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Purple chair sculpture created for students to “sit, exist and just be.”

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Katie Lentz, a senior dual major studying psychology and sculpture, is the artist behind the popular purple chair sculpture. After producing impressive pieces as a standout art student, she was approached by a professor to participate in the creation of interactive sculptures as requested by the university.

The university's art program received funding for interactive sculptures, more specifically, 'student seating sculptures' as a part of the Art100 celebration back in 2020. Dietrich Wegner, a sculpture professor and assistant chair of the art department, served as the project supervisor.

"I was asked by Dietrich if I wanted to participate. Once I said yes, he had me come up with a bunch of ideas and helped me pick the best one to execute," Lentz said. "The school wanted sculptures that you could sit on, and I can be a literal person, so I started looking at photos of dilapidated couches."

Although Lentz had an idea for the initial appearance of the sculpture, she explains that the meaning behind the chair relating to childhood nostalgia emerged after she began working on the piece.

"The meaning started to take place as I made it. I want to take people back to when they were kids and didn't have to be anything or produce anything, they could just exist. I think adults forget to do that, so I made this chair so that we could come sit, exist and just be."

Lentz's chair sculpture was first spotted outside the front doors of the Baron-Forness Library and has since been relocated to Loveland Hall. Regardless of its location, the big purple chair has been utilized and photographed by many.

According to Lentz, the COVID-19 pandemic and personal health problems were both obstacles she had to overcome in completing the piece. After gathering supplies and beginning to carve out the shape in Nov. 2019, progress was halted in March 2020.

"COVID was problematic because I had to stop when March hit, but more than that, my sickness was what held up the project," she explained. "Even though I was allowed to come in over the summer, I was too sick to work. I couldn't stay standing for much longer than ten minutes, much less put concrete all over a six-foot-tall sculpture myself."



Home News Features A&E Op-Ed Sports

Staff

foam, glass fiber reinforced concrete (GFRC) and a few layers of purple paint.

Lentz noted Wegner as being very helpful to her throughout the process.

“Wenger was very helpful in motivating me and helping me when I ran into problems. He helped me find the best recipes and supplies for the GFRC that I used,” she said. “My boyfriend and some of my friends were also very helpful.”

When she’s not working on her artwork, Lentz also works in the Psychology of Creative research group on campus. According to Lentz, she plans on attending graduate school for counseling and continuing her artwork part time. While sculpture is her main area of focus, she also enjoys ceramics work.

In addition to her purple chair sculpture, Lentz currently has more work on display in Bruce Gallery for the Chimera show, up until mid-March. At the end of March, she has a solo display inside the Gmitter scholarship show. Lentz is one of the twelve finalists selected to be featured in the show. The artists will be judged, and three students will be picked for the Gmitter scholarship.

In April, Lentz will have another solo show on display in Bates Gallery. “Please Touch the Art” is based on interaction with the viewer.

“I am creating pieces that all have some sort of interactive quality and the show, as a whole, is meant to engage all five senses. I am currently working with 3D printing and VR Sculpting, Foam and memory foam, ceramics, mold-making, and wire and paper to achieve the movement and interaction I'm aiming for in my show.”

Lentz's “Please Touch the Art” show will be on display from April 10 to 16 in Loveland Hall.

Julia Carden, Music Editor and Social Media Director | @EdinboroNow

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