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Hackettstown artist
sculpts his visions

**Reaching
for sky**

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Sculptor 'reaching for the sky'



Sculptor John Proaño looks over his first big project, a 10-foot-tall metal sculpture crafted on commission for a private collector. The sculpture, made of steel, will be painted in colors inspired by fall foliage, including red and orange.

BY MIGUEL RIERA

PLUS STAFF

HACKETTSTOWN — Artist John Proaño is 30 years old now, and he has been drawing and sculpting since childhood.

A native of Colombia, now living in Hackettstown, Proaño generally sculpts small, abstract pieces. His creations have tended to be about 2 feet tall and not very heavy, although most of his designs are made out of steel and iron.

That is, until now: Proaño's latest art work and his first

commissioned sculpture stands 10 feet above ground, over a base that is approximately 5 feet wide and weighs more than 400 pounds. It's the largest sculpture he has ever attempted.

"Reaching for the Sky" is the preliminary name for the new work that was built out of a series of half-inch steel plates. The work has five major sections with the largest being the

top portion, which resembles a blade or a flat steel spear, slightly curved, emerging from the earth and penetrating into the sky.

Proaño said he is excited about the project.

"My friends and family are very proud of me, and I am, too; this is my first commissioned work ever and it came from a private collector," Proaño said.

A graphic designer by trade,

Proaño said he has been building his own art since he was a child in his native Colombia. His sculptures have found their way into the hands of private and corporate collectors around the state but also in Latin America and Europe.

Creating a large sculpture isn't easy when you don't have a place to store it, he said. Having a sculpture commissioned and knowing exactly

For more information

John Proaño's artwork can be viewed on the Web at www.johnproano.com. He also can be contacted by e-mail at john.proano@gmail.com or by calling (973) 615-0585.

where it would be placed when it was finished, makes it much easier and it definitely influ-

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WARREN WESTURA / SPECIAL TO PLUS

John Proaño, of Hackettstown, a 30-year-old sculptor, designed 'Reaching for the Sky.'

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ences the creative process, Proaño said.

An art aficionado, who preferred to remain anonymous, said that he was visiting Arts off Main Gallery in Hackettstown over the summer and saw Proaño's sculptures, which he considered very suitable for placement outside of his home in Warren County.

"A phone call came," Proaño said "and in just few seconds,

almost instantly, made a life-long dream a reality."

Mike Sedita, who owns the Arts off Main Gallery, said the commission was unusual.

"Many painters in the past have been commissioned to do portraits, after exhibiting at the gallery," Sedita said. "This is the first time I've heard of a large sculpture commissioned, at least here at the gallery."

After a careful evaluation and a survey of the outdoor site where the sculpture will be placed, Proaño took pictures and videos to determine the precise spot where the sculp-

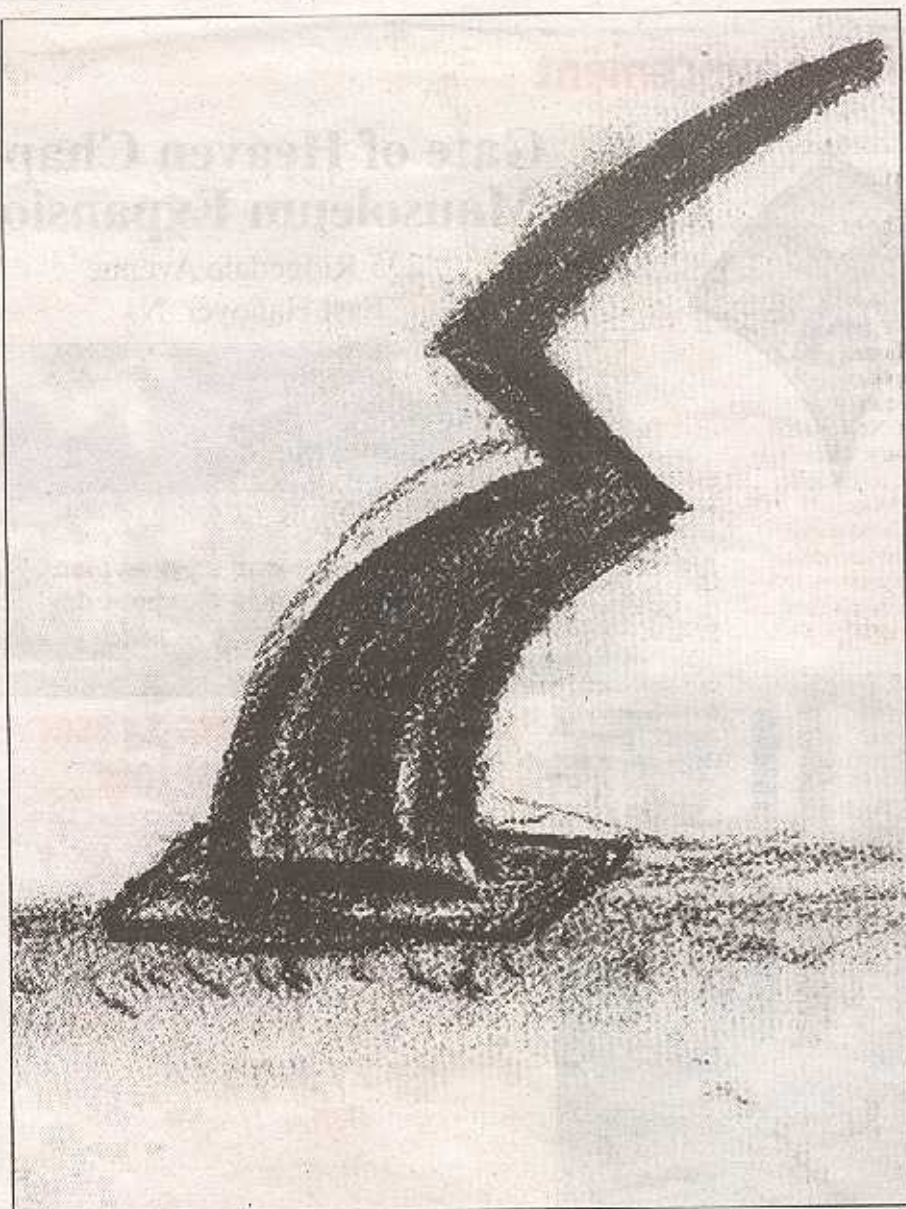
ture will be placed.

"Once a spot on the property was selected, I revisited the location a couple of times and designed an idea, a concept that would work appropriately within the space, keeping in mind the immediate surroundings and the overall landscape," he said.

The buyer was looking for a sculpture that as he said, "would have some metallic and rustic characteristics."

The only request made by the art aficionado was that the

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This artist's rendering shows the design for 'Reaching for the Sky,' a steel sculpture completed by John Proaño, of Hackettstown, for a client in Warren County who commissioned the work. A native of Colombia, Proaño has been sculpting since childhood. This is the largest piece he has created. It stands 10 feet tall and rests on a base 5 feet across.

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structure be big so it wouldn't get lost on the property.

Without wasting anytime, Proaño went on to draw several sketches. He spent a couple of days at the house, sitting down on the grass, surrounded by trees.

The inspiration eventually came to him and the visualization of "Reaching for the Sky," was approved by the future owner, Proaño said.

"The creative process is the most beautiful part of all," Proaño said. "The creative process tends to be uncontrollable. The sculpture is solid and dynamic, big and heavy and it flows like the air."

Richard Buschgens of Lodi Foundries in Hackettstown did the physical fabrication of the sculpture.

"It took us a month to create his vision," Buschgens said.

"The creative process is the most beautiful part of all ... The sculpture is solid and dynamic, big and heavy and it flows like the air."

— John Proaño,
sculptor

"It wasn't very problematic, although we encountered some engineering and architectural issues along the way.

"The most important thing, when doing a job of this magnitude, is not to make any mistakes and to make sure the sculpture is exactly identical to what the artist had imagined and designed," Buschgens said.

Initially, according to Buschgens, they had considered doing the sculpture in aluminum, but they decided to use steel at the last moment.

"Aluminum gives a different look, steel adds power and energy to the sculpture, you

know is there," he said.

The sculpture will be painted in colors inspired by the season's foliage, a Navajo red will fade into a citrus orange, which according to Proaño, will play well with the dynamic aspect of the piece and the natural surroundings.

Once the structure is painted, it will be removed from the shop using a crane and transported to its final destination in Warren County. Completion of the project was expected by the end of December.

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