

Patrick Dougherty - Internationally acclaimed sculptor | Eastern

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Eastern's Chris Kanyusik spent a day with Dougherty and his son working on the giant sculpture. "When we arrived on campus, all the vertical posts were in place for the eventual three-or four- room structure. The central cylinder was already constructed of woven willow branches.

"We built the exterior wall of one of the outer rooms by similarly intertwining branches, building a structure first and then filling in the gaps by interlocking smaller, more malleable boughs. The branches were entwined to create a structure held together by tension only, no screws, nails or other mechanical fasteners were used," Kanyusik said.

Dougherty selects where he wants to build the sculpture on campus and uses crumbled pieces of paper and electrical cords to create the circles for the footprint of the sculpture.

Sticks and love best describe the sculptures Dougherty has spent the past 30 years creating throughout the world. A North Carolina native, he is best known for weaving tree saplings into whirling, animated shapes that resemble tumbleweeds or gust of wind. He calls them woolly lairs and wild follies, gigantic snares, nests and cocoons, some woven into groves of trees, other lashed around buildings.

Branch by branch and stick by stick, a dozen or so volunteers help the artist construct each sculpture which usually lasts two years outside in the elements. Dougherty acts as both sculptor and team coach for the volunteers who show up for either a four-hour shift or all 21 days of the build. He likes the mix of people who assist with his build because he says it adds to the energy of the group.

A dream come true for USU dean

Craig Jessop, founding dean for the USU Caine College of the Arts, dreamt of having a Dougherty sculpture on the Logan campus for the past 10 years. He first saw one of Dougherty pieces at St. John's College in Minnesota and immediately wanted to bring the sculptor to Cache Valley to build one on USU's campus. Since all the USU campuses were celebrating The Year of Arts in 2017-18, he thought this would be a major pillar of the celebration.

"People of all ages identify with Dougherty's pieces," Jessop said. "His work brings out the child in all of us. We look at this work, walk through it and feel his fanciful world."

On Labor Day weekend in 2018, he describes an 18-wheeler truck filled with 16 tons of willows arriving in Logan from upstate New York. Jessop said the willows were stacked 15-feet tall. "We took three hours to unload them on campus so Dougherty could begin the build the next day."

Volunteers from the campus and community worked in shifts as everyone on campus watched the sculpture take shape. The weather was perfect throughout the build, Jessop said.

After two years, the sculpture must be dismantled and the landscaping restored on campus. Jessop acknowledged that the durability and longevity of the statue depends a lot on the weather in Logan. However, Dougherty's contract requests the statue be taken down two years from the build.

A window into sculpture

"It was a great opportunity to take part in such an interesting project. Watching Patrick work, manipulating the branches, creating an enclosure and then stepping back to evaluate the overall form, was a fantastic window into his method for building large-scale sculptures. Patrick was both very purposeful and planned, as well as open to letting the work evolve naturally as it progressed," Kanyusik said.

Dougherty's work received international attention with awards from the Factor Prize for Southern Art, North Carolina Artist Fellowship, Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, Henry Moore Foundation Fellowship, Japan-U.S. Creative Arts Fellowship and National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship.

He combines carpentry skills with his love of nature using primitive techniques of building and experimenting with tree saplings as construction material. Dougherty has built over 250 of these works from Scotland to Japan to Brussels and throughout the United States.

Usually booked two years in advance, Dougherty returned to Utah from Oct. 29-Nov. 20, 2018, to build an indoor sculpture titled "Windswept" in Brigham Young University's Museum of Art.

~ *Susan Polster*