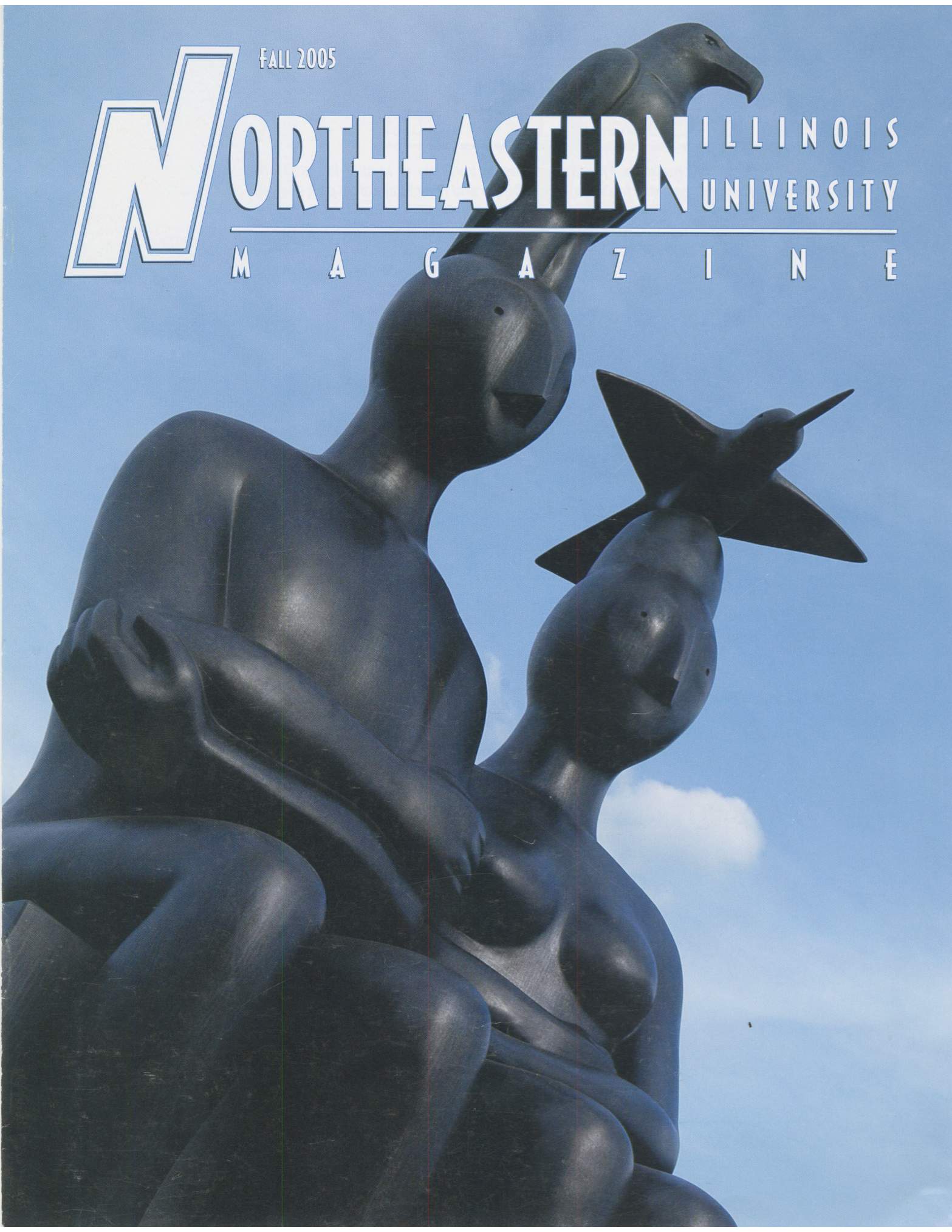


FALL 2005



NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

M A G A Z I N E





"Serenity" sculpture by Ruth Duckworth
Photo by Joe Davis

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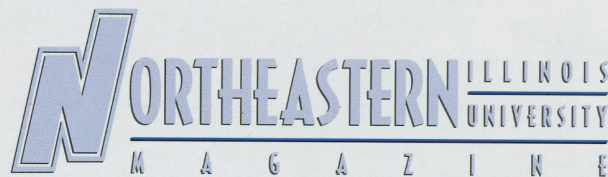
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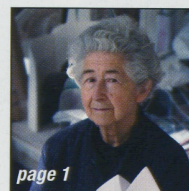
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FEATURES

"Internationally Acclaimed Sculptor Brings Serenity To NEIU" 1

Ruth Duckworth's first permanent freestanding sculpture in Chicago finds a home at NEIU.



page 1

"Students Scale the Height of Educational Adventure" 3

NEIU earth science students travel to New Zealand for a once-in-a-lifetime educational experience.



page 3

"Kamala Tiyavanich: A Woman Who Followed Her Dream" 4

NEIU alumna talks about her experience at Northeastern and her second book, "The Buddha in the Jungle."



page 4

DEPARTMENTS

Campus News 5

Class Notes 7

The Northeastern Illinois University Magazine is published four times a year by the University for graduates, donors and friends. Please send your comments, suggestions and news items to the Alumni Office, Northeastern Illinois University, 5500 North St. Louis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60625-4699.

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INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED SCULPTOR BRINGS SERENITY TO NEIU

BY CAROLYN BONNER, EDITORIAL WRITER

THE LONG WAIT

On a cold Monday morning in May, a five-foot-tall 86 year-old woman stood in the heart of Northeastern's campus. Despite her long wool coat and hat, she gripped her cane tightly against the unexpectedly harsh wind and patiently awaited one of the greatest moments in her life.

A young woman in a pink hardhat and blue jeans scaled the side of a granite pyramid that had been built weeks before on campus. She waited as a crane lifted a one-ton bronze sculpture from a nearby flatbed truck, then helped guide the statue as it was slowly lowered onto its pyramid base.

Several passers-by joined President Salme Harju Steinberg and NEIU faculty, staff and students to watch as the sculpture was installed. Once it was secure, the sculptor, still

grasping her cane, circled the statue several times before she strolled up to a cluster of onlookers and declared, "I have found my favorite angle."

A CHICAGO FIRST

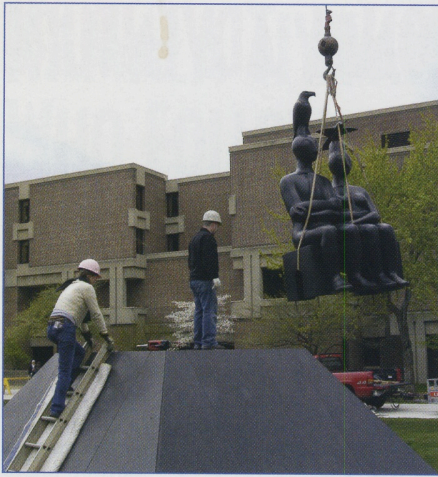
"Serenity," which was installed on campus on May 2, is the first permanent freestanding Ruth Duckworth sculpture in Chicago. "For a long time I wanted to have a sculpture in Chicago. After all, I've lived here since 1964," she said. "So I've been here a long time and now I've got my piece."

Duckworth is considered one of the leading ceramists and sculptors of our time. After fleeing Nazi Germany where she was not allowed to study art, she was educated in London. By the 1960s, she was becoming recognized as a ceramist and was able to sell

more of her works and leave behind the "money jobs" as she calls them, which included carving headstones, working at a munitions factory and, briefly, performing as a traveling puppeteer.

In 1964 Duckworth was offered a one-year teaching appointment at the University of Chicago. "My husband took the job for me," Duckworth said, in the German accent she never lost. "I came home and he told me 'The University of Chicago called and offered you a job and I said yes.'" The one-year appointment turned into a 13-year tenure, and Duckworth has lived and worked in the city ever since.

In 1968, Duckworth created "Earth, Water, and Sky," a 400-square-foot glazed-stoneware mural that covers the four walls and ceiling of The University of Chicago's Geophysical Science Building. She also



crafted the mural “Clouds over Lake Michigan,” which hangs in the lobby of the Chicago Board Options Exchange.

ART-IN-ARCHITECTURE

“Serenity” was funded by the State of Illinois Capital Development Board (CDB) through its Illinois Art-in-Architecture Program. The Board spends a percentage of the construction appropriation on the acquisition of artwork for new and renovated buildings that are open to the general public. Illinois artists have been commissioned to create more than 600 works of public art since the program began in 1977. NEIU projects that contributed to this fund include



collection of public art in Chicago that’s unlike anything else in America. It would be hard to find anywhere in the world that would compare.”

A TREMENDOUS THRILL

The first time Duckworth visited campus, she was inspired. She remembered, “The strange thing is that the minute I walked out on campus, I saw the statue. I saw it just where we put it now, and that normally doesn’t happen to me, but that’s where I saw it.”

Duckworth spoke with the committee about her impressions of the campus and its closeness to the natural environment.



A DESTINATION

The sculpture is situated between Building B and the Science Building in the new University Commons area, which completed its third phase of construction this summer. The parking lot between the Student Union, Library and Science Building was removed, and a park area was created.

The Commons area will be a major focal point of the University, and the sculpture occupies a prominent place there, overlooking the park including the area that will be used for future spring commencements.

“In any university there’s a tremendously important responsibility to have art all around

“AT NORTHEASTERN, ART IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF CAMPUS LIFE.”

—PRESIDENT SALME HARJU STEINBERG

the construction of the Fine Arts Center and the remodeling of Buildings B, C and the Auditorium.

It was Michael Dunbar, coordinator of the Illinois Art-in-Architecture Program and an internationally acclaimed sculptor in his own right, who suggested that NEIU consider a work by Ruth Duckworth.

“This is such an important piece,” said Dunbar. “There’s a Henry Moore sculpture down in Hyde Park at the University of Chicago and to have this piece up here is sort of like having bookends. If you go from ‘Nuclear Energy’ by Henry Moore at U of C to ‘Serenity’ by Ruth Duckworth at Northeastern there’s this incredible

“I admire all the open space the University has,” she said. “You care about nature and I haven’t noticed that much at other universities.”

The name “Serenity” was chosen in conversation with Duckworth. Usually she prefers to leave her works unnamed, but the State of Illinois CDB requires a title for each of their commissioned works.

President Steinberg, who had been part of the process from the very beginning, commented on the installation of the sculpture, “I was struck by the wonderful detail on the piece and the beauty of it from every angle. All of us who saw it installed felt a tremendous thrill that this major work was at home on our campus.”

you,” said Steinberg. “At Northeastern, art is an integral part of campus life.”

Dunbar added, “This is going to be considered a defining piece by Ruth Duckworth. It combines all the elegance of her work with the simplicity of her forms. It’s the kind of piece that people refer to as a destination piece. People will come to see it.”

Duckworth agreed, telling a crowd that had gathered to celebrate the installation, “You got the best one.”

When you visit “Serenity,” stand at the northwest corner of the piece and you will see the best Ruth Duckworth sculpture from her favorite angle. ■