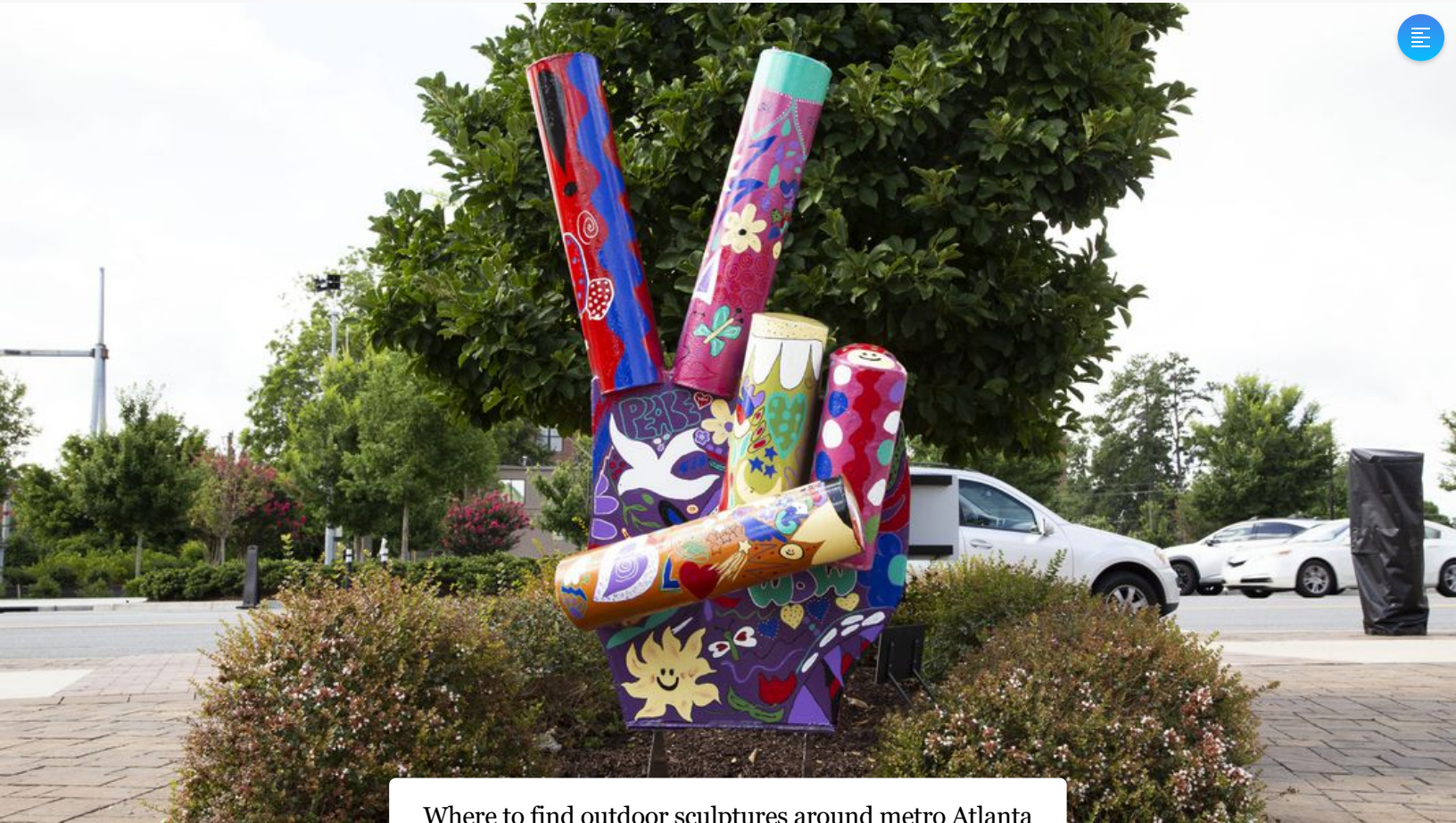




Where to find outdoor sculptures around metro Atlanta

THINGS TO DO | Sept 28, 2020

By Mary Welch, For the AJC

This artwork can be experienced by anyone and loved by everyone.

Wanting Sandy Springs Mayor Rusty Paul to choose his city's favorite outdoor sculpture is akin to asking which of his five children is his favorite. "If I need to [give you one that stands out, it is "Optimistical,"](#) he says. "I enjoy the clean lines, the creative use of color to capture and refract light, the symmetry of the circular metal and the ability to notice something new and different each time I see it."

Not everyone may have Paul's artistic aesthetic, but metro Atlanta has a wealth of sculptures that will provoke a range of emotions in people of all ages and demographics. A piece of sculpture can send a social message, allow one's imagination to run wild, offer a beacon for contemplation, inspire one to think (or be bewildered) and, at the very least, offer a great Instagram shot.





Credit: Handout

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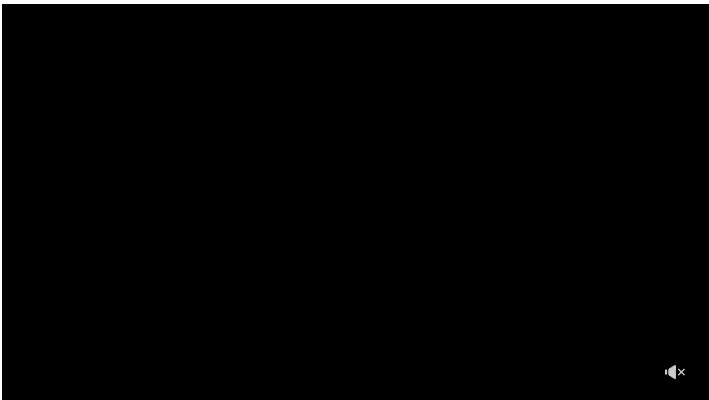
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“Public art is one medium that can be experienced at a distance, so it’s great during COVID,” says Angie Macon, executive director of the [Decatur Arts Alliance](#). “It’s something that everyone can enjoy. It’s free and accessible to the public.”

Throughout the area, arts groups, municipalities, colleges, individuals and businesses have graced the area with signature pieces of sculpture, and in the process, supported local, national and international artists. Whether you are walking the BeltLine, lunching in a park, looking outside your office window (when you are in the office) or randomly stumbling across a piece of art, outdoor sculptures are always a welcomed respite from everyday life.

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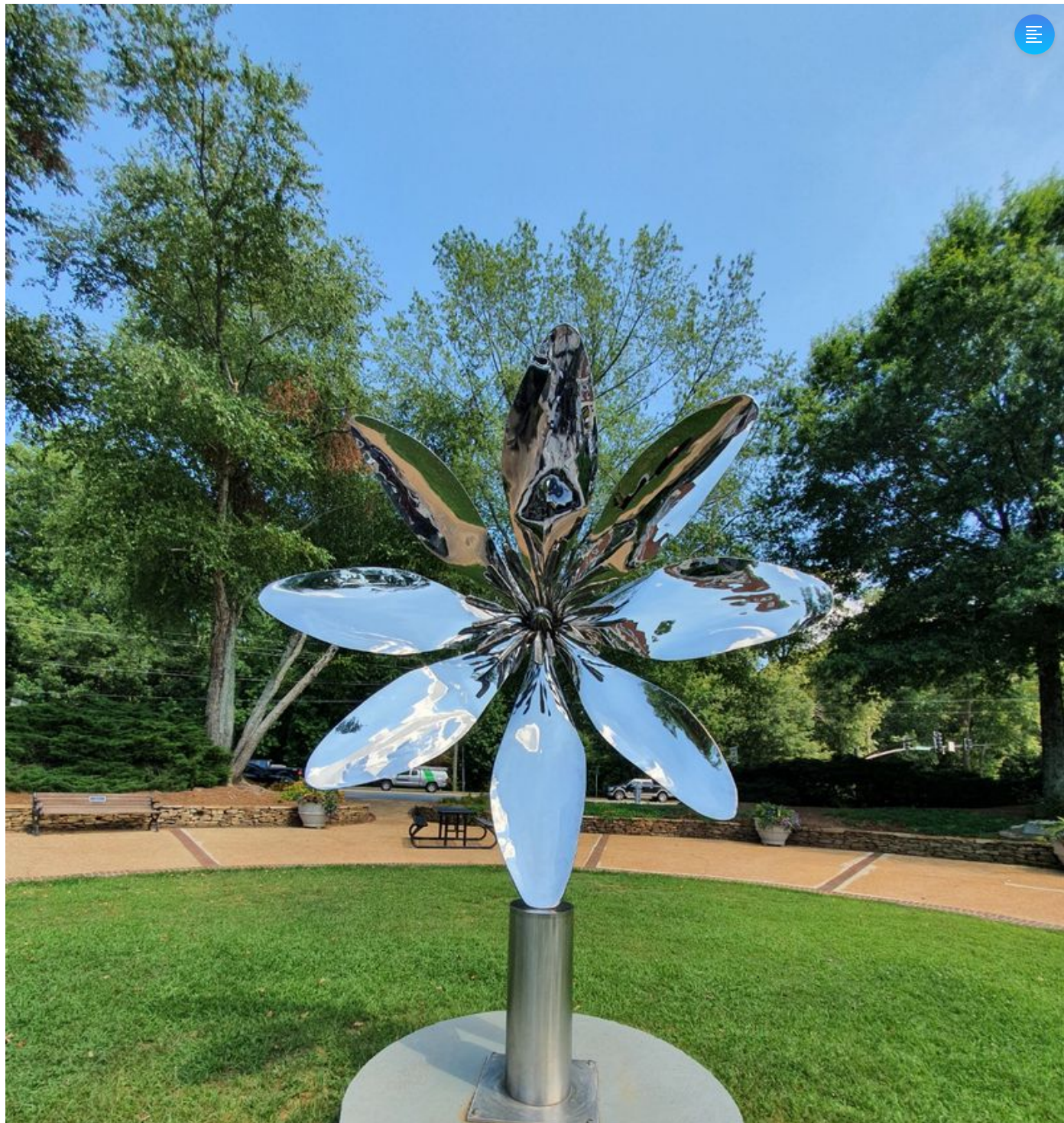


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includes 10 permanent and 10 temporary sculptures, all of which are placed in the city’s parks, historic district and in front of private businesses. The temporary pieces are on loan from the artist for 11 months and are available for purchase.

Ghila Sanders, executive director of the Roswell Arts Fund, believes that public art has the “power to shape and change the way we experience our spaces.”

“Sentience,” located on Canton Street, is by Georgia native David Landis, who also has a sculpture on Atlanta’s BeltLine as well as in Decatur. “Sentience,” which was purchased in 2017, is a delicate stainless steel sculpture of a flower with only a few petals partially formed, symbolizing the temporary nature of the flower’s beauty.





Credit: Handout

“Ask the Fish 2.0” is a little, well, bizarre. Basically, it’s a hand holding a fish. But, of course, it represents so much more. In fact, the work symbolizes man’s domination over nature. The fish’s skin is a holographic film that diffracts light and changes colors depending on the light and the viewer’s position. The artist, Dr. Stephen Fairfield, said his inspiration came from [reading Job 12:8-10](#). Figure personal meaning out for yourself by visiting it at Don White Bridge at Ga. 400.



Credit: Handout

“Reception” illustrates a [Nigerian tradition](#) that visitors should be welcomed by the most beautiful woman in the house and offered a gift. The sculpture by Nigerian Fred Ajanogna is a stone case sculpture of a traditionally dressed African woman holding a drinking gourd. While this piece is located on the Roswell Riverwalk, Ajanogna has works throughout Atlanta, as well as in the private collections of President Jimmy Carter and the late Maya Angelou.

Georgia Tech

Georgia Tech has a number of sculptures worth visiting including a 3,000-pound sculpture of Albert Einstein, which sits on the northwest corner of Tech Green near the Bunger-Henry Building. The sculpture, only one of three created by Robert Berks, came to Tech only after Berks' widow decided it would be a proper fit. If you look closely by Einstein’s foot, there is a star chart engraved in black granite that shows the Atlanta night sky on Dec. 10, 1948, the date of the signing of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



While you're at Georgia Tech, take a look at a bronze and granite sculpture of civil rights icon Rosa Parks at 42 years old, when she participated in the famed bus boycott, and at 92 years old, when she died. The two sit across from each other, with an empty seat in between. The statute, "[Continuing the Conversation](#)," sits in [Harrison Square](#) and was designed by Atlanta artist Martin Dawe.



Credit: Rob Felt

Dawe also created "[The Three Pioneers](#)," which depicts Ralph A. Long Jr., Lawrence Williams and Ford C. Green, the first three Black students at Tech and "[The First Graduate](#)," honoring Ronald Yancey, the first Black to graduate from Tech. "[The First Graduate](#)" is installed near the G. Wayne Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons, while "[The Three Pioneers](#)," is in Harrison Square.





Credit: Christopher Moore

Sandy Springs

Sandy Springs started its sculpture program two years ago. In a partnership with [Art Sandy Springs](#), it hosts [ArtSS in the Open](#), an arts competition where the works of the winners are displayed and possibly purchased. This year the city acquired four pieces: “Optimistical,” by Nathan Pierce; “Doppelganger,” by Carl Billingsley; “Delilah,” by Athens-based Joni Younkins-Herzog, and “Hand Plant,” by Jack Howard-Potter.



Credit: Handout

“Nest” or “[Le Voyageur qui Fait son Nid](#)” is by Atlanta’s Corrina Sephora. The nest represents home, the ladder the journey, and together it illustrates that creating a home is both a challenge and a desire, she said. Joe and Terry Malesky of Strafford, Missouri, brings back the ’60s with the “Groovy Peace Sign”, while Nathan Pierce says that “Optimistical” represents hope and confidence about the future. The large stainless steel circular form represents unity and the transparent colored acrylic panels offer a new perspective of the world. It’s located on the Abernathy Greenway Park at the northeast corner of Abernathy and Wright roads. “Delilah” is located nearby.

“We’re working on a master art plan and are identifying places and targeting how we are going to fund it in the long run,” says Sharon Kraus, communications director. “We’ve chosen really interesting pieces.”





Credit: Handout

Decatur

The Decatur Arts Alliance started in 1989 and since the sculpture program started in 2014, about 30 to 35 pieces have been displayed throughout Decatur, according to Macon. “There [are] no criteria as to what’s selected,” she says. “Sometimes it’s a more contemporary piece while others have been whimsical. It’s all over the place.”

Perhaps the most loved statue in Decatur is “Valentine” by George Lundeen. The bronze statue, located in front of the Old Courthouse, shows the endearing love of an elderly couple sitting on the bench holding on to each other. “A lot of weddings come by and pose next to the sculpture,” says Macon. “And a lot of times people come by and dress them up like putting New Year’s Eve hats on them.” Most recently they can be seen wearing Decatur logo masks.

“Coral Stardust” by [Elizabeth Akamatsu](#) is a welded steel sculpture that is a metaphor for the human condition of “a complex union of the opposing forces of fragility and strength,” she said.



Credit: Handout

Robert D. Clements' steel piece “Flying” grew out of the artist’s happy marriage of 56 years. “The man holds up the woman. The woman, held aloft, reaches out for birds and celestial things, symbols of what is important in life, savoring happy times,” he wrote.

Museums

It almost seems self-evident to mention that great art can be found outside a museum, but that doesn’t make it any less true. The Woodruff Arts Center houses, perhaps, the area’s most famous statue, “The Shade” by August Rodin. A gift of the French Government in 1968, it honors the 122 members and friends of the Atlanta Art Association who perished in a plane crash after an organized art tour of European capitals.

Another iconic sculpture is “House III” by Roy Lichtenstein, which represents the suburban American home. The smaller-than-life sculpture explores the inverted perspective and symbolically complex messages of housing and shelter.



Credit: Handout

The center’s third piece is “Untitled” and is a bronze work by Joel Shapiro. According to the center, the piece “Enlivens the blocky, somewhat ambiguous figure by implying motion — the figure is frozen in the action of a decisive stride, which emanates tension and kinetic energy.”



Credit: Handout

Many of us go past outdoor sculptures without stopping and looking at them, but hopefully, that will change. Even Kraus, who works with the outdoor art project in Sandy Springs, was surprised by the effect the sculptures had on her.

“When I first saw ‘Delilah,’ I thought it was awful, and it’s grown on me. I saw another piece on paper, ‘Doppelganger,’ and didn’t get it. But now that it’s installed at Windsor Meadows Park, I keep walking around it. It’s a really cool piece,” she says. “It’s really fun to watch people, me included, learn how to interact with the sculptures. It’s a fun exploration.”



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