



# World-altering Art

## Sculpture Key West Opens at Fort Zach

BY MARGIT BISZTRAY

Above: One 18"x31" piece from Key West artist Lauren McAloon's multi-media "Focus." Photo courtesy of Sculpture Key West. Opposite page: Corky Irick's 5"x15" neon "Art Sign." Sculptor Bill Loraine's 26'x13'x13' stone "The Angel" created from cornerstones of Victorian-era Conch houses in Key West. Photos by Rob O'Neal.

It's been a decade since the most unusual objects first appeared at Fort Zachary Taylor State Park. Steel figures revolving in the shade of the pine trees. A spiraled iron pig guarding the sea grapes. A nest larger than a pterodactyl's, tucked into the crook of a driftwood tree. Ribbons of painted metal swaying in the fort's moat, like reeds.

People have come to expect the unexpected in Key West, but what is going on here?

It's called art. The annual exhibition was named Art in the Park until recently, when it was re-named Sculpture Key West, and it's about art

goals of that diverse community. The installation also helps support the work of Friends of Fort Taylor, Inc., in its effort to preserve this historic site.

Since its inception, Sculpture Key West has evolved, building from its origins in Key West's indigenous talent,

together with our own."

This year's installation, which opens on January 16 and runs through March 25, will feature 80-plus attractions by over 60 artists—including, among other works, a singing, nine-foot-high lighthouse; a 25-foot drifting beach ball and a herd of life-sized metal buffalos grazing by the Gulf of Mexico.

Such feats of imagination would be a delight to behold anywhere, but in the context of a scenic state park, with the prevailing, rustic majesty of an historic fort right at its center, they shine with >



being bared out in the open and enhancing our public environment.

The fundamental belief of the Sculpture Key West Committee is that art isn't something we should have to make plans to see, or buy a ticket to visit. Instead, art belongs where we can bump into it, where it can unexpectedly alter our world.

In addition to the installation at the park each year, Sculpture Key West makes an ongoing effort to educate the public about sculpture; to introduce children to the pleasure of art; to celebrate the global community of sculpture at large; and to further the

and growing to include international and world-renowned artists. This year, the collection will welcome both a Czech and an Austrian, as well as others highly respected in the art community. Park ranger Jim Racchi, the event's founder, is thrilled with how the show has progressed.

"When I conceived of this project, I never would have imagined the proposals people have come up with," he says. "The scale, the use of the fort, and the range of materials have all exceeded my wildest expectations. I'm delighted that we are able to bring artists from all over the world to show



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with contemplation—stained glass windows with cross-hair perspectives on endangered greenery, a metal construction reminiscent of a mine placed harmlessly on soft grass. All—by interacting with the environment—awaken the setting, celebrate its potential, and multiply its radiance.

It would be hard to imagine a more "public" park than one opened to artistic expression and to an audience as varied as those who love and visit Key West. By touring this show, children and adults alike get to see nature and history

an aerial vantage point. Another sponsor, the Schooner Liberty Fleet of Tall Ships, skims close to the coastline on its way to and from Key West Harbor, permitting guests to survey the show from a watery stance.

Even those who only visit "by land" (which is to say, on foot at the park itself) will find a variety of ways to see the same piece from many different angles. There are the rocks, the paths, the fields, the wood canopy—and there is the fort itself, two stories tall, with the second level offering a view of both the



refreshed through artists' eyes. Bounded only by the sky, air and water, the outdoor "museum" of Fort Zachary Taylor State Park makes possibilities practically endless.

There are no white walls. There is no solemn hush. There is only art enjoying a special place, and the wind blowing through the trees.

The subtitle of Sculpture Key West—By Land, Sea, and Air—pays homage to the unique nature of this vast, outdoor "gallery" and its ever-changing environment. The title reminds visitors to consider art from many perspectives to hover in the contemplations the vast forum makes possible.

Cape Air, a sponsor of the show, redirects its flights to pass over the fort, allowing

entire park and the entire moat.

Sculptures appear in the least expected places, arranged in crevices and crannies, hoisted impossibly overhead. A visitor feels enormous one moment and tiny the next. It is a lesson in relative scale to tour the Sculpture Key West show, a shift in the sense of self—and, as such, lots of fun. All viewers are invited to vote for "People's Choice" awards in the three categories of best seen "By Land, Sea and Air." Ballots are available at the park entrance, on the Liberty Fleet and on Cape Air.

As with any Key West event, there are a number of parties in conjunction with Sculpture Key West. January 16 marks the official opening, with ongoing festivities throughout the afternoon, and the chance to get a first look at the annual collection.

Not to be missed is the annual gala, Art Lights Fort Taylor, on February 26 from 7–9 p.m. This multimedia celebration of art and inspiration kicks

up the presence of the show yet another notch, with live entertainment, gourmet catering and, best of all, the breathtaking beauty of the fort and the artworks lit up under a Key West night sky.

*Fort Zachary Taylor State Park, located at the end of Southard Street, is open daily from 8 a.m. to sunset, (305) 292-6713. For more information, visit [sculpturekeywest.com](http://sculpturekeywest.com) or call (305) 294-3800.*

This show is truly about art out in the open—art out in the real world and in dialogue with a unique and remarkable landscape.

Roam the fields and the fort in silent wonder, dance side-by-side with sculpture figures, or consider the nocturnal beauty of the entire presentation from a perch high above it all. However you choose to enjoy the privilege of this event, you will find it unforgettable.

There are many kinds of souvenirs to take from Key West, but none is better than the souvenir of a one-of-a-kind memory. Sculpture Key West lasts a mere 10 weeks before it scatters to the wind, but in its brief stint, it alters a piece of the island in a remarkable manner.

Carol Schreck, chairperson of Sculpture Key West, puts it this way, "Sculpture Key West's dialogue between environment, art, history and community can shift the patterns by which we live and interact."

Not bad for an afternoon or evening at the park. ♦



Opposite page: "Fishie #2" 1/2" steel rod 38"x17"x7" sculpture by Key West artist Rod Stimers. Photo by Rob O'Neal. Plywood, paint and steel "Jetfire," 8'x10'x3', by New York artist Luisa Caldwell. Photo courtesy of Sculpture Key West. Key West-based painter and sculptor Larry Estridge's steel "Openings," 7'x5'. Photo by Rob O'Neal.

Below: Ceramic 80"x30"x30" canine "Harbor House Hangout" sculpture by San Francisco's Jeff Downing. Photo courtesy of Sculpture Key West. Welded 45"x16"x14" steel "Gunner" by artist, park ranger and exhibit visionary Jim Racchi. Photo by Rob O'Neal.