

WORKING ARTIST | PATRICK SHEARN

Patrick Shearn's 'Skynet' takes flight at New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill in Boylston

Shearn was a creature maker in Hollywood before elevating his art, literally, at Burning Man

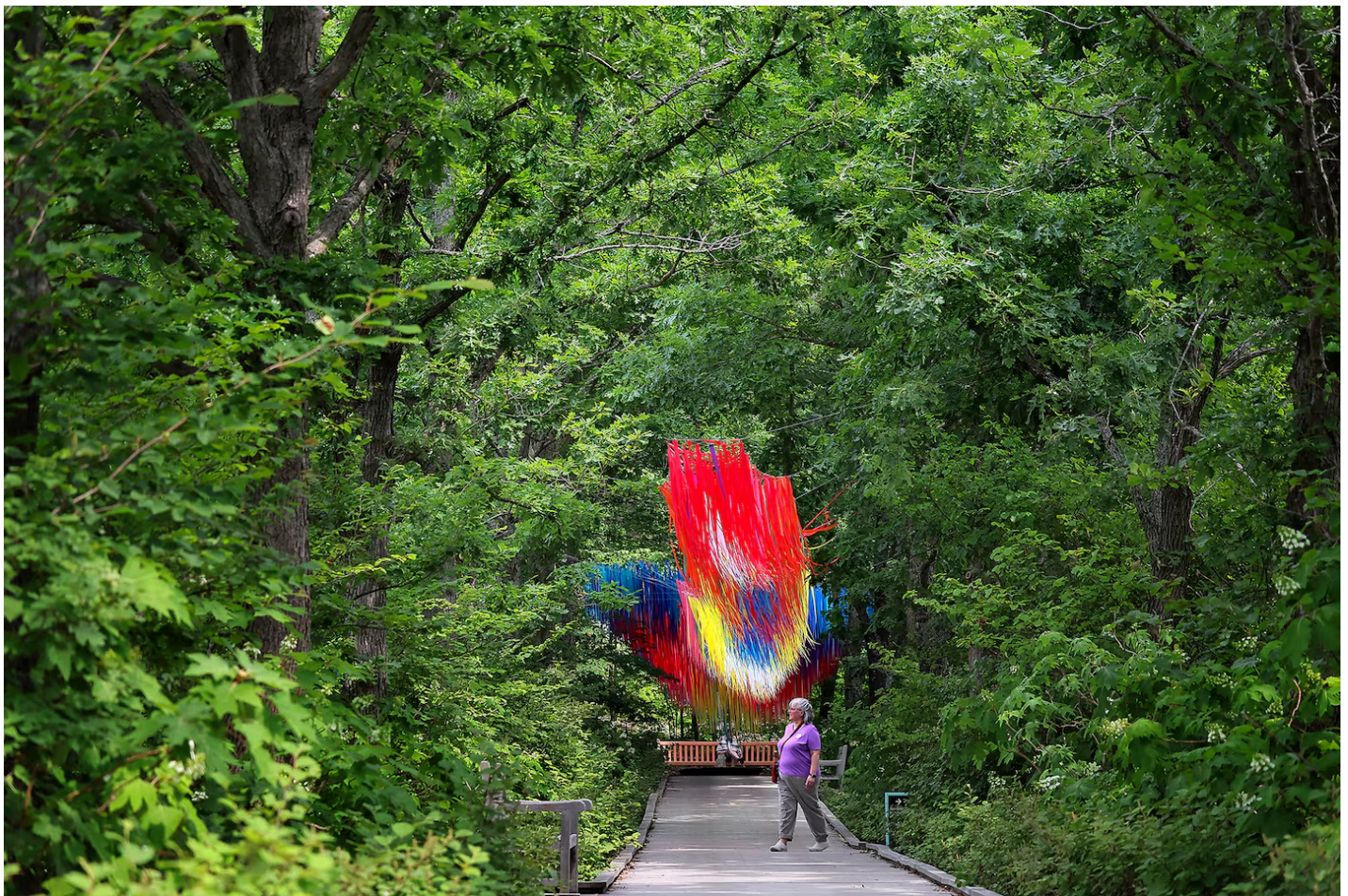
By **Cate McQuaid** Globe Correspondent, Updated June 24, 2024, 7:00 a.m.



Artist Patrick Shearn of Poetic Kinetics installed the aerial artwork "Flora in Flight" at the New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

In late July 2016, a shimmering, 15,000-square-foot canopy of mylar ribbons appeared in Los Angeles's Pershing Square overnight. It was "[Liquid Shard](#)," a temporary public art installation by Patrick Shearn of the creative arts and design studio Poetic Kinetics.

"Liquid Shard" was the first in Shearn's "[Skynet](#)" series, now Poetic Kinetics' calling card. The artist has installed "Skynets" around the world from Berlin to Hong Kong. In mid-June, he put up "Flora in Flight" at the New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill in Boylston.



A visitor walks beneath "Flora in Flight," Patrick Shearn and Poetic Kinetics' installation at the New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

Shearn took his inspiration from the way murmurations of starlings move in the air. "Something inside my chest opens up. It's like witnessing magic," he told the Globe over Zoom from his home in Elbert, Colo., before he installed "Flora in Flight."

Where to find him: www.poetickinetics.com

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Age: 62

Originally from: Colorado Springs

Lives in: Elbert, Colo.



Patrick Shearn prepares part of the piece to be elevated at the New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

How he started: Shearn was a creature maker and visual effects supervisor in Hollywood, working on films such as “Jurassic Park” and “Interview with the Vampire.” Then, in 2005, he made an artwork at Burning Man, the annual creative gathering in the Nevada desert.

“I built a flower on top of an aerial boom lift, the kind you’d see on a construction site,” he said. “It was a beacon because it moved around the festival, 100 feet tall and very kinetic. Somebody saw that, and a few years later I got a call asking if I would produce a show for the Beijing Olympics with a big, giant puppet marionette.” That was the beginning of Poetic Kinetics.

What he makes: Shearn and his company also design Seussian-like “[Enchanted Trees](#),” and at Burning Man last year, he installed “[Vanishing Points](#),” 96-foot-long carbon fiber poles that bend in the wind.

“They break your sense of scale when you get in amongst a grove of them,” Shearn said.

“They look like they go straight up into the clouds.”



"Vanishing Points" by Patrick Shearn of Poetic Kinetics, at Burning Man 2023. STEPHANE LANOUX/COURTESY POETIC KINETICS

Every “Skynet” installation is tailor-made, starting with computer 3-D modeling. “Flora in Flight” features three pieces.

“We’re working in more constrained, intimate zones within the garden where we’re going to discreetly tie off the trees and create one called ‘Hidden Gem,’” Shearn said. “We’ve got a circular one going over the fountain with longer streamers dropping down. Then we have a dramatic one, very wind reactive.”

Reduce, reuse, recycle: “Skynet” materials can include mylar, kite fabric, and monofilament. “We bring everything back to the studio and take it all apart and reuse everything we can,” Shearn said.



Patrick Shearn prepares part of "Flora in Flight" to be elevated. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

Advice for artists: “Artists are attached to their ego and whether somebody likes or doesn’t like their artwork. That can be crippling,” Shearn said. “Do what you want to do. Do it as best you can. Make yourself happy, and people will respond to that.”

FLORA IN FLIGHT: Aerial Art by Patrick Shearn of Poetic Kinetics

At New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill, 11 French Drive, Boylston, through Oct.

31. www.nebg.org/flora-in-flight/

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