

Anna Frlan *(Canada)*

Anna was introduced to steel, welding and sculptural artwork in the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Ottawa in Canada. Upon graduation, she established a studio practice and has been creating welded steel sculptures for 25 years. She challenges herself to use welding in an innovative way, to build up forms and create textures, fabricating with steel sheets, rods, bars and tubes. She has learned that steel is inherently malleable and may be transformed into an infinite variety of sculptural forms representing the biodiversity of trees, nests and coral reefs.

For her exhibit, which was commissioned by the City of Ottawa and OC Transpo, Anna's objective in creating The Navigators (Bees, Birds and Butterflies) was to introduce natural references to the busy traffic corridor of Rideau Street in Ottawa. She created thirteen sculptures installed behind the glass walls of three bus shelters for this exhibit. Symbolic elements are water jet cut into stainless steel plate, comparing the intelligent navigational abilities of Ottawa's bees, birds and butterflies to the need for safe navigation of OC Transpo buses and passengers.

She researched the shapes of feathers and discovered that birds have special filoplumes which may help them to navigate and detect weather conditions such as temperature. The nine Bird feather sculptures are water jet cut with meteorological symbols for cloud cover, air fronts, precipitation and visibility. The Butterfly sculpture is surrounded by magnetic patterns, alluding to the theory that iron filings in the butterfly's abdomen help it to navigate the Earth.

The Bee sculpture depicts the flight path of the bee merged with the entire schedule for bus route #6. It is flanked on either side by bee's wings patterned with honeycombs, representing the bee's desire to return to the hive.

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Exhibit "The Navigators (Bees, Birds and Butterflies)"

Anna researched the biodiversity of bees, birds and butterflies in Ottawa and their inherent navigational abilities to create detailed drawings required for water jet cutting of The Navigators sculptures. 180 bird species nest locally in Ottawa and 80 are at risk. She selected feathers from 9 bird species to create the Bird sculptures. The meteorological symbols found on the sculptures illustrate the intelligence of filoplumes which enable birds to detect weather conditions and determine safe flight conditions.

Of the 94 butterfly species in Ottawa, the Monarch butterfly is one of the species at risk due to habitat loss and nectar sources such as milkweed.





*The Navigators
(Bees, Birds
and Butterflies)
Anna Frlan
Photos: David Barbour*

In the Butterfly sculpture, the space delineating the form of a butterfly is largely empty, alluding to the threat of extinction.

Wild bee species are also at risk in Ottawa. A recent study at the University of Ottawa revealed that 70% of ground-nesting bees are at risk because of exposure to pesticides in the soil. Bees memorize the shapes of bushes, trees and other elements in the landscape to know the

way home after a trip for gathering pollen. The Bee flight path sculpture contains information about bus stop names and times for an entire bus route, forever cut into the welded stainless steel sculpture.

Dimensions of Exhibit

Comparison of each exhibit with size of bus shelter



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