

Sculpture on USTAR building represents science inside

Split Spiral



A sculpture called "Split Spiral" that hangs on the side of the USTAR BioInnovations Center on Tuesday. (Eli Lucero/Herald Journal)

Posted: Wednesday, July 18, 2012 1:15 am | Updated: 9:57 am, Wed Jul 18, 2012.

By Kevin Opsahl |

NORTH LOGAN — On a sunny afternoon at the USTAR BioInnovations Center at 650 E. Grand Ave., shades of red, purple, green and yellow illuminate from the metallic circles placed on the exterior of the building.

The wall-mounted sculpture consists of a metal armature of curved stainless-steel pipes and holographic glass discs arranged in a criss-crossing spiral pattern that wraps the southeast corner of the facade of the USTAR building.

It's the work of Ray King, a sculptor based in Philadelphia, who was chosen by officials at Utah State University, USTAR and the Utah Division of Arts and Museums to make a sculpture for the BioInnovations Building, which was dedicated in October 2010. King was chosen by the committee out of nearly 200 applicants who applied for the project.

King's work came through the Utah Percent-for-Art Act, which designates that 1 percent of construction costs of state public buildings be added for commissioning, maintaining and conserving art at a public facility, said Jim Glenn, manager of Utah Division of Arts and Museums. Such money is automatically included in the building's budget, Glenn said.

King was chosen by the selection committee in October 2011 and finished his work — titled “Split Spiral” — in June.

"The art selection committee selected Ray King's 'Split Spiral' sculpture because it represents the innovative life-science research that the building houses," said Rob Behunin, vice president for commercialization at USU. "The sculpture is based on a Fibonacci/Phyllotaxis pattern found in many plants native to the state of Utah. The sculpture magnificently links the values of an agricultural college with the innovative research being conducted within."

The ebb and flow of the circles all connecting together references USTAR professor Randy Lewis' work with transgenic goats to produce milk with spider silk proteins. The proteins are purified and spun into fibers that can be used to create technical fabrics as well as artificial ligaments and tendons.

King's work also references the work of other USTAR teams housed in the building. The USTAR Applied Nutrition Research team, Veterinary Diagnostics and Infectious Disease, and the Synthetic Bio-Manufacturing Center all occupy lab and clinical space.

According to King's biography on his official website, he is a sculptor who "uses the natural phenomena of light as it interacts with optics and glass as his art medium." He has exhibited his work internationally since 1976.

King's works are "inspired by ancient cultures' use of light in architecture and monuments, particularly how light and mathematics were used to further understand planetary movement and the Earth's relation to the larger universe," his website biography reads.

USU is known to have various sculptures or artwork around campus — like the fry sculpture outside the USU library — and King's work is a notable one located on the USU Innovation Campus in North Logan.

"I believe strongly that art in public places helps create livable communities," Glenn said. "People that live there in North Logan who go by the building get to experience art and how it changes every day without having to go to the art gallery; it's just in their everyday experience. So it adds to our quality of life here in Utah."

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