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New statue is salute to 'The Cyclist'

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GREENFIELD — Greenfield and the surrounding hilltowns are known for their picturesque roads and bike paths.

Now, the town is celebrating the freedom and joy of the cyclist, as well as Greenfield's commitment to alternative transportation and healthy living, with a new sculpture in front of Mesa Verde that will welcome people as they walk toward Energy Park. The bronze sculpture — called "The Cyclist" — was created by Claremont, N.H.-based artist Ernest Montenegro and installed Thursday morning.

"What I ended up with was a figure of a cyclist who sort of becomes the bicycle, and that's indicated by a gap in the front where the person sort of merges into the wheel," Montenegro said.

The project was funded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council Adams Grant Program and the town. Greenfield solicited applications from artists last year, and a special committee selected "The Cyclist" out of seven proposals.

"What was really interesting is that Western Mass. and Greenfield are known for cycling, so it was really exciting to have a sculpture represent that," Recreation Director Christy Moore said.

Montenegro said he had created a model of the sculpture several years ago with no intention of turning it into a commissioned piece. When he heard about Greenfield's call to artists from a friend, he decided to submit a proposal.

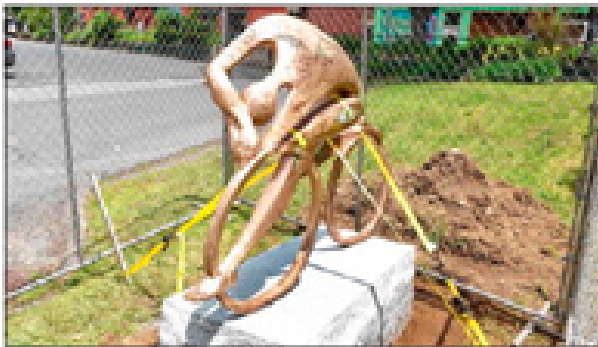
Since the 1990s, Montenegro has made more than 10 public sculptures for various communities.

"Each one is different," he said. "In each instance I tried to not do what's called helicopter something in and just drop it on the site if it had nothing to do with the community or the area. I try to be sensitive about what the community is about, up to a point. There's a limit to that, you have to balance the privileges of art with what people expect."

The sculpture was cast by Campbell Plaster and Iron in West Rutland, Vt. and Negus & Taylor of Greenfield donated a 3,600-pound piece of granite for the base.

Moore said the town plans to hold a ribbon cutting ceremony sometime in July.

"It's inviting, it draws people down to the sculpture and we hope that they will the make their way down to the Energy Park," she said.



RECORDER STAFF/ANNA LUTTRELL

A new sculpture was installed on Miles Street in Greenfield on Thursday.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ernest Montenegro, right, looks on as a DPW crew installs his sculpture, "The Cyclist" in front of Mesa Verde on Thursday.