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Petroglyph artist brings public sculptures to Maine

There are dozens of birds, and even something from space, now carved into rock



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PHIPPSBURG, Maine — A new and very different kind of art exhibit is ready for public viewing, but you will need to do some hiking to enjoy it.

The preserve owned by the Phippsburg Land Trust now features petroglyphs, thanks to artist Kevin Sudeith.

"I had been exposed to some rock art, I had done some outdoor drawings and the light went on and thought, well this will last better if it's carved," Sudeith said.

He has traded his paintbrush for power tools and a cloth canvas for huge rock slabs. He now travels the county, combing the woods and wilderness to carve petroglyphs.

"My goal has become to make a portrait of a place at a given moment in time," Sudeith said.

He has etched more than two-dozen life-sized birds, including a blue heron, loon and ducks, based on pictures he took on the Phippsburg peninsula.

"My 'of the moment' objective is to give the local community something in which they identify," Sudeith said. "Bringing people to an undiscovered place that's beautiful, where they can have picnics or some time with their family or just enjoy the beautiful nature."

Dan Dowd of the Phippsburg Land Trust says the art gives people another reason to visit their trails. The trust invited Sudeith to begin the project in 2019.

"Walk our trails, see something different. Not just see nature but actually have an opportunity to see nature through art in this case," Dowd said.

Sudeith's petroglyphs also include a lifesized carving of the Mars helicopter.

"In this case, I've used these 25 birds that exist here today plus the Mars helicopter as a way to point this moment in time in this location," Sudeith said.

For other projects across the country, he's made astronauts, cowboys and sea creatures, each directly to the time and particular location.

The art is carved into the rock and, he hopes, centuries from now may offer a glimpse into 21st century Maine.

"Trying to convey something that a person in a thousand years might understand that doesn't require too much privileged information," Sudeith said.

Sudeith is from New York but plans to remain in Maine until October, offering guided tours of his sculptures.