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Dino, Beetle live on in sculpture

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HIGHLAND HEIGHTS - A "Stegowagenvolkssaurus" has stormed Northern Kentucky University's W. Frank Steely Library.

No need to worry - it's a sculpture.

The 1974 piece by Cincinnati artist Patricia A. Renick combines the body of a VW Beetle with the legs and spikes of a stegosaurus.

Renick meant the work as a comment on the parallels between the coming obsolescence of fossil fuel vehicles and the extinction of the dinosaurs.

The 12-foot-tall by 20-foot-wide sculpture is on long-term loan to the library courtesy of Laura Chapman, executrix of Renick's estate. Chapman also oversaw the restoration of the sculpture.

"I am thrilled this sculpture will again be on view, especially in this splendid library," Chapman said. "In the 1970s, it was shown at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, the Cincinnati Art Museum and in a federal building in Chicago."

In an artist's statement written before her death in 2007, Renick wrote: "I created the sculpture over a period of 10 months. The first stage took place outdoors under a tent attached to my garage, making the work subject to the whims of weather. In this stage, I used simple versions of the fabrication processes found in the automobile styling industry. I used improvised and professional tools in shaping the automotive modeler's clay and in preparing the fiberglass molds.

"The molds were then moved from my improvised outdoor studio to an industrial site specializing in fiberglass projects. The owner allowed me to work within his factory.

"He also made his experts in fabrication available to me, and facilitated the completion of the project in other ways. I saw the completed work for the first time only two hours before the doors to the Cincinnati Art Museum opened for this exhibition."

Arne Almquist, associate provost for library services at NKU, says artworks such as "Stegowagenvolkssaurus" play an important interdisciplinary role because libraries serve as an intellectual commons. He said it helps to build knowledge and stimulate thought by bringing together people and information in an environment conducive to intellectual discovery.

"Stego will be an important enhancement to the library, providing enjoyment and stimulating thought for years to come," said Almquist.

A public unveiling ceremony will be from 5 to 7 p.m. Friday. Reservations are required.

Parking will be provided on the NKU campus in Lots I, W and D, adjacent to the library.

For reservations or information, contact Krista Wiseman-Moore at 859-572-5810 or wisemanmok1@nku.edu.