

'Canal Men' sculpture now on view at RiverScape

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JAN UNDERWOOD/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Two views of Leesa Haapapuro's installation "Canal Men." Made from recycled natural and man-made materials, it memorializes the forgotten workers who built the Miami and Erie Canal and stands where the canal once existed here in Dayton. Staff photos by Jan Underwood

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By Meredith Moss, Staff Writer

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DAYTON — Have you ever wondered about the workers who built the Miami and Erie Canal that ran through Dayton?

Leesa Haapapuro has.

The Dayton artist's tribute to those forgotten individuals, "Canal Men," is now on view at RiverScape.

The men lying at the bottom of the replicated canal at the corner of Patterson Boulevard and Monument Avenue are made from recycled, natural and man-made materials. The sculpture, according to the sign that accompanies them, "remembers the men who performed backbreaking work from sunrise to sunset to build the canal."

"Begun in 1825, the canal became obsolete even before it was finished with the arrival of the railroad. Abandoned and seen as an eyesore, the canal through Dayton was filled in by 1928," says information posted near the work.

The sculpture, one of four that will be presented by the Dayton Visual Arts Center (DVAC), is part of the "Branching Out" project sponsored by Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation in conjunction with the visit of well-known artist Patrick Dougherty, currently in town creating an outdoor sculpture made of saplings.

Haapapuro, who is also an art instructor, is hoping the community will pay tribute to the canal men by making flowers from recycled plastic "litter" at several public workshops happening from noon to 6 p.m. each Friday in April on the first floor of Key Bank across from Courthouse Square.

The flowers made will be added to the sculpture, which will be moved to Carillon Park in May.

Contact this reporter at (937) 225-2440 or mmoss@DaytonDailyNews.com.

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