



PRESS RELEASE
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Truman Lowe Sculpture Returns Home to UW-Madison Campus after 26 Years

Effigy: Bird Form received and restored by the same Hooper craftsman who helped create the sculpture for the White House in 1997

DeForest, WI (September 12, 2023) -- It's been 26 years since Native American artist and UW-Madison art professor Truman Lowe and Hooper Custom Metals team worked on a sculpture for the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden at the White House in Washington, D.C. *Effigy: Bird Form* landed at the White House for a yearlong exhibition of 20th century works in 1997, and after several stopovers, it has made a final journey back home to UW-Madison.

Inspired by the ancestral mounds and effigies found throughout the Midwest, the impressive bird effigy sculpture, which measures 20 feet wide and 12 feet long and weighs more than 900 pounds, is now nested on the **UW-Madison campus just north of Van Hise Hall, where a [dedication ceremony](#) will be held on Friday, September 15, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. commemorating Lowe's life and work.**

"Truman was a beloved and inspiring teacher and mentor whose work was deeply rooted in his Ho-Chunk heritage. It's a special occasion to welcome Truman's artwork back home to UW-Madison," said Carla Vigue, UW-Madison Director of Tribal Relations. "Truman's unique talent seamlessly bridged time and cultural connections through art and the natural world. It's a gift to have his artwork on campus for all to enjoy."

"Given his long career at UW-Madison, his Ho-Chunk roots and his deep reverence for both the University and the mounds on campus, it is most fitting that *Effigy: Bird Form* returns to Madison and finds its permanent home on campus," added Jo Ortel, author of *Woodland Reflections: The Art of Truman Lowe* and Nystrom Professor Emerita of Art History at Beloit College.

During the creation of the sculpture and under Lowe's direction, solid aluminum rods were welded together by Hooper craftsmen to create a "woven" ethereal lattice design in the shape of a bird form hovering above the ground.

Lowe and Hooper forged a unique and lasting bond during the project, and for Hooper Customer Metals Foreman Larry Sailing, the project has come full circle. Sailing worked closely with Lowe to create the sculpture more than 25 years ago, so it was a special moment for Sailing to welcome *Effigy: Bird Form* back home. During the campus installation, Sailing spent a few days buffing out scratches and cleaning and polishing the aluminum to the same specifications Lowe had instructed him two decades earlier.

"It's an honor for me to have the opportunity to work on the sculpture again. When I heard it was coming home to Madison, I was thrilled for the chance to help restore the piece," said Sailing. "Staying true to Truman's vision was extremely important to me. For example, I knew he only wanted the top of the aluminum polished to a shine and the rest left natural. It's how he wanted it to look. Truman was a wonderful person, very soft spoken and kind. Working with him to create the sculpture was one of the highlights of my career."

In 1997, Truman Lowe was commissioned to create a sculpture for an exhibit showcasing work by twelve prominent Native American artists throughout the United States. Lowe turned to Hooper to help bring his vision to life, and described *Effigy: Bird Form* as representing the loss of Indigenous burial mounds but also the strength and vitality of the Wisconsin Ho-Chunk.

In addition to The White House (1997-1998), *Effigy: Bird Form* also spent a number of years on display in Kalamazoo (2000-2023) at Western Michigan University before returning to Madison.

Hooper Custom Metals also assisted Lowe on several other pieces, including *Water Whispers* and *Ke-Chunk Ciporoke*. An internationally acclaimed sculptor and Ho-Chunk artist, Lowe passed away on March 30, 2019, but his work lives on at major venues throughout the United States and across the world.

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About *Effigy: Bird Form*

The aluminum sculpture, *Effigy: Bird Form*, was created by Lowe in 1997 and showcased in a yearlong exhibition of 20th century works at the White House Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. Lowe said the work, which features open air between the metal pieces, represents the loss of Indigenous burial mounds, but also celebrates the strength and vitality of Wisconsin Indigenous traditions.

“Being from the woodlands, I wanted my inspiration for this sculpture to come from a culture that inhabited this area and left its mark with earthen mounds -- a unique way of showing respect and living with the Earth,” Lowe said of the work. “This is my attempt to pay my respects, to celebrate the longevity of our history and our traditions. We have endured and I know we will survive.”

In its new home at UW–Madison, the sculpture serves as an important symbol for the university’s Indigenous community, honors the Ho-Chunk Nation, and is a reminder that UW–Madison occupies ancestral Ho-Chunk land.

About Truman Lowe

Truman Lowe (1944-2019), an alumnus and Professor Emeritus, was an internationally acclaimed sculptor, his works bridged the traditional and contemporary, abstract and representational worlds of Native American fine art and were deeply rooted in his Ho-Chunk heritage. His art is exhibited at major venues throughout the United States, as well as in Canada, Europe, Africa, South America and New Zealand.

Lowe was born Jan. 19, 1944, and grew up in a Ho-Chunk community near Black River Falls. He received a Bachelor of Science in Art Education from UW-La Crosse and a Master of Fine Arts from UW-Madison in 1973. While on campus, Lowe studied sculpture, glassblowing, ceramics and more while developing his own artistic voice. He joined the School of Education’s Art Department in 1975, was promoted to full professor in 1989 and served as chair of the department from 1984-1995. From 1975 to 1988, Lowe was also the coordinator for the fledgling Native American Studies Program. Additionally, he served as chair of the Chancellor’s Scholarship Committee, where from 1984 to 2004 he recruited and supported underrepresented students interested in pursuing their education at UW–Madison.

In 2007, the Wisconsin Arts Board honored Lowe with its Wisconsin Visual Art Lifetime Achievement Award, and in 2008 he received a Distinguished Alumni Award from the Wisconsin Alumni Association. From 2000-08, he was the curator of contemporary art for the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. Lowe passed away on March 30, 2019, leaving behind a powerful legacy that keeps growing stronger. Art museums across the nation are still acquiring his art for their permanent collections, and in 2022, the Truman T. Lowe Center for the Arts was dedicated at the UW-La Crosse, where Lowe earned his BS in Art Education.

About Hooper

Since 1913, Hooper has grown to become a well-respected electric power and mechanical contractor. With headquarters in Wisconsin and regional offices in the states of Colorado, Florida and Ohio, Hooper provides a wide range of services to support commercial and residential clients.

Hooper's areas of expertise include fabrication and installation of complex plumbing, process piping, fire protection, and HVAC systems as well as the construction of substations and high-voltage transmission and distribution lines. Hooper also actively provides power line clearance and deploys emergency storm response teams around the country to help restore power to communities ravaged by natural disasters. For homeowners in the Wisconsin region, Hooper's Service Division provides 24-hour maintenance and repair on HVAC and plumbing systems. Businesses also benefit from these services in addition to fire protection options provided by Hooper's certified technicians.

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