

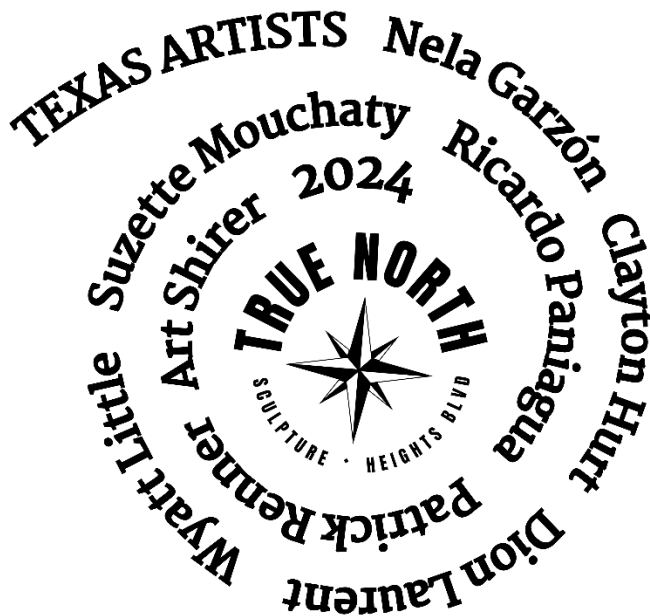
True North 2024

PRESS RELEASE – March 21, 2024

**TRUE NORTH 2024 OPENS
WITH EIGHT NEW SCULPTURES**



WHO: True North 2024, sculpture + heights blvd
WHAT: A nine-month public sculpture exhibition
WHERE: Heights Boulevard, Houston Heights, Texas
WHEN: March to December 2024



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True North 2024

The project's eleventh exhibition was cleared for landing and has been installed for its 2024 run. Greeting residents and visitors at Houston Heights' entrance on the south end of the esplanade is fourth generation Houston artist Dion Laurent's sculpture, "AirPlane 1"—a conceptually-imagined work designed to specifically run on solar energy and produce fresh air for its pilot and explorer—Laurent's alter ego, "EarthMan 1."

Also in this year's exhibit—as you head north from the boulevard's entrance—are seven more extraordinary and diverse sculptures, including Texas artists Art Shirer's "WISH," Nela Garzón's "Pre-Columbian Unlooted Bat or Vampire for the New World," Ricardo Paniagua's "Intersections of Dimension," Wyatt Little's "BRICK PHONE," Suzette

Mouchaty’s “Monument to Sea Slugs,” Clayton Hurt’s “Apprehensive Dog” and Patrick Renner’s “dauber.” Visit the sculptures up close along the esplanade’s foot paths (1.5 miles from end to end), cruising the street’s bike lanes, or of course, as you simply drive from here to there. You can scan the QR codes at each site, or download the “Otocast” app from any location, to listen to the artists’ statements on their works—in their own words, and visit our website at www.truenorthheightsblvd.com for all the latest news and information.

About True North

Beginning in 2014 and named for the compass bearing of Heights Boulevard, True North is a temporary outdoor public art installation on eight designated sites along the winding trails of that boulevard’s beautifully forested esplanade. Working in cooperation with the City of Houston Parks and Recreation and Public Works Departments and the Houston Mayor’s Office of Cultural Affairs, True North is organized by an all-volunteer team, in partnership with the Houston Heights Association—its nonprofit/fiscal sponsor. A wide range of sculptures, by Texas artists, 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.

Started by Gus Kopriva and Chris Silkwood, team members behind the sculpture project now are Donna Bennett, Kopriva, Dean Ruck, Silkwood and Kelly Simmons. The project is underwritten entirely through private donations from art- and community-minded individuals, businesses and professionals who wish to support the popular public art project and its ongoing success. Large enough in scale to be seen from passing vehicles and bicycles, with more intimate views along the winding trails of the esplanade, True North sculptures are seen by hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors to the Houston Heights each year.

Heights Boulevard’s esplanade is a designated City of Houston park which runs directly through the heart of Houston Heights. Patterned after Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, the 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, one of the most popular foot trails in Houston and the True North sculpture project.

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.

Social Media

Facebook [@TrueNorthHeightsBlvd](#)

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Website <https://www.truenorthheightsblvd.com/>

Sculpture Photos, “Kolanowski Studio”

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/8gfkz1dyjix6w5e3mrfc4/h?rlkey=sext5ygsx0ucz4jb8hbqaezcgw&dl=0> or you may download them from our website <https://truenorthheightsblvd.com>

True North 2024 Artist Bios/Statements

DION LAURENT, Houston **“AirPlane 1” – 400 block**

A fourth-generation visual and performative artist with studios now in Houston and Bastrop, Dion Laurent spent 7 years traveling the world after college—with a backpack of supplies—covering 23 countries and creating and exhibiting works all along the way. He has lived and maintained studios around the globe, including six years in Tokyo and throughout Asia, including a small Japanese island in the Pacific. Laurent’s

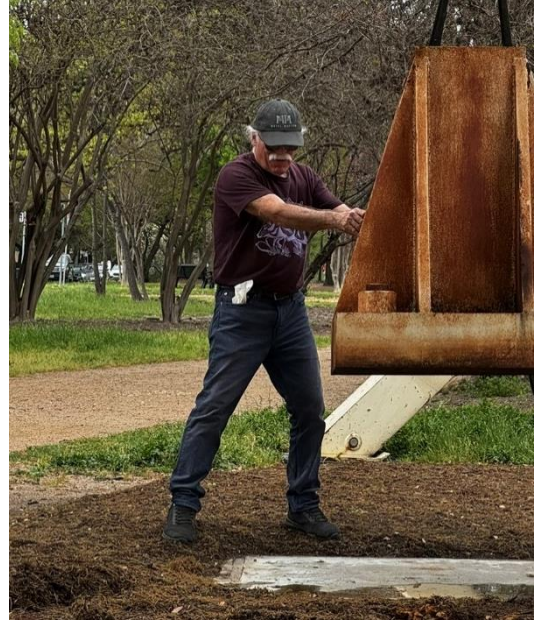


large-as-life sculpture, “AirPlane 1,” for True North 2024 is made of wood, aluminum, steel, plexiglass, batteries, tires, electric motor, solar panels, generator, lights, PVC, plants, soil and water—a conceptually imagined work designed to specifically run on wind and solar energy and produce bio-regenerative life support for outer space explorer, “EarthMan 1.”

Laurent attended Texas A&M University, College Station, and Belmont University, Nashville, and has exhibited extensively, including shows at the 1940 Air Terminal Museum, Hobby Airport, Houston, Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, Art Car Museum, Houston, Poissant Gallery, Houston, Texas A&M University Visual Arts Gallery, College Station, Tennessee State Museum, Nashville, Guardian Garden Gallery, Tokyo, and HTTP Gallery, London, England. He has held his unique brand of art performances, including Earthman, at Tate Modern, London, Art Basel, Miami Beach, Art Chicago, Louvre, Paris, and Espace d’Animation des Blancs-Manteaux, Paris.

ART SHIRER, Dallas
“WISH” – 600 block

Art Shirer has produced welded steel sculpture for more than four decades and is known for his kinetic forms and ephemeral site-specific installations. His True North 2020 collaborative sculpture “Carbon Sink” (with Dallas artist Sherry Owens) was one part performance art as they meticulously pieced the work together on site over a period of several days in March (just as the pandemic was closing in) using hundreds of discarded crape myrtle cuttings. Made of welded steel and found industrial objects, Shirer’s 2024 sculpture “WISH,” with its fantastical shapes and movement, appears as a mysterious primeval relic—meant to grant your every wish with a spin of its ancient wheel.



Shirer was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and received a BFA from East Carolina University, an MFA from Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, and an Artist Fellowship from the State of Louisiana Division of the Arts. An art instructor earlier in his career, Shirer taught at Creative Arts Center School of Sculpture, Dallas, and School of Art and Architecture, Louisiana Tech University, Ruston. Exhibitions of his work include Locke Surls Center for Art and Nature, Cleveland, Art League Houston, Port Jefferson Nature and History Center, UMLAUF Sculpture Garden + Museum, Austin, Redbud Gallery, Houston, and Fain Fine Arts Center, Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls. Selected public collections include Martin Museum of Art, Baylor University, Waco, San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, the City of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi, Dallas College, Brookhaven, the City of Dallas, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Onslow County Museum, Jacksonville, North Carolina, and East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

NELA GARZÓN, Houston
“Pre-Columbian Unlooted Bat or Vampire for the New World” – 800 block

A multidisciplinary visual artist, **Nela Garzón** finds inspiration through studies of ancient beliefs, myths and customs—and those reflections in folk art—from around the globe. Her works raise awareness of the importance of ancestral traditions and promote pride within these cultural societies. Her sculpture, “Pre-Columbian Unlooted Bat or Vampire for the New World,” for True North 2024—made of chicken-wire, salvaged plastic and polyethyl-ene, paper mâché, PVA glue, primer and gesso—is based on the Mexican free-tailed bat. Adorned with pre-Columbian ornamentation, its wings hold patterns of the iconic monarch butterfly, and the nose and fangs are inspired by the vampire bat. Garzón explains that the pre-Columbian Tayrona tribe believed their shamans would transcend into fierce animals, and Mesoamerican mythology tells of an anthropomorphic bat-headed monster named Camazotz.



Born in Bogotá, Colombia, Garzón studied Literature at Los Andes University and holds a Bachelor of Visual Arts from Javeriana University, Bogotá. She received the Jones Artist Award from Houston Endowment in 2023 and has held residencies at Houston Center for Contemporary Craft and PAC Art, Houston. Garzón’s installations have included The Lillie and Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden at MFAH, Discovery Green Houston, Institute of Hispanic Culture, Houston, Contemporary Art Museum, Bogotá, Post HTX, Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, Holocaust Museum Houston, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, and she has been selected as one of 40 prominent Houston artists to collaborate in the highly-anticipated Meow Wolf art experience—opening in Houston’s Fifth Ward in 2024.

RICARDO PANIAGUA, Dallas

“Intersections of Dimension” – 900 block

Ricardo Paniagua is known for his trompe l'oeil and geometric paintings and sculptures which explore the relationship between color, line and form. He draws inspiration from a backlog of concepts and projects stemming from his dynamic and ubiquitous dreams and visions. Paniagua’s brilliant geometric sculpture for True North 2024, “Intersections of Dimension”—made of laser-cut and -welded steel and automotive paint—continues his work originating from a lucid dream where he observed a vivid hypercube—painted in a multicolored array of stripes—turning and moving on the many planes of the form itself.

A self-taught artist whose works have been shown all over the world, Paniagua first became interested in creating art while enrolled at a technical school for underprivileged youth—taking advantage of the free art supplies he found in the facility’s community room. Since that fateful day, among his many exhibitions, he has held shows at The Museum of Geometric and MADI Art, Dallas, Irving Arts Center, RE Gallery, Dallas, Davidson Gallery, New York, Talley Dunn Gallery, Dallas, Central Booking, New York, Amarillo Museum of Art, Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, Mexic-Arte Museum, Austin, The McKinney Avenue Contemporary, Dallas, Box43, Zurich, Switzerland, and 500X Gallery, Dallas.



WYATT LITTLE, Houston

“BRICK PHONE” – 1200 block

Following an early career in traditional industrial design, Houston Heights artist Wyatt Little turned to ceramic art after learning mold making from a friend. His concepts are derived from early memories of treasured, iconic objects—resulting in decidedly quirky and whimsical symbols of a bygone time. Growing up watching “Saved by the Bell,” Little recalls those comically-huge phones—like the kind Zack had on the show—resembling a brick in size and shape and representing a major status symbol that personified that era of conspicuous consumption (costing upwards of \$4,000 at the time). His 16’-tall “BRICK PHONE”—made of treated lumber, stucco and paint—evokes nostalgia, immortalizes the dramatic evolution of that technology and, let’s face it, simply makes us smile.



Wyatt holds a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Design from the University of Houston, Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design. His delightful handmade ceramic vessels are found in small luxury boutiques and galleries around the country. “The products themselves are surprising, but they’re also relatably nostalgic. ‘My designs are my way of immortalizing the things I’ve always cared about,’ Little says.” [BloombergCityLab, 2016.]

SUZETTE MOUCHATY, Houston

“Monument to Sea Slugs” – 1300 block

Suzette Mouchaty’s works blend formal structures of rational scientific thought with the imaginary and subversive of the artistic realm—realizing quirky objects that address sociopolitical issues and environmental concerns. Inspired by marine nudibranchs that are no larger than your thumb, her sculpture for True North 2024, “Monument to Sea Slugs”—made of metal, Styrofoam, stucco, pvc and paint—is composed of two colorful sea slugs rapturously gliding up a carnival pole. One of the many marine species facing extinction because their coral reef habitat is being lost due to warming oceans, these tiny mollusks have consequently become indicators of climate change. Our survival and well-being depend upon healthy ecosystems rich in diversity, and Mouchaty’s sculpture serves to shed light upon the plight of these phenomenal creatures of the sea.



Mouchaty is an artist and scientist who lives, works—a professor of biology for UH-Downtown—and creates her art in Houston. She earned a BS and MS from University of Alaska, Fairbanks, an MFA from University of Houston School of Art, a Ph.D. in Genetics from Lund University, Sweden, and received a Junior Fulbright Fellowship to Sweden. Mouchaty has received grants and scholarships from University of Alaska, Lund University, Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Houston Arts Alliance and University of Houston School of Art. She has held exhibitions, in part, at Mystic Seaport Museum, Connecticut, G Contemporary Gallery, 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.

CLAYTON HURT, Dallas
“Apprehensive Dog” – 1600 block

A multi-media artist based in Dallas, Clayton Hurt is mostly known for his figurative works—often depicting the mundane daily life of a dog—which navigate a fine line between struggle and humor. His father a master electrician and his mother an artist, Hurt grew up around construction sites and surrounded by art and the Dallas-Fort Worth arts community. His True North 2024 sculpture, “Apprehensive Dog”—made of welded steel, burlap, cloth, foam, tar, wax, resin and paint—depicts a mysterious canine with a story that is left to the viewer’s imagination. Its precarious posture suggests it is avoiding or contemplating something below, and its shiny chrome eyes reflect the world around it.



Hurt earned a BFA Sculpture from University of North Texas, Denton, and an MFA Sculpture from Texas Christian University, Fort Worth. His works have been shown, in part, at Fort Worth Contemporary, Texas Christian University, Arts Fort Worth, Plush Gallery, Dallas, Ann Dean Fine Arts Building, Kilgore College, Redbud Arts Center, Houston, Fort Worth Community Arts Center, Artspace 111, Fort Worth, and 500X Gallery, Dallas, and he was featured as one of Glasstire’s esteemed Top 5 in 2021.

Patrick Renner, Houston
“dauber” – 1800 block

A fourth generation Houstonian, Patrick Renner has been established in his hometown’s art scene for over two decades. Returning to the project this year, his True North 2016 installation, “harbinger,” was an otherworldly work of imaginative and architectural genius. For 2024, Renner brings us “dauber”—a meditation on the structures built by the garden-beneficial mud dauber wasp. His stylized “nest” is



constructed with—instead of mud—a combination of architectural refuse and brightly colored wood from past projects—dismantled and reconfigured into the new form. One side of the nest’s organic silhouette is considered the planar facet—implying it might have been originally built on the angling surface of another form that is now absent.

Renner attended the famed High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Houston, earned a BFA from Kansas City Art Institute and MFA from New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University. An art educator from 2006-16, Renner led his students at Sharpstown International School to win prizes for their Houston Art Car Parade entries, including First Place Best School category in 2016. His solo and group exhibitions include Art League Houston, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, DiverseWorks, Houston, Locke Surls Center for Arts and Nature, Cleveland, Galveston Arts Center, Kirksey Architecture, Houston, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, Poissant Gallery, Houston, and Redbud Arts Center, Houston. Renner was named 2016 Artist of the Year by American Institute of Architects, Houston, and has won multiple prizes, including first place, in Lawndale Art Center’s The Big Show. His traffic-stopping “Funnel Tunnel”—the renowned 180-foot-long civic art sculpture snaking its way through the esplanade of Montrose Boulevard in 2013-14—was commissioned by Art League Houston and later permanently installed for the city of New Orleans.



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