Herron alumnus unveils Sachem Award honor roll plaque for departing governor

In the last hours of Governor Mitch Daniels’ administration, Herron School of Art and Design alumnus Brett Harbour (B.F.A. in Sculpture ‘12) unveiled his latest public commission during a brief meeting at the Statehouse. It’s a companion plaque and medallions for the Sachem Award, Indiana’s highest honor.

Governor Daniels established the Sachem Award in 2005. Named for a Native American word akin to chief or wise man, the accolade goes to one person each year in recognition of “a lifetime of excellence and moral virtue that has brought credit and honor to Indiana.” According to Daniels, the award signifies that “… in Indiana we value not only what people do, but how they live their lives.”

The eight recipients to date include coaching titan John Wooden, Notre Dame President Father Theodore Hesburgh and philanthropist Bill Cook. For the first time, the award winners’ names will be permanently enrolled on the Sachem plaque in the Statehouse rotunda for all to contemplate.

It’s a nice symmetry that a Herron alumnus would design and cast the bronze plaque, because the award—and each annual rendering to this point—also have been created at Herron.

Jeffery L. Fearin Jr. (B.F.A. in Sculpture, ‘06), designed the Sachem Award in Indiana limestone and bronze featuring a tomahawk and scroll motif. “The original idea was for a kind of coin,” Fearin said. But as a student sculptor and a history buff, he had other ideas that were very well received. A Sachem Award is on permanent exhibit in the cultural history galleries of the Indiana State Museum. Today Fearin runs Fearin Customs in the Circle City Industrial Complex on the city’s near eastside.

Harbour currently lives and works in Indianapolis. He spent eight years in the Army Corps of Engineers, finishing his duty with a tour in Iraq. He began his studies at Herron one year later. His experience in Iraq both rattled and ratified his worldview. He focuses on creating interactive work and installations that provide an opportunity to enter a new state of awareness. “It is an honor to have my work included in the record of Indiana history,” he said.

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