

Maynooth art travels the world



Hastings Highlands artist Kevin Hockley works in his studio near Maple Leaf, on the outskirts of Maynooth. Hockley's projects, like Titanoboa, continue to travel to destinations across the continent. SARAH VANCE Special to This Week

By Sarah Vance

Bancroft This Week continues to follow the installations of artisan projects from their origins in Hastings Highlands to destinations across the continent.

This has included a massive 48-foot Titanoboa model which Bancroft This Week reported travelling through Maynooth on a flat bed trailer, for photos at the ANAF Barn.

This Boa, fabricated at Hockley Studios, has since enjoyed a career as a traveller, with sightings in Grand Central Station, in New York City, where it was the featured installation in a launch by the Smithsonian Channel.

'We spent 90 per cent of our annual budget on the Titanoboa,' said spokespersons for the Smithsonian Channel. 'Titanoboa is a very big deal.'

This December, the Gaston Gazette followed the Maynooth monster snake in its travels as a mobile exhibit, into the Schiele Museum of Natural History, in North Carolina.

Over the Christmas season, Hockley Studios demonstrated taxidermist skills with coyote, porcupine, opossum, red-rumped agouti and capuchin bird mounts installations at the Royal Ontario Museum, in Toronto.

These new specimens join an imposing squid that looms above spectators in the Schad Gallery of Biodiversity, another Hockley installation, which boasts a Hastings Highlands ancestry.

And just last December, Bancroft This Week reported a Jurassic dinosaur, known as Liopleurodon, crossing the Canada-U.S. border with Kevin Hockley and Kelly Ohlschlager, for a new home in New Jersey's, Adventure Aquarium.

'We designed a prominent jaw with a torso retracting, away from what could be prey,' says Kevin Hockley. 'And in this case the prey are spectators, or the thousands of people who visit natural history installations every day.'

From his studio in Hastings Highlands, Hockley's projects preserve the timeless accuracy of archeological discovery.

'Much of what I do is connecting the dots,' said Hockley. 'I always have to go back to my references because much of what we build in the studio has no living account, as we are reconstructing a model from one single part.'

Hockley's accuracy continues to put his Hastings Highlands studio into the foreground of the North American museum installation community.

'I create a scale model, which is conceived architecturally within the gallery space, wherever it may be, and which I may not yet have visited,' said Hockley. 'It's like putting together a puzzle without a picture of the completed puzzle and half the pieces are missing.'

A Google search shows that an average of 33,208 people are talking about Hockley Studio's projects, in their many forms, on any given day, so Hockley's approach appears to be working.

Hockley however, is not the only local artisan who was 'open for business' over the Christmas holidays.

Rocky Zenyk Dobey, a contemporary of Hockley's, who is also based in Hastings Highlands, has recently begun reconstruction of the original stained-glass on the main entry doors of Hart House, at the University of Toronto.

?I have a company that produces public art for other artists,? said Dobey. ?I was approached for this job because of having done a lot of projects like this in the past.?

Dobey, like Hockley, is a diverse and mobile artist whose sculptures, like the recent installation at the Theatre Centre, on Queen West, in Toronto, take him to destinations across the country.

?I have a contract to restore the 150-year-old bronze and glass doors at Hart House,? said Dobey. ?This is specifically a glass craft project.?

For this project Dobey is working with See Saw Stained Glass, a studio based on Musclow Greenview Road, in Hastings Highlands, with Jane Kali and Sean Sarty, undertaking the glasswork at their studio.

Established in 1919, Hart House is one of North America's earliest student centres. The building was a commissioned memorial project, by the Massey family, which demonstrates Gothic Revival architectural influences, wood carvings and sculpture by Henry Sproatt.

Dobey, Kali, Sarty, Ohlschlager and Hockley are just some of the local Hastings Highlands artists, who are sought after in their field, and whose projects continue to put the region on the map.