

JAMES LEE HANSEN



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Steven L. Grafe

During a career that has spanned more than sixty years, Battle Ground, Washington, artist James Lee Hansen has produced more than seven hundred sculptures ranging in size from small studies to monumental works of public art. Working primarily in bronze, Hansen's sculptural series relate to his ideas about human origins, existence, identity, and reality.

Hansen was born in Tacoma, Washington, in 1925. In 1936, at the height of the Great Depression, he moved south to Vancouver with his parents and brother. He spent most of his teenage years raising racing pigeons and hunting, fishing, and horseback riding in the surrounding countryside. World War II broke out while he was attending Vancouver High School, and right after graduation in 1943 he went to the Marine recruiting office in downtown Portland. Finding it closed for lunch, the impatient young man went next door and enlisted in the Navy.

For three years, Hansen was a sailor and served in the South Pacific on the destroyer USS *Preston* (DD-795). This was a defining time for him. The fact that his life was spared time after time, often in unusual ways, made a lasting impression on him. He never took lightly this sober truth, especially when he helped his crewmates perform burials at sea. On those occasions, his thoughts would turn to the families of the deceased men as he imagined the pain their untimely deaths caused their loved ones.¹



James Lee Hansen (kneeling), Rick Norwood, Jack Hammack, and Manuel Izquierdo in sculpture studio class at the Portland Art Museum School, c. 1949; Courtesy of Pacific Northwest College of Art Charles Voorhies Fine Art Library Archives.



James Lee Hansen casting in his Burnt Bridge Studio, Vancouver, early 1950s.



Hansen working on the wax version of *The Huntress*, with the core pins in place, 1951.

Shortly after he returned to the States in March 1946, Hansen met Annabelle Hair, whose family had moved from Missouri to Vancouver during the war so her father could work at the Alcoa aluminum plant. After graduating from high school in

1944, Annie had held several jobs before going to work for Hansen's father, Hans, at the Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway Company. Hans invited Annie home to meet his son, and Jim and Annie were married six months later.

Conscious that he had "always been an artist," Hansen enrolled at the Portland Art Museum School (now Pacific Northwest College of Art).² Following the advent of the G.I. Bill, the Museum Art School was providing studio art instruction to both its own pupils and to students who were registered at other Portland-area institutions. All of the school's applicants—including veterans—were required to submit portfolios of their work in order to qualify for enrollment. Among Hansen's classmates was Rick Norwood (1922–2008), Hansen's next-door neighbor in Vancouver and the first friend he had made after moving there. Also in attendance were Manuel Izquierdo (1925–2009), a refugee from Francisco Franco's Spain; former Navy Seabee and prolific silkscreen artist, Elton Bennett (1910–1974); George Johanson (b. 1928); James Haseltine (1924–2013); Byron J. Gardner (1930–1992); Don Sorensen (1927–1994); and Jack Lucas (1926–1992), who became a fine arts picture framer and later a conservator of oil paintings.³

After their wedding, Annie continued working, eventually finding employment on the swing shift at the phone company. This was an ideal situation for Hansen as it allowed him to attend school and to build their home, an adjacent studio, and a foundry on a site northeast of downtown Vancouver. He named the studio Burnt Bridge Studio after nearby Burnt Bridge Creek. During the evenings he also cared for a daughter, Valinda (b. 1949), while Annie worked. After a second



Annie and James Lee Hansen on Browns Island, in the Columbia River several miles upstream from The Dalles Dam, 1957. They are melting the wax needed in the initial step of creating a petroglyph cast.

daughter, Yauna (b. 1956), was born, Annie quit working outside the home and tended the girls while helping in the foundry and elsewhere.

Hansen graduated from the Portland Art Museum School in 1950, and with a foundry at his disposal, he soon became a West Coast pioneer and recognized master of lost-wax bronze casting. On a visit to Portland in 1951, Cubist sculptor Jacques Lipchitz (1891–1973) asked Hansen to become an assistant at his suburban New York City studio. Recalling another young sculptor's remark that "nothing can grow under the shade of a big tree," Hansen declined the honor.⁴ He was already firmly rooted in the place

he called home—the Pacific Northwest—and its sustaining confluence of cultures. That same year, American Cubist painter Max Weber (1881–1961) saw Hansen's work at the Portland Art Museum's "Artists of Oregon" exhibition and remarked to Louis Bunce (1907–1983), painter and Art Museum School instructor, "Now there is a young man who knows what sculpture is all about."⁵

Hansen's early exhibition successes affirmed the positive assessments of his work. In 1952, a bronze, *The Huntress*, was acquired as a first purchase award by the San Francisco Art Museum (now San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) during its "71st Annual Painting and Sculpture Exhibition."



James Lee Hansen and B.J. Gardner watching Don Sorenson work on a Sheraton Hotel mural, 1959–60. Hansen is sitting next to *Talos*, which was installed in downtown Fresno, California, in 1961.

Another bronze, *The Call*, was acquired that same year by the Seattle Art Museum during its “38th Annual Exhibition of Northwest Artists.”

In the late 1950s, Hansen was instrumental in recording many prehistoric petroglyphs in the eastern Columbia River Gorge. As The Dalles Dam and John Day Dam neared completion, rising water levels threatened these ancient images. To save them for posterity, Hansen made wax molds of the rock art *in situ* and later made cast stone facsimiles for public display. In completing the

project, he had the help of his wife, Annie, James Haseltine, and Dr. Carl Heller. Heller (1913–1983) was an endocrinologist and renowned medical researcher. Haseltine—a former colleague from the Museum Art School—was a noted artist, arts advocate, and eventually the Executive Director of the Washington State Arts Commission. Hansen gifted copies of many of the images to the Oregon Museum of Science and History in Portland. He gave additional casts and the accompanying field notes to Maryhill Museum of Art in 2011.



Reredos (relief wall) sculpted by James Lee Hansen for St. Ann's Catholic Church, Butte, Montana, 1966, gypsum cement, 40' x 36'



Hansen working on one of two menorahs he created for Portland's Congregation Shaarie Torah, Burnt Bridge Studio, 1965.

During the same decade, Norbert Sorger (1917–1995), a Vancouver resident whose company created church interiors, asked Hansen Studios to produce sculptural works and art objects—tabernacles, baptismal fonts and candelabras—for liturgical use. Hansen recruited a talented group of friends to work with him on an ever-increasing number of projects. When the need for artist participation in the 1959 Oregon Centennial Exposition and International Trade Fair arose and the new Sheraton Hotel adjacent to Portland's Lloyd Center was deemed worthy of housing an array of original art, Hansen already had existing relationships with relevant regional artists. A fine-arts collaborative called "Builders Arts" was established to ensure smooth interaction with the construction clients.⁶

Hansen's collaborators included Rick Norwood, Lee Kelly (b. 1932), Robert Huck (1923–1961), Don Sorensen, B.J. Gardner, and Duane Zaloudek (b. 1931). Hansen rented a large riding arena and built a temporary partial floor in it. He also furnished all of the tools necessary for the projects. While continuing to work in his studio on his own sculpture, he negotiated contracts with both the Oregon Centennial and the Sheraton Hotel. Each of the collaborating artists then submitted proposals for the art requested by the two clients. The artists whose work was not selected worked for the others as assistants. Builders Arts ultimately held the major contract for fine art development at the Centennial Exposition, completing, among other tasks, a 510-foot-long mural that covered the east wall of the Exposition Building. Work at the Sheraton included five large murals, one of which was the largest porcelain-enamel mural ever produced in the United States.



James Lee Hansen, *Crescent Probe*, 1978, stainless steel, 15' tall, Vern Miller Civic Center, Salem, Oregon.



James Lee Hansen, *Stempost Study*, 1975, stainless steel, 16" tall; Hansen Trust.

Although the collaborative was a heady experience—a local newspaper referred to these projects and the artists themselves, as “Hansen’s Art Gang”—it ceased functioning after the completion of the two large endeavors. Hansen did not wish to forego his individual artistic activity to become a project manager.⁷

With his bronze-casting skills and a functioning foundry, Hansen was often called upon to attend to historic works in need of repair. One of his more prominent projects was restoring Alexander Phimister Proctor’s (1860–1950) *The Circuit Rider*. Dedicated in 1924, the over-life-size statue was a casualty of the 1962 Columbus Day Storm. After it was taken to Vancouver from its location near the Oregon State Capitol in Salem, Hansen restored the rider’s crushed head and split torso. During the 1960s, he also repaired and restored some of downtown Portland’s “Benson Bubblers.” Commissioned by Portland businessman Simon Benson (1852–1942) in 1912, a half-century of use had left some of the iconic bronze drinking fountains in a sad state of disrepair.⁸

In 1977, the State of Washington began constructing the recently rerouted State Route 500, a highway designed to be a major east-west arterial through east Vancouver. Since the Hansen home and Burnt Bridge Studio stood squarely in its path, the Hansens had to sell their property to the State. At the time, Hansen was working on two major commissions: *Crescent Probe*, an eighteen-foot-tall stainless steel fountain for Salem’s Civic Plaza, and *Stempost*, an eighteen by twenty-foot stainless steel sculpture for the Stadium Plaza at Washington State University in Pullman. It was imperative that Hansen find another place to live and work, and fortunately, Annabelle saw an ad

in the local newspaper for a property near Battle Ground. The land already had a house on it, but Hansen needed to build another studio in order to complete the two commissions. He purchased the property immediately and then bought back his former house and studio from the state so he could use the salvaged materials to build a new studio. He christened the completed facility "Daybreak Studio."

In his 1966 book, *Art Treasures in the West*, William Wyatt Davenport described James Lee Hansen as "one of the most talented of Pacific Northwest sculptors" and suggested that "his

abstract work in metal reflects the influence of Chinese bronzes and totemic Indian sculpture."⁹ While this formal assessment of Hansen's work is true, the philosophical underpinning of the work is much deeper and more complex than Davenport suggests. The artist's sculpture explores ideas related to humanity's response to the environment and to the archetypes and mythological symbology inspired by this interaction.

Writing about Hansen's work relative to his 1971 retrospective exhibit at the Portland Art Museum, the museum's director Francis J. Newton suggested that "the artist seems to be trying to



James Lee Hansen, *Stempost*, 1980, stainless steel, 18' x 20'. The sculpture was originally installed in Stadium Plaza at Washington State University in Pullman, but later moved to another location.



The artist with a work from his *Equestrian* series—*Autumn Rider*, 1987. The twelve-foot-tall bronze was commissioned by Gresham Town Fair in Gresham, Oregon.

find ways to express the beginning of things . . . beginnings expressed by shapes and forms which have not yet been assigned specific meanings in a visual image vocabulary.”¹⁰ Several years later, Hansen himself wrote:

After my return from WWII, I started to read a great deal of philosophy and art history, many texts and authors. The war and this exploration into philosophy brought into question the numerous dichotomies of human nature and humankind’s fascination with war and its consequences on the history of civilizations.

*In general, my sculpture work is about the phenomena of cultures and the forces that impel them. Some of my sculptures reflect in part the primitive force of will, germinal religion, and conflicting and questioning consciousness that creates civilization. In this respect all my sculpture series have a common thread . . . I am inclined to view humanity as an epoch in a cosmic petri dish. With the end and the beginning the principle components in a ritual of celebration and its continuing cycle of regeneration; life is the resulting treasure—a wonder beyond comprehension.*¹¹

Elsewhere he noted:

There is nothing that I do that is not in some strange way accompanied by an awareness of its ultimate archaeology. This is not a melancholy reflection, for I feel the past is never dead, but rather an open book—a sort of tribute to a persevering spirit. This is not necessarily contradicted by the chronicle of society’s lemming-like periodic self-destructions, but then being at the top of the food chain has what we perceive as its “neurotic” consequences. Nature, in this respect, has designed for us a diabolical dilemma. Humanity, it seems, must be wolf to its own flock more than any other species. The cutting edge of fang and claw are “ism” and ideology. It seems not to matter whether such doctrines are promulgated by saint or tyrant: their advocacy and adversary aspects inevitably serve the predictable predator and prey aspects that creates the dichotomy and “catch-22” that defines our human circumstance. This situation is stage for my Rituals, stance of the Guardians, the spirit of my Singers, and Riders, quest of the Explorers and the gift of the Bearers. This is the epoch Human. Such is our glory and our sorrow, and I suspect the seed of our arts. Our psyche has designed the leash of law and the muzzle of compassion to stay and temper the force of nature. It is with a short leash on a tired arm we tend our flock the best way that we can.¹²

Hansen’s mention of the “ultimate archaeology” surrounding all he does alludes to his awareness of himself and humankind in both historical and mythological time. On a personal level, he suspects that his sculpture, “like life in general, is parenthetically bracketed between an awareness of the past and notions of the future. When I am



James Lee Hansen, *Carousel Hero Unicorn*, 2003, bronze, 47½” tall; Hansen Trust.



Annie Hansen posing in the Daybreak Studio with *Rider Torso*, *Carousel Hero*, and *Winter Rider*, 1980s.



James Lee Hansen, *Explorer No. 6*, 2000, bronze, 36 $\frac{1}{4}$ " tall; Hansen Trust



James Lee Hansen, *Head Study (Explorer)*, 1972, bronze, 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ " tall; Hansen Trust

working, I feel a certain sanctity, a kinship with something unknown—a brotherhood, perhaps, with things of another time." In a larger context, he notes that, "The art of each age communicates to and nurtures successive cultures, stimulating each age to build its own temple of wonders wherein the litany demands its adherence to faith and extracts sacrifices peculiar to its time . . . We call it civilization and we must care for it and pay for it dearly, for it is our only home."¹³

Throughout his career, Hansen has created series of works—*Equestrian*, *Explorer*, *Guardian*, *Missive*, *Ritual*, and *Shaman* among them—but his creations are not necessarily produced in linear sequences:

The "progression" of my work is not well suited for the linear chronological assessments. It has never materialized as a series in a single vintage period or in a linear chronological sense. The body of my work might be best envisioned developing from a central point with an expanding sphere with separate spokes representing themes radiating from that axis point.

My works gestate for many years in formative processes. Completion of a particular work, without the pressure of a specific commission, is seemingly arbitrary, involving factors of personal motivation, studio expediencies and financial imperatives that determine which works will be completed. Works involving various studies to full-scale piece may be completed in a time span ranging from a few months to many years. A single showing of my "recently completed work" might reflect works started sometimes twenty years prior along with works of more current vintage.¹⁴



Left: James Lee Hansen, *Guardian*, 1965, bronze, 72" tall; Clark College, Vancouver; Right: James Lee Hansen, *Talos No. 3*, 1984, bronze, 69" tall; Seattle Art Museum.

The *Equestrian* series is comprised of works featuring horse and rider motifs that Hansen intends to have deep significance, although he has described their meaning in different ways. On one hand, he suggests that they represent "mankind's pursuit of romance and freedom by taming and harnessing the creatures of the wild. We seek to gain for ourselves some semblance of our notion of lost freedoms by that robust connection."¹⁵ Yet elsewhere he offers another, even deeper interpretation of the figures:

The EQUESTRIAN series represents the interdependent bond of the spirit of the rider and the ridden. They culminate as the dual imperatives of civilization. It is the epitome of empire. It is the dream of

Caesars, the rage of "Huns." When I work on the riders, I always recall a stanza from the poem "The Barrel Organ" by Alfred Noyes.

*And there La Traviata sighs
Another sadder song;
And there Il Trovatore cries
A tale of deeper wrong;
And bolder knights to battle go
With sword and shield and lance,
Than ever here on earth below
Have whirled into—a dance!*¹⁶

In the *Explorer* series, Hansen has pursued themes that evoke intellectual and physical exploration. Here, the intellectual exploration of



Hansen posing with *Vigil*, a 1985 addition to the *Guardian* series. The work is featured on the cover of *New Totems and Old Gods*, his 1990 book of poetry.

philosophy, the arts and sciences coexist with the alert posture and searching gaze common to those who have physically explored mankind's boundaries.¹⁷

The artist's *Guardian* series is comprised of images in postures of watchful apprehension. As such, they are descended from ancient and historic sculptures that visually delineated boundaries and marked territories. According to the artist, his bronze figures "are the symbolic guardians of cultural systems, both political and religious. They are the primary images inherent in the constructs of civilization. Through all human history their

various forms are the substantive imperatives: a sublimation of spiritual forces, the quintessential cultural artifact of human passage."¹⁸

The first work in what later became the *Guardian* series was *The Huntress*, acquired by the San Francisco Art Museum. The second was *The Call*, acquired by the Seattle Art Museum. A third, *Talos*, was installed on the Fulton Mall in downtown Fresno, California, in 1961. In Greek mythology, Talos was a giant, living bronze statue that Zeus presented to his lover, Europa, as her personal protector. He patrolled the island of Crete, circling it three times daily until he was destroyed through witchcraft.

A related work, *Talos No. 2*, was placed on Portland's downtown transit mall in 1968. *Talos No. 3* joined *The Call* at the Seattle Art Museum in 1984, and *Naga Stand*—a 1977 work in the *Guardian* series—is currently on display in the Evans H. Roberts Sculpture Mall at the Portland Art Museum.

As a young artist, Hansen was intrigued by Immanuel Velikovsky's book, *Worlds in Collision* (1950), which advanced the theory that cataclysmic events in our solar system changed Earth's orbit and axis and caused numerous catastrophes that were recounted worldwide in mythology and religion. Although the book was later challenged by the scientific community, Hansen's *Missive* series reflects these ideas.¹⁹ The series is small but noteworthy because, apart from the distinct facial features that appear on some of Hansen's *Explorer* heads, the sculptures are the only ones that represent actual objects, which in this case are tektites, or small meteors.²⁰ Their round, button-shaped fronts are backed by abstracted embryonic life forms. The opening of the artist's poem, "Panspermia," refers to them:

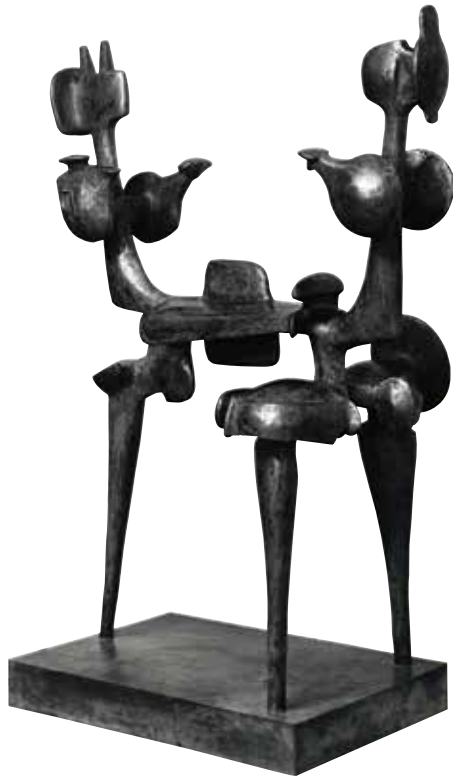


Left: Hansen in the Burnt Bridge Studio working on one of his *Missive* series, c. 1970s; Right: James Lee Hansen, *Missive*, 2002, bronze, 16½" tall; Hansen Trust.

The missile slips cold lonely
 A stone from a cosmic sling;
 Across black heavens hurdle
 To earth, its life will bring.²¹

The works in Hansen's *Ritual* series employ two abstract figures—dichotomous entities representing parallel but different forces—who are “players in a scenario of symbolic gestures, who symbolize the framework for culture intercourse, the tradition of sacrifice, the offering of belief systems” and who hope that their faith will serve its intended function.²² The artist says:

It is clearly important that if faith is to be culturally functional, the ritual aspects of religion must be assiduously maintained as an instrument of order, although this function carries the cyclic imperatives of the seasons. It is rarely recognized as such and in time of stress accusations abound and great devastation results in ideological struggles to overcome what we perceive as the onset of evil and decadence. We must analyze piecemeal our cultural rituals periodically to see that they are serving the evolution of human benefits. This is the challenge of each new age. How can we know



James Lee Hansen, *Glyph Singer No. 2*, 1968, bronze, 69½" tall; Collection of Harold and Arlene Schnitzer.



James Lee Hansen, *Glyph Singer No. 4*, 1984, bronze, 43" tall; Hansen Trust.

*whether concepts serve man or man serves concepts? Art is the principle cultural vehicle of faith. Each culture perishes in its season when the prevailing art forms of its conviction loses currency.*²³

Another of Hansen's poems, "The Ritual," best expresses the artist's thoughts about this sculptural series:

When our stance is unredeemed,
 By all our music and all our themes,
 Don glittering vestments for life's ball,
 Raise temples up and defy their fall.
 Trumpet the entrance and last tattoos,
 Read circumstance in sacred clues,
 Build monuments and gleaming towers,
 Parade about in plumes and flowers.
 Sacred is the ordained story,
 It gives us pomp in all its glory,
 Ritual is what we must treasure,
 Gives our life its meaning's measure.
 It is the play we hold most dear,
 Lack of applause the most we fear,
 It is our cloak for hopes within,
 To cover-up essential sins.
 Rituals seek redeeming cause,
 Then wait hopefully for God's applause.²⁴

The *Ritual* series includes several variations on Hansen's *Glyph Singer* motif. Inspired by the artist's efforts to preserve Columbia River rock art imagery, the dichotomy visible in the figures in these works represents hammer and anvil forging inquiry into the nature of ourselves and the world around us, as well as the cultural axioms and structures that arise from this discourse.²⁵

Historically, members of select indigenous cultures served as mediums between the visible and invisible worlds. These shamans were practitioners of magic, most often for divination or healing or to control the natural environment. Hansen's *Shaman* series considers the idea that these ritual specialists were the predecessors of later inquirers into the arts, sciences, and religion. In his view, shamans functioned as the original doctors, alchemists, lawgivers, artists, and priests. They inquired into the mysteries and the physical nature of the universe and the place and role of humanity within it. They posed the questions and sought explanations and solutions to the pain, trouble and complexity of the human condition and were instrumental in directing the process of acculturation.²⁶

The early works in the *Shaman* series were a group of small bronzes made in the late 1960s. In 1970, one of these was selected for enlargement and placement on the Washington State Capitol Campus in Olympia. Cast in twelve major pieces that were welded together, the finished work was eight feet tall and fourteen feet long. In October 1971, *Shaman* was installed on what is now the east plaza of the Washington State Department of Transportation building. The stated theme of the work is "the enduring spirit of inquiry," and Hansen hoped it would inspire viewers to ask "Who and why are we?"—the questions posed by the archetypal medicine man represented by the sculpture.²⁷

Throughout his career, Hansen has exhibited his work in prominent galleries. In 1966, he began showing at Portland's seminal contemporary art venue, the Fountain Gallery, and had his first solo show there that same year. He remained with the



James Lee Hansen, *Bearer Study No. 2*, 1974, bronze, 47" tall; Oregon Health and Science University, Portland.



James Lee Hansen, *Shaman Probe Study*, 1990, bronze, 20" tall; Hansen Trust.



James Lee Hansen working on the clay intermediate study for *Shaman*, Burnt Bridge Studio, 1969. The finished work was placed near the Washington State Capitol in Olympia.

gallery for two decades and had additional one-man exhibitions in 1969, 1977, 1981, and 1984. Shortly before the 1977 show opened, the gallery was gutted by a fire, damaging all of Hansen's bronzes. They were removed by crane through second-story windows and taken to his studio for repairs.²⁸ Later that year, they were exhibited at a new Fountain Gallery location. After the gallery closed in the mid-1980s, Hansen's sculpture was featured at Abanté Fine Art in Portland, at Bryan Ohno Gallery in Seattle, and elsewhere.

Hansen's work has also received significant exposure at museums and other public

institutions. He has produced one-man exhibitions in Oregon at the University of Oregon Art Museum (now Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art) in Eugene and at the Portland Art Museum. In Washington, solo shows have been hosted by Cheney Cowles Memorial Museum (now Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture) in Spokane, Maryhill Museum of Art in Goldendale, and the Museum of Northwest Art in La Conner. His work has also been shown in numerous university art galleries and in group exhibitions at the Portland Art Museum, the Seattle Art Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Art, and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Beyond the West Coast, the artist's work has appeared in group shows at the Denver Art Museum; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas; and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Hansen has completed numerous monumental public and private art commissions. These include cast cement, concrete, and stone architectural elements for—among others—the former Safeco Building in Portland; the former Sacred Heart Hospital Nurses' Dormitory (now Riley Hall, a University of Oregon dormitory) in Eugene; the "Land Title Building" (now iQ Credit Union) and Wintler Park in Vancouver; the Baker County Educational Center in Baker City, Oregon; and a large reredos (altar wall) for St. Ann's Catholic Church in Butte, Montana. His public sculpture includes *Guardian* and *Naga Spore No. 2* at Clark College, Vancouver; *Talos No. 2* and *Winter Rider Variation* on the Portland Transit Mall; *Shaman*, on the east campus of the Washington State Capitol in Olympia; *Oasis*, for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in Medford, Oregon; and *Autumn Rider*, at Gresham Town Fair in Gresham, Oregon.



James Lee Hansen, *Shaman*, 1971, bronze, 8' x 14'; Washington State Capitol Campus, Olympia. The Washington State Department of Transportation Building is visible in the background.

His sculpture is also included in corporate collections throughout the Pacific Northwest.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Hansen taught sculpture at several West Coast universities, including Oregon State University (1957–58), the University of California at Berkeley (1958), and the University of Oregon (1967). He is best known for having taught at Portland State University for twenty-six years. He ended his pedagogical career there in 1990 as Professor Emeritus, having taught

two full days each week while working full time in his own studio.

In 1990, Hansen also published a book of poetry, *New Totems and Old Gods*, which he called “a rather autobiographical compilation of themes which touches on the notion that sculpture is inherently totemic.”²⁹ Some of his published poems relate generally or specifically to his three-dimensional work; some reflect on issues of duality and dichotomy. All provide insight into



Sculpted relief panels created by James Lee Hansen for the “Land Title Building” (now iQ Credit Union), Vancouver, 1963, cast concrete, 15’ tall.

the artist’s ruminations on individual human experience, shared cultural and social structures, and the lot of humanity as it responds to mythological, historical, and ideological landscapes.

Annabelle Hair Hansen died in 1993, and Hansen married Jane Lucas the following year. Jane was the widow of well-known painting conservator Harvey Jack Lucas, who had died in 1992. Jack had been a student at the Museum Art School with Hansen and the two families had been longtime friends and shared the same social circle.

Hansen still lives and works on the Battle Ground site. His house, studio, foundry, and gallery are now surrounded by thirteen acres that are home to an extensive sculpture park featuring many of his major works. Jane Hansen has begun compiling a *catalogue raisonné* of her husband’s

work, and to date, the inventory includes more than seven hundred individual projects and sculptures. This number continues to grow as Hansen, now in his late eighties, still works in his studio almost every day. As he has done throughout his career, he personally attends to each stage in the production process. His maquettes are brought to full size using intermediate models, the modeling of clay, mold creation, wax application and removal, and the pouring and finishing of the bronze all feel the imprint of his hand. Individual patinas are then applied.

Hansen still has many ideas that he would like to bring to fruition. Whether these works are big or small, they will be—as Francis Newton noted—“characterized by great dignity and strength. Almost without exception there is monumentality in his work regardless of the actual size of the piece.”³⁰

SELECT PUBLIC ART AND ARCHITECTURAL COMMISSIONS

Sculpted relief panels, 1963, cast concrete, 15' tall overall (5' x 5' individual panels), iQ Credit Union, Vancouver, WA (panels serve as full or partial primary walls on all sides of building at the northwest corner of Broadway Street and E. 13th Street)

Sculpted relief panels, 1964, cast concrete, 2½' x 11½' panels, Riley Hall, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR (on north and south façades of dormitory at E. 11th Avenue and Patterson Street)

Relief panels, 1964, welded aluminum, 11' x 3', George Fox University, Newberg, OR (on exterior of the Lemmon Center)

Oasis, 1964, bronze, 54½" x 57" x 38½", U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Medford District Office, Medford, OR (in outdoor courtyard)

Guardian, 1965, bronze, 72" x 22" x 22", Clark College, Vancouver, WA (outdoors near entrance to Lewis D. Cannell Library), administered by Washington State Arts Commission Art in Public Places Program

Reredos (relief wall), 1966, gypsum cement, 40' x 36', St. Ann's Catholic Church, Butte, MT (inside church)

Entry doors, 1966, welded bronze, 9' x 7', St. Ann's Catholic Church, Butte, MT (two sets of doors at Farragut Avenue entrance)

Joseph and Mary, 1966, bronze, 6' tall, St. Ann's Catholic Church, Butte, MT (inside church)

Talos No. 2, 1968, bronze, 66" x 20" x 20", Portland Transit Mall, Portland, OR (near SW Sixth Avenue and Stark Street)

Sculpted relief panels, 1968, cast concrete, 11' tall, Baker County Education Center, Baker City, OR (north and west façades of building on the southeast corner of Fourth Street and Broadway Street)

Shaman, 1971, bronze, 8' x 14', Washington State Capitol Campus, Olympia, WA (immediately east of the Washington State Department of Transportation Building)

Naga Spore No. 2, 1972, bronze, 36" x 48", Clark College, Vancouver, WA (outdoors near entrance to Lewis D. Cannell Library)

Bearer Study No. 2, 1974, bronze, 47" x 24" x 12½", Oregon Health and Science University, Portland, OR (near entrance to Baird Hall)

Explorer, 1976, bronze, 84" tall, Chief Kamiakin Elementary School, Sunnyside, WA (temporarily removed for repairs, currently at the Denny Blaine Annex, 810 E. Custer Avenue), administered by Washington State Arts Commission Art in Public Places Program

Glyph Singer No. 3, 1976, bronze, 87" x 65" x 37½", Sculpture Garden on Broadway, Vancouver, WA (east of Broadway Street and E. Ninth Street)

Crescent Probe, 1978, stainless steel, 15' tall, Vern Miller Civic Center, Salem, OR (in outdoor plaza between city hall and library)

Stempost, 1980, stainless steel, 18' x 20', Pullman, WA (originally installed at Washington State University's Stadium Plaza; moved to Airport Road)

Autumn Rider, 1987, bronze, 12' tall, Gresham Town Fair, Gresham, OR (near west entrance to mall)

Winter Rider Variation, 2003, bronze, 105" tall, Portland Transit Mall, Portland, OR (near SW Sixth Avenue and Taylor Street)

ART IN SELECT PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

The Eaglet, 1951, bronze, 10" x 6" x 6¼", Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR

Ritual Dancer, 1951, bronze, 18" x 11½" x 8", San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA

The Call, 1952, bronze, 14" x 10" x 8", Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA

Neo Shang, 1955, bronze, 23" x 20½" x 12½", Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA

Clan Dancer No. 2, 1961, bronze, 21⅞" tall, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR

Ritual Dancer No. 2, 1965, bronze, 29" tall, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR

Naga Stand, 1970, bronze, 91½" x 36" x 30", Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR

Rattleman Study No. 2, 1971, bronze, 26¼" x 33" x 12¼", Oregon State Capitol Collection, Salem, OR

Talos No. 3, 1984, bronze, 69" x 20" x 20", Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA

NOTES

1. "Biography," undated manuscript, James Lee Hansen Archive, Battle Ground, WA.
2. James Lee Hansen, personal communication, February 11, 2014.
3. James Lee Hansen, e-mail communication, February 4, 2014.
4. Ibid.
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Hands

All is of the dust of stars
wedded to the dust of hands.

—James Lee Hansen, 2014

Inside front cover: James Lee Hansen working on one of his *Explorer* series, Daybreak Studio, 1980s

Inside back cover: James Lee Hansen, *Sentinel Study*, 1965, bronze, 18" x 6½" x 6½"; Hansen Trust (left) and James Lee Hansen, *Explorer Study*, 1998, bronze, 20½" x 6¾" x 4"; Hansen Trust (right)

Unless noted, all photos are courtesy of the James Lee Hansen Archive, Battle Ground, WA.

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