

Potpourri of artwork is delight to the eye

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

Some folks plant roses to greet them as they pull into the driveway after a hard day.

Lee Barthel of Farmington Hills plants art objects.

His favorite is a one-ton, 12-foot replica of a Clydesdale horse constructed of car bumpers. Its creator, John Kearney, was educated at Cranbrook and now resides in Chicago.

Barthel discovered the Fulbright scholar's work upon visiting Detroit's Children's Museum, where "Silver Bolt," another car-bumper horse, greets young cowboys and cowgirls.

Kearney's first of many large works to be situated in a public place, the horse was purchased 16 years ago by General Motors, Ford, Chrysler and AMC and given to Detroit Renaissance, Inc.

"I was really impressed with it, so I went inside and asked who the artist was," said Barthel.

"I contacted Kearney and said I'd like a life-sized riding horse like the one at the museum, and he suggested a Clydesdale. I didn't argue."

"He said it took him 10 tons of bumpers to make it — 10 times as many as were used for the horse itself."

"He drove it up here from Chicago on an open horse trailer and I guess he had a lot of fun driving and watching people stare at it," he added.

Also in prime viewing spots from Barthel's patio are a bronze life-sized cheetah crafted by Mexican sculptor Sergio Bustamante; an owl perched upon an 11-ton granite pyramid constructed of Belgian blocks; and a wooden-laminated arch that revolves on ball bearings in the wind.

The pyramid blocks arrived in Detroit in 1885 as ballast in sailing vessels that later returned to Europe loaded with American furs.

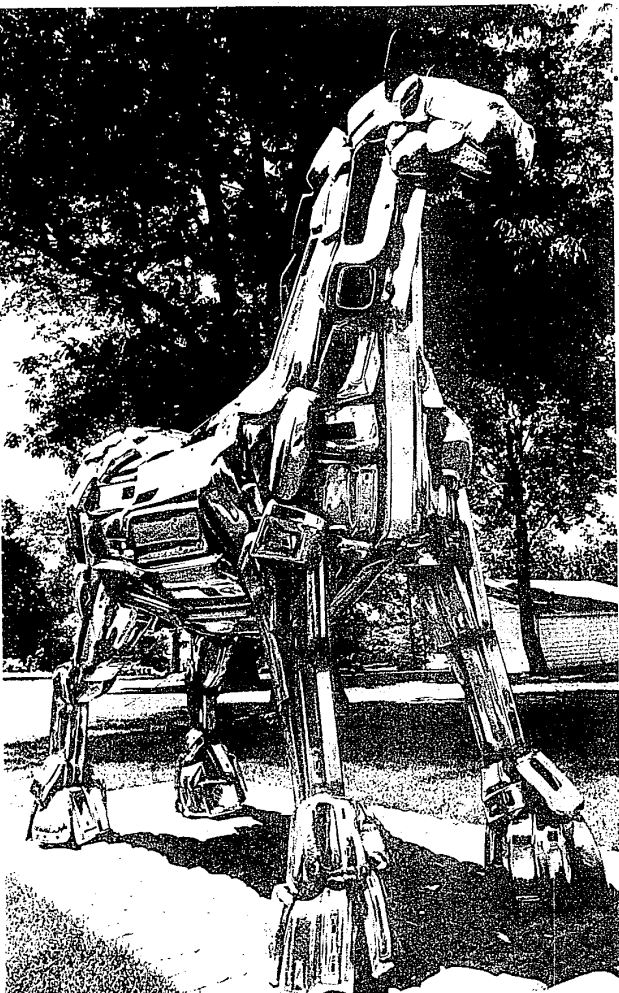
Granite from Belgium was used to pave Atwater Street in Detroit as well as to construct the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel. Such blocks now are visible as

fish-scale paving on Canfield, designated as one of Detroit's historic streets.

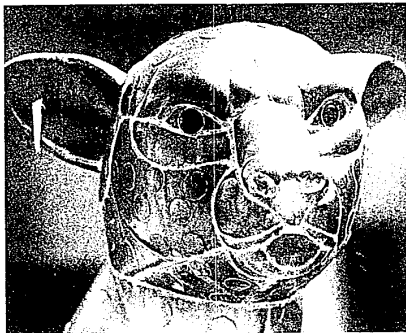
Barthel intended to place a mobile from the top of his 22-foot-wide wooden arch, but "I was delighted to discover that, because the longer top end has more leverage, it turns by itself."

"These are all things I've added to the grounds to make them nice to look at," Barthel said.

"I enjoy being welcomed home by the things I like so much."



Chrome automobile bumpers were used to construct this 12-foot-high horse.

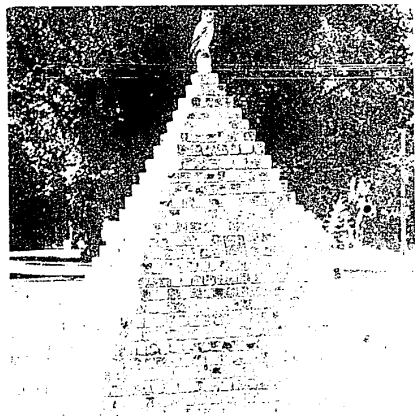


A close examination reveals the many welded joints of the bronze cheetah.

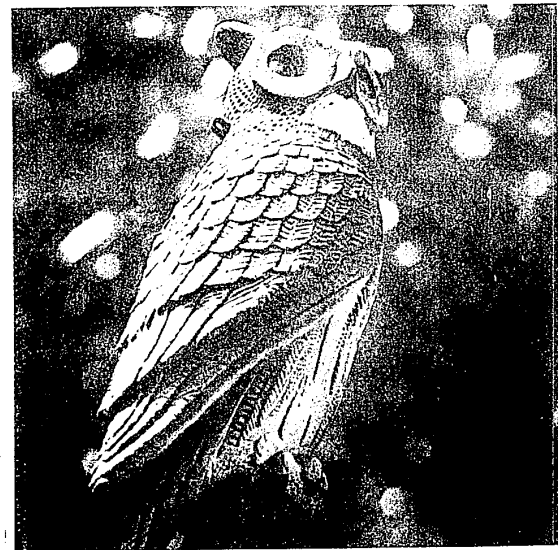


A bronze cheetah watches over the entrance to the home.

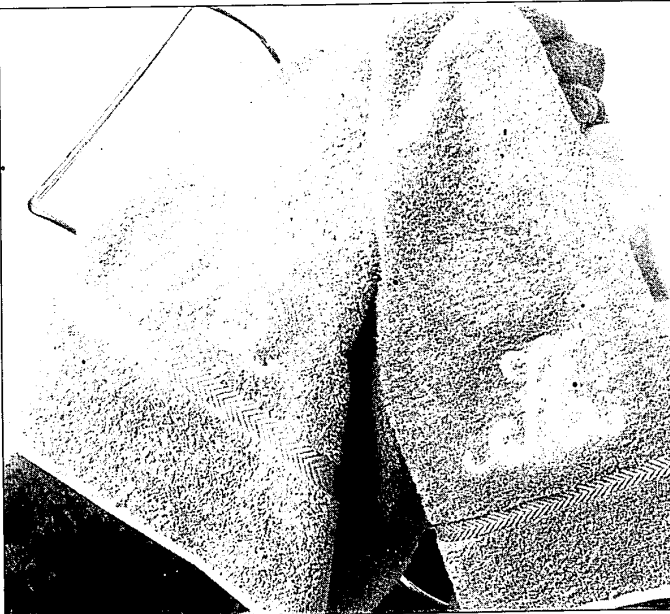
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A pyramid constructed of granite blocks serves as a perch for an owl that sits silently on its roost.



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