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# Sculpture coming to SKyPAC as part of public arts push

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Figurative sculptor Russ Faxon speaks Tuesday at the announcement of the piece he has been commissioned to make for the Southern Kentucky Performing Arts Center. The in-progress bronze statue marks the beginning of a public art effort headed by Arts of Southern Kentucky's Public Art Committee.

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Former Warren County Judge-Executive Mike Buchanon said Tuesday that all great communities have a public arts presence. Bowling Green will soon be on that list.

Arts of Southern Kentucky announced the first commissioned work from its Public Art Committee Tuesday, a large bronze sculpture to be placed out front of

the Southern Kentucky Performing Arts Center.

The work marks the first step of an effort to install public artwork across Bowling Green.



Buchanon, a chairperson of the public art committee, said the group will continue to engage regional artists to “identify and secure sites,” both public and privately owned, to create and install public artwork.

He said a city that shows creativity attracts creative people.

“And certainly we want to attract creative people to this community to visit, to live and to work,” he said.

Joe Davis, current chair of Arts of SOKY, said Buchanon is speaking to “several interested businesses and individuals” about public art in Bowling Green.

“It's my understanding that our initial emphasis is in downtown Bowling Green, but it goes beyond that,” he said. “There will no doubt be opportunities outside of downtown.”

The committee's first commission was made possible by a \$100,000 gift from Davis.

He said the only real exposure he had to the arts growing up was through art classes in school. That was until he learned to play the trumpet.

“I played basketball as a freshman, but then I turned to pep band so I could be a starter rather than hardly make the team,” Davis said. “Music became my ticket to see the world.”

Davis said SKyPAC's upcoming piece will become a symbol of the “magic that takes place in this building.”

“I believe it will also symbolize the artistic spirit and core values woven into our community,” he said.



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The man chosen to capture all that was figurative sculptor Russ Faxon, a product of Western Kentucky University who was raised in Bowling Green.

“We can all go out and work every day doing something, but unless we have that ability to express ourselves, we have a sense of, for me, incompleteness,” Faxon said.

He is known for pieces like Tennessee's Korean War Memorial, the bronze statue of Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black that adorns his gravestone and sculptures of country music legends Roy Acuff and Minnie Pearl – complete with price tag dangling off her hat.

“The performing arts, the visual arts are a way for us all to interact and to receive something from the art,” he said.

“Because art is a means of telling a story.”

Faxon’s work can already be found across WKU's campus.

His statue of Kentucky representative and speaker Jody Richards stands in the School of Media building that bears his name. Faxon is also responsible for the statue of Edgar Allen Diddle outside of Diddle Arena as well as the depiction of Sgt. First Class Robert H. Guthrie underneath the Guthrie Bell Tower.

Davis said his board expects completion to take roughly a year and half. He said it will stand between 10-12 feet tall once it's put on its pedestal base, "a pretty good size."

The design has not been shared with the public, but Davis was able to give a tease based on what he has seen.

"It'll express movement. It'll be artistic in its expression," he said. "It's going to be an alive-looking piece, not a static-looking piece. It's going to be a piece that has action associated with it."

Faxon said it was his honor to create a piece for SKyPAC and Bowling Green that will be uplifting, powerful and energetic.

"I'm so grateful I'm getting to come back to Bowling Green and bring one of my sculptures expressing what I feel about life, and the performing arts center, and the arts, and the creative process," he said.

For artists who want to be involved in the committee's public art plans, Davis said the best thing to do is make yourself known.

“One thing about Judge Buchanon is if you’re interested, he’s going to be interested in you,” he said. “That’s how motivated he is about this project.”

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