

Illuminated by ice

Verdant Meadows ice sculptures are on display in Vail through early spring

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Seventeen giant blades of grass dot the landscape along Gore Creek in Vail. Each blade, sculpted from a series of 300-pound blocks of ice, is between 10 and 15 feet high.

Let your imagination work a bit and the curved sculptures rising from the ground look a little like enormous elephant tusks, though one curious passer-by said the sculptures really do look like giant blades of grass.

"I really like the segments — the facets of the blades. I think it's very original," said Ruth Galbreth, visiting from Albuquerque, N.M.

The exhibit, called Triumph Winterfest Verdant Meadows, is a \$40,000 project funded by Triumph Development and organized by the town of Vail's Art in Public Places council. Denver artist Lawrence Argent and local ice sculptor Scott Rella collaborated on the project.

Though Argent hasn't seen the sculptures lit up yet, he's looking forward to the finished product, he said.

"It will be a very magical environment down there and will illuminate that part of the river. (This project) will add something to the visual literacy of Vail," he said.

A temporal project

Argent is best known for "I See What You Mean," a 30-foot blue bear sculpture outside the Denver Convention Center. Taking small things and making them big seems to be a theme in Argent's work, but he said his method isn't quite so simple.

"I like to question the familiar. In so many ways, it's through that meaning and experience that opens up the sublime," he said.

The temporal nature of the project and collaborating with Scott Rella, a 20-plus year ice



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Scott Rella, owner of Fear No Ice as well as three other ice sculpture companies, uses a torch to polish an ice sculpture Thursday night in Vail. Rella and Denver artist Lawrence Argent collaborated on the project called Verdant Meadows, which represents Vail's alpine meadows. Several ice sculptures, which resemble blades of grass, are located near the Gore Creek Promenade next to Gore Creek.

i Ice sculptures

Where: Gore Creek Promenade, near the International Bridge in Vail Village.

When: Sculptures are on display until March or whenever they melt. Lighting ceremony tonight at 6 p.m. at the fire pits.

Cost: Free. Refreshments will be provided during the ceremony by Alpine Treasures, the store operated by the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens.

More information: Visit www.artinvail.com or call 479-2344.

sculptor and owner of four ice-sculpting companies, attracted Argent to what he referred to as an "unusual enterprise," he said.

"The fact that it isn't permanent, that it changes with the environment, I think that's part of the cycle of life, and I think that's what these pieces represent — the cycle of life," Argent said.

