

THE BIG SKY

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New 'Ole' Nelson sculpture greets library visitors

By **RACHEL HERGETT**
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The concrete slab in the center of the Bozeman Public Library's roundabout is no longer empty. Its latest resident is "FlameDance," a 12.5-foot, 700-pound welded steel abstract sculpture created by artist Erik "Ole" Nelson of Bozeman.

The sculpture was installed Friday as part of the library's partnership with the Gallatin Art Crossing and its commitment to public art. It is a "teaser" for the exhibit's 2012-2013 selections, which will be unveiled in July.

"It's up and ready for your viewing pleasure," Nelson said.

Nelson is the owner of Media Station, which makes custom signs, including more than 40 in downtown Bozeman. He has three other sculptures displayed as part of Gallatin Art Crossing, including 2010's people's choice winner, "Fish Face," in Soroptomist Park.

"We're always excited to have Ole's new sculptures each year, and this one is better than ever," Gallatin Art Crossing founder Tate Chamberlin stated in a news release for the installation.

Normally, Nelson builds and submits a sculpture in July, but he was

inspired earlier this year and created his largest-ever piece, not knowing if it would have a home.

"I was really excited about one of the drawings," he said. "It was an 'if you build it, they will come' sort of idea."

And the optimistic attitude worked. "FlameDance" is now in a prominent location that allows people to view it from all sides as they're driving on the west side of the library.

"It's a neat venue for sculpture," Nelson said.

The piece itself is based on a spontaneous line drawing that feels as if it's in constant motion. It includes almost 3,000 inches of welding in a

technique Nelson said took 20 years to develop.

Library Director Susan Gregory said in a written statement that she is drawn to the piece because it "is imposing yet graceful."

"FlameDance" will have a spot at the library for at least a year.

Gallatin Art Crossing's ongoing exhibit has 42 pieces placed outside between the library and the Emerson Center for the Arts and Culture.

For more information on Gallatin Art Crossing, visit www.gallatinart-crossing.org.

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