Arts Center, Houston, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, New York, and Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, Japan, and his smile-inducing sculpture for True North in 2016 was titled “Stroll in the Park”—an oversized baby carriage made from an old trailer and welded steel. Barber says, “My architecture-related sculptures are influenced by my travels throughout rural America. I am attracted to the strong visual character of this country’s vernacular architecture. Vintage lap-board houses, mobile homes and agriculture-related structures have become regional icons that ultimately tell the stories of their inhabitants and builders. I often fuse these influences to create hybrid objects of fantasy, the results of which are often humorous, ironic or visually poetic in nature. An example is ‘**Goddard Nomad V.**’ This sculpture depicts a mobile home that is transformed into a spacecraft of dubious reliability. On one level it reminds us of the dangers of space travel and on another it speaks to the irony that most mobile homes never go anywhere.” “Goddard Nomad V” has been exhibited on the campuses of The University of Texas at El Paso, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina.

## ROGER COLOMBIK, Wimberley “Bloom”

Born and raised in Chicago, that City’s immense sculptural presence helped to define an understanding of the relationship between artist, community and public spaces for **Roger Colombik**. He also counts three mentors for building the foundation for his life in the arts and career in academia: Elliot Balter, a dynamic high school art teacher, Roger Blakley, a longtime professor at the School of Art and Design at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Thomas Walsh, director of the graduate sculpture program at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, for 37 years. Colombik’s own distinguished 34-year career as professor and Sculpture Head at Texas State University, in turn, influenced and instilled confidence in the lives of countless young artists. Projects by him and his wife and artistic collaborator, Jerolyn Bahm-Colombik, have been supported by the Fulbright Scholar Program, CEC ArtsLink, and the Texas State University Research Program, and included work in Burma, Armenia, Republic of Georgia, Indonesia and Ecuador. The duo has also developed projects in collaboration with International Rescue Committee and The Grace Museum examining issues of assimilation and citizenship for families resettling in Abilene from Congo, Burundi and Nepal. Colombik’s True North sculpture **“Bloom”** engages the viewer in a constructive visual dialogue about our resilience and ability to bloom, as individuals and a society, after difficult circumstances. He tells us, “The genesis of the series was the aftermath of the 2022 ice storm that was particularly devastating to the Texas Hill Country’s cedar and oak groves. This body of work began as an attempt to bring a sense of grace back to the fractured forest and a sense of resilience in individual will. Most importantly, it is a reflection that beauty can blossom in the wake of adversity.”



## **KEITH CRANE, Houston [Heights]** **DAMON THOMAS, Houston [Heights]** **“Migrations”**

A mostly self-taught outsider artist, **Keith Crane** loves sifting through metal salvage yards and “junk” stores for those diamonds in the rough that may one day become the catalyst for a new creation. Using those found treasures—binding elements together through welds and fastenings—he has been creating otherworldly- and botanical-esque works since the 90s, and you may just stumble upon one around the Heights in the gardens and homes of friends and collectors. His creative curiosity was piqued early on by an artistic aunt who used metal as a primary medium and later inspired by the vibrant art scene in Houston and the quirky, art-centric nature of the Heights neighborhood where he’s lived since 1988. He was further inspired by the incomparable Houston artist and longtime friend, Mark “Scrapdaddy” Bradford, and his legion of fantastical, mechanical creations, as well as his collaboration on several sculptural works with Houston mosaic artist and good friend, Chris Silkwood, including their public art installations “Dazy Mae,” Art on Longpoint, Redbud Arts Center, Houston, and “Flower Power”—created from an industrial venting fan, metal salvage and glass mosaic—for True North in 2016.



**Damon Thomas**’s clay works are hand built using stiff slabs and hand-formed coils—intentionally leaving traces of hand building and other “imperfections” in the clay. His style is an abstracted realism that generally follows human proportion from which he freely deviates. He often combines his sculptures with found objects that carry their own stories. Thomas says “My artwork, like me, is often called quiet; I am drawn to glazes and surfaces that quieten and unify the pieces. I hope that my art is soulful and meaningful. If it is, then I have accomplished what I set out to do as an artist.” Born in the Heights (his family later moving to the East End where he grew up), Thomas was drawn back to the neighborhood in 1996. He earned a B.A. from University of Houston, an M.A. from University of Texas at Austin, and holds a Certificate of Achievement in Ceramics from The Glassell School of Art, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Current and more recent exhibitions include “Kirk & David,” The Jung Center, Houston (through 10.31.26), “Off the Box,” Glassell Studio School, “Texas Dimensional: Fine Art In Three Dimensions,” San Antonio Art League + Museum, “Found & Made,” Archway Gallery, Houston, “Altamira, Sculpture Month Houston,” Site Gallery, The Silos at Sawyer Yards, “Ancestors,” The Jung



Center, and True North was proud to exhibit his “meaningful and soulful” mixed media sculpture "Home Fire" in 2019.

With their collaborative sculpture **“Migrations,”** Thomas creates rotating casts of three different species of winged creatures in fired clay, with multiple “migrations” over the duration of the exhibition—a flock of bright red cardinals in spring, a parliament of owls through summer and a colony of bats in time for Halloween. Crane’s 3-D puzzle-like tree form of oxidized steel and stainless steel carriage bolts gives creature comfort to, and a 360-degree view of, these ever-changing multitudes of inhabitants.

## **MARK NELSON, Houston [Heights] “MARBLEOUS GfG BUCKET CORRAL”**

In the summer of 1994, after witnessing a terrifying close call involving his five-year-old son and some carelessly-discarded shards of glass in a public park near their home, **Mark Nelson** decided to do something to bring attention to and alleviate the chronic issue of dangerous glass debris lurking in public spaces where children and families gather to relax and play. That next year, at Art League Houston, he exhibited a sculptural work called “110 Lbs. of Park Glass”—an old, galvanized metal wash basin filled to the brim with clean, clear, amber, green and blue shards of broken glass bottles he had painstakingly collected from City parks over the course of a year. For his NYU Fellowship, Nelson established and ran a public art project called GLASSfreeGROUNDS—creating 36 workshops held at City parks where children and adult participants gathered one ton of broken glass and painted and decorated a thousand GfG Art Buckets. In 2000, 1500 pounds of that glass were melted down at a marble making factory in Reno, Ohio, producing 180,000 cobalt blue “MARBLEOUS” marbles. His True North installation **“MARBLEOUS GfG BUCKET CORRAL”** is composed of 80 of these GfG Art Buckets inviting us to study each bucket’s unique artwork and reflect upon the dangerous issue of glass usage and litter in public spaces. Nelson earned his BFA at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York, and MFA at University of Houston. A multi-media artist, some of his exhibitions include Brownsville Museum of Fine Arts, “Extremely Short Film Festival,” Aurora Picture Show, Houston (Best of Show), G Spot Contemporary Art Space, Houston, Mother Dog Studios, Houston, Project Row Houses, Houston, The Art Car Museum, Houston, “The Big Show,” Lawndale Art Center, Houston, and received the Houston Community Activist, Environmental Excellence Award, from Citizen’s Environment Coalition, Houston. Presently, he maintains his art practice and lives in the Heights with his wife, Maria.



## **HANS MOLZBERGER, Houston / Hilmsen, Germany**

### **“Mantis with Saddle”**

**Hans Molzberger** was born in Höhr-Grenzhausen in Germany’s Rhineland region where his family has lived and worked in the manufacture of industrial ceramics for many generations. A mostly self-taught multi-media artist and an arts educator, Molzberger started a studio in Wendland, Germany, in 1982, and mounted his first museum exhibition in 1991. His works have been shown throughout Israel, France, Netherlands, Poland, U.S. and Russia. In 1993, he founded *Atelierhaus* (“*studio house*”) Hilmsen, a professional arts and humanities residency and nonprofit organization in Hilmsen, Germany (a small hamlet located 10 miles outside the charming medieval town of Salzwedel), after acquiring a plot of land which included a 1906 Gothic farmhouse and several very large dilapidated barns—to be perfect for creating large scale sculpture. While in Hilmsen, he enjoys conducting workshops and engaging with the local community through various programs, and during the academic season, he is an Artist Affiliate at Houston Christian University. Molzberger was a True North artist with the Texas-themed (and sized) sculpture “Retired Cowboy Clown” in 2015. This year he delights us with **“Mantis with Saddle”**—a version of which (titled “Für Walter”) is situated on the grounds of the renowned 13<sup>th</sup> century Mönchkirche (the Monk’s Church) Salzwedel, Saxony-Anhalt, Germany.



## SUZETTE MOUCHATY, Houston

### “Folly in the Park: The Famous Adventure of the Enchanted Pole and Some Other Things Worth Knowing”

**Suzette Mouchaty**’s works are often responsive to social, political and environmental issues that rankle or disturb, and she tends to inject perverse humor into the content as a strategy for easing the bitter pill. Mouchaty says, “Nature inspires awe, that sense of wonderment that brings us into the moment and helps us know our humanity.” Her colorful and enchanting “Monument to Sea Slugs” for True North 2024 shed light on one of the many phenomenal



creatures of the sea facing extinction. Her 2026 offering, **“Folly in the Park: The Famous Adventure of the Enchanted Pole and Some Other Things Worth Knowing”** is an abstraction of a microscopic aquatic organism, the hydra. This sculpture combines the form of the hydra with that of an emerging egg—a symbol of hope for the future. In this work she has magnified a creature so tiny as to be invisible into an imposing and charismatic form and mimicked the raucous patterns and enthralling colors of marine creatures to assert its presence. Born in Michigan, Mouchaty earned a BS and MS from University of Alaska, Fairbanks, a Ph.D. in Genetics from Lund University, Sweden, and received a Junior Fulbright Fellowship to Sweden. After working decades in scientific academia, she began her formal art studies at Art League Houston and Glassell Studio School, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, before earning an MFA from University of Houston School of Art. She has received grants and scholarships from University of Alaska, Lund University, The Glassell School of Art, Houston, Houston Arts Alliance and University of Houston School of Art. Her works have been shown, in part, at Mystic Seaport Museum, Connecticut, G Spot Contemporary Art Space, Houston, The Glassell School of Art, University of Houston-Downtown, Hooks-Epstein Galleries, Houston, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, Bill’s Junk, Houston, Blaffer Art Museum, University of Houston, and The Lab, Adelaide, Australia.

## JAMES D. (JIMMY) PHILLIPS, Houston “beyond reach”

During the week Sputnik was launched, **Jimmy Phillips** was born the fifth of six children to a Scotch-Irish father and Italian mother in Houston, Texas. Phillips says, “The extent of my art education included my mother, who taught me to draw as a child, and my middle and high school art teachers.” Fifteen years ago, after a 30-year hiatus from making art, Phillips tells us he was cutting down a tree and began doodling with a chainsaw on the fallen trunk. As a recognizable form emerged from the log, he was amazed, and it remains a magical experience for him today. Within the first year of his adventure in sculpture, his works were selected for several juried art shows. On a trip to Galveston, to collect wood from the removal of trees killed by Hurricane Ike’s storm surge, he was introduced to a woman who wanted to carve the dead trees into public sculptures, and he was selected to carve the first pieces at Galveston City Hall. Private commissioned works followed, and the Galveston Tree Sculptures became a huge sensation. His sculptures are scattered throughout Texas including Arlington, Baytown, Beeville, Calvert, College Station, El Lago, Fulshear, Galveston, Greenville, Hallettsville, Houston, Humble, Killeen, Lake Jackson, Missouri City, Montgomery, Nelsonville, Richmond, Santa Fe, Simonton, Spring, Tuleta and Weimar. Phillips’ True North work “**beyond reach**” playfully depicts a giraffe, stretching hopefully for the sustenance of a nearby tree. The sculpture’s instantly recognizable and nostalgic composition reminds us of a child’s artistic assembly of popsicle sticks.



## JIM ROBERTSON, Trinity “Sanctuary”

Soon after **Jim Robertson** graduated from his Houston high school, he joined the Army and served our country for three years—two of those in Vietnam. After returning to the states, he earned a BFA from University of Houston and an MFA from University of Texas, Austin. His education and art career began in painting and drawing, and his works have been shown in numerous galleries and museums, including Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. While continuing to paint, his interests gradually turned toward three-dimensional works. In the early 1990s, he took metal working classes at The Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, welding at Lone Star College and began experimenting with steel and found metal objects. Robertson says, “I spent a lot of time cruising industrial salvage yards and had access to several dumpsters at metal fabrication shops.” His works are more or less figurative and evolve from one or two “starter” pieces, where he begins selecting or modifying more pieces to reinforce the original theme suggested by the starter piece. He says, “A few subjects reoccur in my work: surrealistic vehicles, fanciful weapons, animals and architectural structures.” Other works are conceived from scratch, without found objects—non-objective and more formal in nature—using readily available steel material. Robertson was a Professor of Art at Lone Star College for 29 years, retiring in 2009. He has a full-time art studio in Trinity and is often spotted cruising the art car scene in his stainless steel art creation, Jet Car. A True North 2022 artist with the bright teal monolithic sculpture “Zig Zag,” this year’s work **“Sanctuary”** is an architectural mashup of Egyptian pyramids, Gothic pointed arches and minarets.

