

middle of the hill

What Makes Possible the Big Bang of Sculpture Key West?



"My Mordant" by Susan Hodges, steel, plexiglass, series of three



"Folksies" by Mimi Blessing, ABS plastic, life-sized heads, series of 20



"The End of the World" by Monika Goetz, steel

by Joel Blau

Bmile Adamec, an artist from the Czech Republic, knocked on Karley Klopfestein's apartment door in the middle of December 2005, saying in effect: "I'm here, where do I stay; where do I get my stone or wood to make my sculpture?" (His chaiseur had been confiscated at the airport.) After the initial shock, Klopfestein introduced Bmile to the Czech community in Key West, negotiated with the Indigenous Park staff for the generous donation of two large, ancient pieces of mahogany, and suddenly beamed that Bmile was sleeping in the Park's youth work during the eight months from the end of one Sculpture Key West exhibit to the next is not usually so dramatic and upsetting as that of Bmile's arrival. But it is just as

busy and unpredictable.

It all started 13 years ago with sculptor Jim Raebich's dream of a sculpture exhibit in Fort Zachary Taylor, where his day job was that of a park employee. After those few years, Jean Carper, the current president of the board of directors, can say: "Take all adolescents, we are going through growth throes. We have had difficulties. But I think we can be a major force on the international art scene."

As valid and exciting as that vision is, it depends on eight months of dedicated nitty-gritty work. As soon as the last artist has taken down the last sculpture in April, several processes begin in more or less the same order: the director of exhibitions, Jean Carper, and the director of the director of the board of directors is active both in planning, soliciting grants, and carrying the direction of the organization, much of the budget is dependent on grants from foundations and individuals. A large part of that money supports the artists, who are responsible for the construction of their work and its transportation to and from Key West.

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Such creative thinking can be expected from this dedicated staff and board. Sculpture Key West has joined several other cultural organizations — such as the Literary Seminar, the Customs House, the Key West Symphony and Pops, the Red Barn and the West End Community Center — that make our city an important cultural center, bringing us substantial contemporary sculpture, as the logo says, "By Land, by Sea, and Sky." □