

Home > Page One > Archives > Greeter statue gets a makeover for 2024

Page One Archives Arts News Town Crier

Greeter statue gets a makeover for 2024

By Clara Beard • December 22, 2023

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The celebrated statue of Eiler Larsen, Laguna Beach's first official greeter, underwent a much-needed refresh recently thanks to local brothers Jackson and Sawyer Collins and Laguna College of Art and Design student Alicia Zhuang.



love the statue of Eiler Larsen."

The Collins brothers, who have a small Laguna-based Christmas ornament business called Iconic Ornaments, said they wanted to repaint the statue to coincide with the release of their 2023 Laguna ornament of the Greeter.

"We both agreed that it would be a great act of service to freshen up the statue, as many people love it," Jackson said. "Our favorite part of the experience was definitely being able to talk to different people while helping one of Laguna's famous landmarks get an update. Learning people's stories and their own connection to the statue was super fun and opened our eyes to how many people

The Larsen statue sits in front of The Old Pottery Place on 1200 South Coast Highway and is owned by local Joe Hanauer.

"He did not give any special instructions, but we wanted to make sure we didn't mess up his statue in front of his property," Sawyer said. "He (Hanauer) came by several times throughout the day, and luckily, he loved the new paint job."



Jackson and Sawyer Collins stand in front of the finished greeter statue with Laguna College of Art and Design student Alicia Zhuang and owner Joe Hanauer. Photo/Clark Collins.

Last painted by local artist Mike Tauber in the early 2000s, the statue refresh took about seven hours and required close attention to detail, which was where Zhuang came in. The LCAD artist helped the two brothers with some of the more technical elements of the project.

"We were glad to have her as she is quite a bit more experienced and talented when it comes to painting," Sawyer said. "The painting itself was not particularly difficult, but it helped that we had Alicia as we did not have to worry about messing up the face or highlights because she has expertise," Jackson said.

The brothers said multiple people, curious about the project, came by and talked to them throughout the day.

"One man told us about how he was a local artist and loved painting Laguna Beach, while another lady let us know her appreciation for doing it," Jackson said. "Michael, the current greeter, came by and thanked us for repainting the statue, and we wished him a happy birthday."

"We are super glad to be able to have done this, and we loved giving one of Laguna's most iconic landmarks a refresh," Sawyer said.

To find out more about Iconic Ornaments, visit www.iconicornaments.com.

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