WHEAT RIDGE TRANSCRIPT

Steeling the show

Cassie Monroe
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Kevin Robb, a Wheat Ridge metal sculptor, is working on a new series he calls "Journey."

Robb extracts metal shapes from sheets of stainless steel and combines them with curved glass, creating sculptures that are quite different from the nearly 15-foot stainless-steel creations for which he is famous.

The city of Wheat Ridge started working with Robb in 2009, asking him to create a sculpture for Discovery Park.

In order to pay for the statue, Mayor Jerry DiTullio and community activist Tom Abbott asked city residents to donate to the project through the Mayor's Art Initiative.

A plaque with the names of the donors was placed near the sculpture, known as "Discovering the Stars," and was unveiled at the recent grand opening of the skatepark.

"It is just so awesome that so many individuals would support Kevin and public art," Diane Robb, the sculptor's wife, said.

Kevin Robb suffered a stroke eight years ago, and since then has been nearly unable to speak. His wife of 37 years — they were high school sweethearts — is able to explain the work Kevin has been doing for the past 35 years.

After graduating high school, she said, Kevin began studying graphic art at the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design.

"He hated it," Diane Robb said.

Soon after, he started interning with a metal sculptor in Boulder.

An art festival was coming up and the sculptor asked Robb if he would like to enter a piece. Robb created an 18-inch sculpture. When he presented it to his mentor, the sculptor told him to make it significant — 18 feet instead if a foot and a half.

"We'll never forgive him for that," Diane Robb said, laughing.

The sculpture now rests in the "Kevin Robb Retirement Home" in the backyard of the Robb's home, along with other artworks. Kevin Robb has sold his metal sculptures to clients across the United States and internationally.

He creates plans for his pieces using a computer design program, or by using his left hand and a magic marker to draw shapes on large sheets of stainless steel. His right hand has been crippled by neuropathy associated with the stroke.

There is a large crane system in his Wheat Ridge studio that can lift the heavy pieces of metal Robb can direct them into place.

His brother-in-law, Richard Dougherty, a contractor in the Denver metro area, helps with installation and contracting questions. Welder Tom Donovan has worked with the Robbs for the past four years.

Diane Robb said her husband is still the visionary but others who help out have become his hands. She said it generally takes about four to six weeks, of nonstop working to create one of the large stainless-steel pieces.

"But as Kevin always used to say, 'it takes a lifetime,'" she said.

Kevin Robb has no intention of stopping. One of his latest stainless-steel pieces can be seen at the Loveland Sculpture in The Park festival Aug. 11 and 12 at 29th Street and Taft Avenue in Loveland.

"Kevin is constantly creating," Diane Robb said. "He always used to say, 'I have more ideas than I'll ever be able to create in a lifetime.'"

"We just have to keep up with him," she said.