

Dennis Smith

*Children's Fountain*, 1986

Cast bronze with patina – figures

Boulders and river rock imbedded in concrete – basin

Dedication: "Children's Fountain/Dennis Smith/To those who help us all celebrate children. December 1986"

Commissioned by Deane Knox and Gordon Pierce on behalf of members of the Vail community for the Art in Public Places program.

One of the first contributions to the Town of Vail's art collection was made in 1986 with the commissioned bronze work *Children's Fountain* by artist Dennis Smith. Deane Knox, owner of the Knox Galleries with locations in Beaver Creek, Denver, and Harbor Springs, Michigan, commissioned the work along with Gordon Pierce on behalf of the Art in Public Places program which was established in 1984. Knox's goal was to "initiate activity in the arts in Vail."

Artist Dennis Smith of Alpine, Utah is a graduate of Brigham Young University and also attended the prestigious Danish Royal Academy in Copenhagen. In 1968 his artistic direction turned to figurative work, especially the child being the main motif in his bronze sculptures. "The child became a significant metaphor for humankind in general. Vail's *Children's Fountain* is an assemblage of five images of children in exuberance and exemplifies the celebration of the human spirit," explains Smith. His work is influenced by the German Expressionists and the sculptural work by Edgar Degas and Auguste Rodin. He incorporates a similar sense of gesture and texture capturing the vibrancy of a child and their movement.

Smith has over 125 public installations throughout the world. Many of his public works in the U.S. have been placed in hospitals, libraries, and colleges. Abroad, his work is in the collection of several American Embassies, including Moscow, Prague, and London. Smith's dedication as a sculptor has been integral Utah's arts programs. He co-founded the Alpine Art Center to further the advancement of the arts as an educational center, working studios, and sculptural park.

Garnering sponsorship from the CEO of JC Penny which was headquartered in New York City at the time, Knox coordinated an exchange program between the children's program at St. John's Cathedral in New York and the children of Eagle County. The original *Children's Fountain* included small bronze cast animals created the children of New York City. These elements of the sculpture have since been removed for various reasons. The children of Eagle County whom Knox brought to New York on this exchange program, also created bronze sculptures that remain in place at the St. John's Cathedral fountain.

– Molly Eppard, Art in Public Places Coordinator