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Danish Environmental Artist brings Troll Sculptures to the Pacific Northwest

Northwest Trolls: Way of the Bird King

New public art initiative to launch August 2023

Seattle, June 20th, 2023 - Beginning in August 2023, a new six-site art exhibition entitled *Northwest Trolls: Way of the Bird King*, will be unveiled. The unique project features six giant hand-built Nordic troll characters, designed by acclaimed Danish environmental artist and storyteller Thomas Dambo, to be installed at five locations in the Puget Sound region and one in Portland, Oregon. Scan Design Foundation is managing the collaborative effort with funding, media and site partners from across the region.

"We are excited to showcase the creative ingenuity of Dambo's work to Northwest audiences in this ambitious exhibition," said Fidelma McGinn, president of Scan Design Foundation. "His message of turning trash into treasure and building community through art will resonate with all who experience his mystical troll sculptures."

Dambo's high level of creativity drives the creation of highly interactive experiences, turning recycled materials to immersive, interactive, and awe-inspiring art. Today, he is known internationally for his larger-than-life troll sculptures. With 100 sculptures all over the world, these trolls have begun to have a life of their own, inspiring "troll hunters" to seek them out and fulfill Dambo's vision of creating art that inspires people to get outside to explore, have adventures, and protect our natural spaces. The Way of the Bird King will be the first Dambo trolls to be placed in the Pacific Northwest, linking this region to the worldwide phenomenon.

The project celebrates the human experience of art by amplifying the network of cultural heritage between Coast Salish tribal communities and Danish and Scandinavian traditions. It reinforces the shared values of environmental stewardship for watershed protection, restoration, and preservation of riparian habitats. Because the trolls will be located on traditional Coast Salish territories, the project is working closely with the Muckleshoot and Snoqualmie tribes.

As part of the project, a companion map and app will be released to engage the public in finding out precisely where each troll is located in Portland, Issaquah, Ballard, West Seattle and on Bainbridge and Vashon Islands. To capture the curiosity of the public and contain an element of surprise in discovering them through a scavenger hunt adventure, the specific site locations will only be revealed at the conclusion of each build process, between August 1st and September 17th. The sculptures will be hosted at each site for at least three years.

Fashioned entirely out of recycled materials, the large-scale public art installations tell a tale of protecting nature and honoring the land and waterways. With a focus on understanding the impact of humans on life in watersheds and animal habitats, the project includes a companion story focused on restoration and preservation of riparian habitats in an approachable, fun way. It provides opportunities for youth and adults alike to learn, support, and make a difference in protecting our environment.

"I want people to know that trash has value. My trolls do that, and also help me tell stories, like the legends I grew up with," said Dambo. "In nature, there is no landfill. Nature is circular, everything has a meaning and everything is recycled."

A key part of the troll installation is leveraging a community of local volunteers. For this project, over 200 volunteers will be dedicating their time to help complete the sculptures, from disassembling wooden pallets, cutting up wood pieces, screwing and hammering parts, to clearing brush and making meals for the crew.

Funding for the full exhibition series is provided by grants from Scan Design Foundation and the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation. Additional sponsorship support has been provided by Alaska Air, Icelandair, National Foundation for Danish America, Republic Services, and Re-Use Consulting.

The site partners for the six sculptures include the City of Seattle Parks, City of Issaquah Parks, Vashon Parks District, Bainbridge Island Metro Parks District, National Nordic Museum and Nordic Northwest. Media partners include the Embassy of Denmark, Visit Seattle, Washington State Tourism and the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation.

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About Thomas Dambo:

A native of Odense, Denmark, Thomas Dambo is considered the world's leading recycle artist, having been taught from a young age the value of recycling, sustainability, and unlimited imagination. Previously, Thomas has led a multifaceted life that allowed him to express his creativity via music, street art, and scenic design. After graduating from the Kolding Design School with a master's degree in interactive design, Dambo began his current journey of using recycled materials to create colorful art installations, building the foundation for his artwork today. Today, Dambo is known internationally for his larger-than-life troll sculptures that are a part of his project "The Trail of a Thousand Trolls" that are all made from recycled wood. With 100 sculptures all over the world, these trolls have a life of their own. Dambo's vision is to create art that inspires people to get into nature. www.thomasdambo.com

About Scan Design Foundation:

Honoring the legacy of Inger & Jens Bruun, the mission of Scan Design Foundation is to advance Danish-American relations by supporting cultural exchanges focused on environmental sustainability. The organization is a private foundation, founded in 2002 and is headquartered in Seattle, WA. www.scandesignfoundation.org

Link to photos & credits: www.nwtrolls.org/media

1. Thomas Dambo headshots
2. Examples of Thomas Dambo's sculptures
3. Photos working with volunteers

Additional Quotes from Key Leaders & Partners

"The Thomas Dambo troll sculptures are a great example of how art can make us reflect on nature and the environment, and how we can make a difference. Denmark is a frontrunner when it comes to green transition, and we have a close collaboration with the U.S. on climate and green solutions. The sculpture project emphasizes our two countries commitment to environmental themes, as well as the close connection between the Pacific Northwest and Denmark."

~ Ambassador of Denmark to the United States, Christina Markus Lassen

"This project celebrates the human experience of art and the connection between Coast Salish tribal communities, Danish and Scandinavian traditions, and our shared value of environmental stewardship. It uses the power of storytelling to engage people of all ages to learn about the environment and the steps we can all take to better preserve and protect it."

~ Cat Martin, Arts & Communities Program Director on behalf of the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation

"The tradition of nordic folktales popularized by fellow Dane, Hans Christen Andersen, is alive and well with Thomas Dambo. Through his giant troll sculptures, he brings his own creative storytelling to his art, with an urgency to change the bad habits of us, the little people."

~ Lotta Gavel-Adams, Professor Emerita, University of Washington Dept of Scandinavian Studies

"Working shoulder to shoulder with Thomas and his team was a real trade of our respective cultures. I feel we are kindred spirits and have formed life-long friends. I'm proud to be part of the Dambo tribe now, too!"

~ John Halliday, aka Coyote, Muckleshoot tribe