

Stephen LeBlanc (b. 1955)

"Rocky Mountain Majesty," 1987

Cast bronze, life-size, edition of 12

Dedicated: Gift in memory of/Chuck McLaughlin/"Rocky Mountain Majesty"/Stephen LeBlanc/December 17, 1990

"I'm the Boss"

Cast bronze, 1¼ scale life-size, edition of 21

Location: Vail Mountain at Two Elk restaurant

Wildlife bronze sculptor Stephen LeBlanc's work may be enjoyed at two locations in Vail; one in Lionshead and the other outside of the Two Elk Restaurant on Vail Mountain. LeBlanc's sculptures stem from a lifetime of research and appreciation of nature.

Stephen LeBlanc, originally from Missouri, had a chance encounter as a young boy with Marlin Perkins, the former director of the St. Louis Zoo and television host of "Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom." LeBlanc said that Perkins would have "a huge influence" on his direction in life. At this early age, he recognized his affinity for the great outdoors and intrinsic interest in animals.

LeBlanc's family moved to Colorado, where he would enjoy the abundances of the pristine environment. He obtained a degree in wildlife biology from Colorado State and continued to hone his already acclaimed skills as a taxidermist. In 1976 after winning first prize in a national taxidermy competition, it was suggested to him to try working in a different medium. His acute skills in observation and preservation led him to execute his artistry in bronze. Meticulously modeling his works in clay and then in wax, the models are sent to a foundry to be cast in bronze. This process can take up to 6 months before a finished work emerges. "I want to share the joy I create with my hands in hopes it brings a smile to the faces of those who view it," said LeBlanc.

In Lionshead, a life-size rendering of a bighorn ram appropriately titled "Rocky Mountain Majesty," was donated to the Town of Vail in 1990 in memory of Chuck McLaughlin. He was an avid outdoorsman, had a great interest in the bighorn sheep and also a very close friend of LeBlanc.

At an elevation of 11,220 feet outside of Vail Resorts' Two Elk restaurant is LeBlanc's "I'm the Boss." This work renders a mature seven-point bull elk bugling during the fall rut and willing to spar in order to maintain his herd. The elk bronze was installed in 1999 with the re-opening of the restaurant. "Vail Resorts was looking for an iconic symbol for the Two Elk restaurant, so I presented LeBlanc's sculpture," said John Cogswell. Cogswell has represented LeBlanc's work for nearly 30 years at his Vail Village gallery.

LeBlanc's sculptures are in many international collections including the Duke of Edinburgh's and the Emperor of Japan's. His work is also found in major corporations and universities across the country, including the buffalo at the University of Colorado's stadium commissioned in 1995. He has received numerous awards throughout his career. In 1994 he represented Ducks Unlimited as their feature sculptor at their National Art Show and in 1998 he received four Best in Show awards, including one at the Oklahoma Wildlife National Art Show. Earlier this week he was presented Best in Show for miniatures at the juried Tulsa Nature Works Art Show.

LeBlanc was hired by Browning Expeditions to host a television series for ESPN2, about to begin filming its third season. LeBlanc's appreciation for wildlife and conservation made him the ideal host for leading expeditions around the globe.