

Mysterious art lands in Providence

Street Stories tracks artist nesting her creations

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PROVIDENCE, R.I. (WPRI) - A local artist has tucked away about 3 dozen mysteries in hiding places along Providence's streets, hoping to inspire peace with anyone who happens to find them.

The Rhode Island capital is the latest stop for Sandra Jean Ceas who grew up in Lincoln and started what she calls a public art project six years ago after a revelation in an art class. She took us back in time as she perched her hand crafted porcelain doves in a variety of spots.

"The first one was carved out of wood," Ceas said.

She weaved her way off Washington Street, down a side road and through a back alley, laying down the palm sized white birds along the way and explaining how she heard a classmate crying while she crafted that first one. The raw emotions a few feet away motivated her to secretly leave her creation on his desk.

"When I saw the response to that," Ceas said. "Anonymously, sort of lifting his spirits? That's what gave me the idea."

Hand carving hundreds of doves out of wood would have been impossible so she created 9 different molds to cast the symbols. She still has to finish each bird by hand but there are no complaints.

"It's very meditative to cast, fire and sand every last one."

[Art4him](#) took flight about a thousand doves and 19 cities around the world ago. In city number 20, Ceas hummed her way through Burnside Park, across Kennedy Plaza, over toward North Main and eventually to the Broad Street side of the city. During the serpentine stroll, she toted the doves, tightly wrapped in a purple back pack and without any obvious order, gently left them for unknowing strangers to find.

She propped one on a brick window sill, balanced another on a park bench and left many more in random locations, from a basket on a colorful bike near a RISD dorm to a three-legged black couch in an alley.

"Sorry," Ceas said, briefly running into the frame of photographer John Villella's camera to peck the dove off the couch. "I'm going to ruin your shot."

And with that she rested that dove near a dumpster instead.

"This will be harder to find," Ceas said, slipping a bird between a metal fence and a concrete wall. "Someone's got to really be looking for that one."

The artist photographs every resting place and displays the shots on a website as part of her project.

She speculates most if not all the thousand or so doves from the past six years have been found and she believes eventually she will hear the stories of their impact.

"I've only got one and a half stories. One from a beach on an island off Florida. One person was

'witnessing' to the other. She saw the dove in the sand and handed it to the person she was trying to comfort."

Ceas had never been to that island but did hide some doves in Miami, making her guess the little bird floated to its eventual destiny for a reason. The 'half story' involves a dove that was left with a card, explaining how to contact its creator.

"That was cheating. We stopped leaving cards."

She hopes to spark spiritual revelations but in the end it is up to whomever finds the treasures to decide what to do next.

"For me, it's just leaving it and having the mystery, knowing that it has touched someone's life. This is just a gift to remind people there's hope and there's peace."

Before the sun set on her afternoon in Providence, we noticed at least one of the symbols she nested was already gone. Others are still waiting to move on, unless you count the dove that seemed quite at home on a patch of grass, mixed in with a slightly confused flock of city doves, also known as pigeons.