

Fun, food, etc.

Sculptor extends his influence through pen, classroom

Multitalented artist exhibits bronzes in Tempe



Donald Locke's *Timehri Bird*, a bronze work finished in blue and turquoise, is largest in a series based on Indian petroglyphs.

By SUSI LERMA
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Teacher, writer and artist are all titles that apply to Donald Locke, whose bronzes are included in the exhibition "Intimate to Monumental: Contemporary Sculpture" at the Tempe Arts Center, Mill Avenue and First Street.

Locke, who was born and raised in the South American nation of Guyana, was a teacher at age 17.

"I come from a teaching family," he said. "My mother, aunt, cousins and my brother are all teachers."

"In those days, teachers took exams and drawing was compulsory. I knew I couldn't draw, so I began taking art classes. I studied with a great man, E. R. Burrowes. That was 40 years ago. I heard and saw, and I was converted."

He has been studying, teaching, creating and writing about art ever since.

He studied art at the Bath Academy of Art, a division of Bristol University, in Wiltshire, England, and earned a master's degree in fine art at Edinborough University in Scotland. He lived in London until 1979, when he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, at that time the biggest fellowship available in the arts.

With that, he received an invitation from Arizona State University to be an artist-in-residence.

"I did not teach, but I worked and interacted with the students," he said.

Despite cultural differences, Locke stayed in Arizona. "I can't describe the difference. It's not easy, but people are people are people. The common thread is the friendliness of people."

"Things are much more similar than one would expect. In this

sense it isn't a strange world."

Locke has written a great deal about art. Several years ago, he wrote reviews for the *New Times* newspaper. Now, he is a correspondent for *Artspace* magazine.

Locke says his writing is a necessary extension of his work. He has written features and reviews and is working on articles about contemporary art theory.

"For me it is all part of the art that I do," Locke explained. At the Arizona Bronze Foundry, where his works are cast, every artist has his own way of working, he says, and there is a great exchange of ideas. "Talking about art is very important to me and writing is a natural extension of that."

Locke also has been asked to be the critic-in-residence at the Algira Arts Center in New Jersey, where he will lecture, visit studios and write beginning in April.

For the Tempe show, which runs through Feb. 14, the center has opened its inside gallery and its outside sculpture garden to accommodate the works. Jurors Michael Costello and Marvin Schenck chose three of Locke's large bronzes to include in the show.

One of the pieces is the *Timehri Bird*, a 6-foot-tall, sensuously flowing work finished in hues of turquoise and blue on the upper third and down the back of the torsolike form. Below the bright patina is a dark, almost black-brown. *Timehri Bird* is the largest in a series based on Timehri writings, or, in Guyanese, Indian petroglyphs. Locke's north Phoenix workshop is named Timehri Studio after them.

In making a sculpture, Locke first creates the piece — large models in clay, smaller ones in wax.

Then he casts a plaster mold. Melted wax is poured in to create a thin, hollow wax duplicate that is used in the actual bronze casting. To apply the patinas, he heats the skin of the bronze with a propane torch, then applies chemicals in a water solution to the form. The chemicals bond with the bronze to make different colors.

Because of the expense involved in casting bronze, Locke said, the work can be completed long before it actually is cast, and seem "old-fashioned" to the artists before it is shown.

"The greatest problem facing an artist is making work that belongs to the age. An artist must not only make it relevant, but a part of today," Locke said. For example, "the cowboy artists have nothing to do with the 20th century."

While on a teaching assignment in Santa Cruz, Calif., Locke began his current work: heads and busts.

"My new series of heads is a spinoff of one of the lessons I did with my students. I thought, 'Just let me try one of those.'"

The figures range in size from two to 40 inches.

"They are symbolic heads, not psychological statements. They are more statements of form. The right side may be smooth and the left side roughed up."

Locke says he is optimistic about the development of art in Arizona.

"I have been depressed at times, but not for long. When you add up all the individual progress in the art scene, it is much richer than 10 years ago. It's slow, it's steady, and it's not a flash in the pan. There is a classic complaint: 'The times are bad for art.' Michelangelo said that in Florence."