

PUBLIC ART in DOWNTOWN DEERFIELD

Guide and Map

Deerfield, IL

www.deerfieldlibrary.org

2017

text: Dylan Zavagno

Deerfield, Illinois is fortunate to be home to world-class works of public art by nationally and internationally renowned artists, representing a wide variety of styles. This guide will illuminate the artists and their art, as well as focus on the fascinating stories of how these paintings and sculptures came to be part of Deerfield’s collection, from local artists to famous art collectors.

This guide showcases nine artworks in walking distance from the Library. The tour starts inside the Library, then moves outside, south along Waukegan Rd., and ends at the AT&T building on Deerfield Rd. with a brand new work by a Deerfield High School student.

Public art in Deerfield is maintained by the Deerfield Fine Arts Commission. They also present the Deerfield Public Art Program, which selects new pieces each year for display in public buildings, on loan from the artists. There are many works of public art not featured here. Check the “Extensions” section at the end of the guide for more information and locations.

Tips for taking this tour:

The tour is best in good weather during daylight hours. Feel free to walk up close to sculptures and get various vantage points on the grass, but please be mindful of planters and please don’t touch the artwork. Four of the nine featured works are inside the library and can only be seen during library hours:

Mon-Thu 9am—9pm; Fri 9am—6pm; Sat 9am—5pm; Sun 1pm—5pm.

An audio version—with original artist interviews—is available online or through the Deerfield Public Library Podcast feed: deerfieldlibrary.org/podcast, or on iTunes, Stitcher, or Google Play.

A virtual, 360-degree video tour is also available at deerfieldlibrary.org/localtours, where you can find maps, audio, and more about our other local history tours.



Sculptor Mary Block and tour author Dylan Zavagno

Listen to an in-depth interview with artist Mary Block on the Deerfield Public Library podcast! [Deerfieldlibrary.org/podcast](https://deerfieldlibrary.org/podcast) and iTunes, Stitcher, & Google Play.

About the author

Dylan Zavagno is the Adult Services Coordinator of Virtual Instruction and eResources at the Deerfield Public Library where he produces eLearning videos and hosts the *Deerfield Public Library Podcast*, featuring interviews with notable community members and library-related guests. He studied education at National Louis University and holds a Secondary Education teaching license. Dylan graduated from DePaul University with a BA in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. In his spare time he loves reading and going to art museums.

make this mosaic, with . Austin’s goal was to show the importance of healthy soil and identify native plants. Look closely for plant names carved into the leaves.

The mosaic first came to the Library as part of the Village of Deerfield Public Art Program. The Friends of the Library purchased the piece for the Library’s permanent collection in 2015.

Robert Winslow (1950 —)

Energy Form, 1980s

Tennessee Pink Marble

Deerfield Public Library

Lower Level: in front of the computer lab



Original Interview



This sculpture is made up of a large form and a smaller form tucked beneath it, both standing on three points. Winslow says this sculpture represents organic growth or molecular energy fields. It’s part of a series of *Energy Forms* that Winslow made, the largest of which is the massive *Energy Form* commissioned for the corporate offices of McDonalds in Oak Brook. That sculpture was carved out of two large blocks of Tennessee pink marble, one weighing 21 tons, and one 13 tons. Our *Energy Form* was created from a small piece of one of those large blocks. According to Winslow, Tennessee pink marble is some of the hardest marble, which makes working with it difficult.

Winslow is interested in proportions, studying the golden ratio and other artistic and natural ratios that show up across cultures. Look for ways the proportions of the two pieces play off each other from different angles. Be sure to take a peek from inside the Computer Lab for views from the back.

Energy Form was donated by the Turner Family in 2014, in loving memory of Fred and Patty Turner. Fred Turner was the Chairman and CEO of McDonald’s Corporation from 1977 to 2004. Winslow first came to the attention of McDonald’s when sending out brochures of his work to various corporate collectors and galleries. He got a call back from curator Susan Pertl, who said if he was ever in Barrington to come see her. Winslow’s brother called to check if Robert had any responses from his brochures. Robert explained the call he got from Pertl. Winslow’s brother replied, “You know where we live? We live in Barrington, Bob!” Robert was on a plane the next day and soon was commissioned to work on *Energy From* outside the corporate office in Oak Brook. Winslow was later commissioned to make another large-scale work at McDonald’s: *Totem*, made of black granite.

Winslow developed a close relationship with the Turners. The family became his patrons, including his works in their backyard sculpture garden in their Deerfield home. “These were the greatest people,” Winslow remembers. “I loved them.”

Fred Turner was responsible for the creation of the Patty Turner Senior Center, named after his wife, who passed away in 2000. Fred passed away in 2013. Winslow currently resides in Michigan.

Antoine Poncet (1928 —)

Agrippine, 1968

Carrara marble

Deerfield Public Library

On the east side of the library along Waukegan Rd.

French sculptor Antoine Poncet has had a long and celebrated career as an abstract sculptor, with pieces in many public parks, museums, and institutions around the world. Like other post-war Modernist sculptors, his goal is to achieve a purity of form that can speak across languages and cultures. Poncet’s smooth, polished marble sculptures are inspired both by forms in nature and abstract dream-forms. Poncet was the only student of Hans (Jean) Arp, the “father of Dadaism,” who once called Poncet’s work, “the closest thing to nature.” Poncet intends his sculptures to work on the viewer with spiritual depth, peace, joy, and even playful humor. He offers his own artistic philosophy: “By restoring poetic dimension to the world, art enables us to discover both the invisible and the profound meaning of the real and the unreal.”

Agrippine stands on three points and features a Möbius strip-like swirl that unwinds from the center. Like many of Poncet’s sculptures, it features a hole or open space in an effort to create a harmonious form. “I shall always remember my father’s words: ‘Never put two long measures side by side, a long and a short, a short and a long are essential,’” Poncet once said. He is often inspired by the piece of marble he is working with, emphasizing the natural features of the stone. In this case, the title reflects the marble it was created from—Emperor Agrippa restored Rome with Carrara marble.

Agrippine is part of a significant breakthrough collection of works Poncet made in the 1960s after visiting the marble quarry at Carrara, Italy. He was overwhelmed with the variety and quality of the marble and desperately wanted to create monumental artworks but didn’t have the resources. In response, his friend and early supporter Nathan Cummings wrote to him, “I will be your Medici!” and funded the project. In five years, Poncet made 18 monumental works, each weighing between 3 and 7 tons. Nathan Cummings featured Poncet sculptures in shows of his collection at the National Gallery, Metropolitan Museum, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Three of the sculptures made it to one of Cummings’ businesses, the Kitchens of Sara Lee plant in Deerfield and were particular favorites of his. When the factory closed in 1990, the Village asked if Sara Lee would donate the sculptures. *Agrippine* was placed in front of the library, in 1991. Then Head Librarian Jack Hicks said at the time, “I have seldom felt so excited about anything. It softens our building. I love it.” Since then, the sculpture has been closely identified with the library.

Lars-Birger Sponberg (1919 —)

McHenry County, 2003

Oil on Canvas

Deerfield Public Library

Main Floor: on the South wall of the library in the Friends Book Sale



Original Interview



Born in Sweden in 1919, Lars-Birger Sponberg has been a Deerfield resident for over 60 years. His family emigrated in 1930 and settled in Evanston. Sponberg attended the Art Institute of Chicago on a scholarship where he was influenced by his teacher Lauren Van Pappelendam, particularly her use of dimensional space. During World War II, he painted signs and posters for the Army. His recent work has focused on Midwest landscapes as viewed from the roadside. Often these paintings are composite images put together from photographs Sponberg takes from the passenger seat while his wife Dallas drives. The image depicted is one he had in mind for a long time. He calls it, “basically a real scene.” Sponberg starts paintings by sketching on the canvas with red paint, and he likes to let a little bit of the red show through. Look along the edge or the road or in the bushes for some of these red lines. The painting was commissioned by the Deerfield Library and unveiled in 2004.

Sponberg strives to illuminate the “significance of the ordinary”: “We often mark the significant events of our lives and fail to note the passages that lie in between. In using the Midwest landscapes as subjects of these paintings I am calling attention to the extraordinariness of the commonplace, the in-betweens of the celebrated places as well as the in-betweens of our lives.”

Sponberg’s work is in private and corporate collections as well as several universities and U.S. embassies. He has been featured in solo and group exhibitions in Sweden, New York and Chicago.

Janet Austin

Prairie Plants, 2010

Stone mosaic, carved ceramic stoneware tile

Landing of the middle staircase, leading from Periodicals to Adult Services



This four-paneled mosaic depicts an above- and below-ground cross-section of local plant and insect life. The mosaic uses carved ceramic pieces with traditional flat mosaic tiles. Evanston-based artist Janet Austin often works in sculpture and mosaics depicting the natural world, with a focus on species that are considered undesirable by humans but are essential to the ecosystem. Austin has many works of public art in the Chicagoland area and around the country.

The inspiration for *Prairie Plants* came from a project Austin worked on at Deerfield High School. In 2010, DHS students participated in a program with the Chicago Botanic Garden, creating an outdoor prairie garden at their school. Austin was hired to help make identification plaques for the plants in the garden. This inspired her to

Javier Vilató

(1921— 2000)

Nature Morte, 1953

Oil on canvas

Deerfield Public Library

Lower Level: On wall in meeting room hallway, near Meeting Room A



This cubist still-life depicts a carafe, a glass, a plate, and two green apples. While presenting these objects in a characteristically flat and diagrammatic way, Vilató uses color to suggest depth and space. Look for the brown shadow cast on the table by the fruit or the highlights of green reflecting the fruit off the edges of the carafe.

If it reminds you of Picasso, that’s because it’s by Catalan artist Javier Vilató, Picasso’s nephew. He was very close to Picasso, often described as his brother, best friend, or the artistic son Picasso never had.

Vilató lived in the family home in Barcelona and grew up surrounded by his uncle’s art. Vilató’s mother Lola was a frequent subject of Picasso’s early work. Picasso’s mother Marie nurtured the budding art career of her grandsons, even teaching them how to stretch canvas. Javier Vilató was instrumental in helping to coordinate Picasso’s donation of his work to Barcelona’s Museu Picasso Picasso in 1970. Though Vilató had a successful career in France and Spain, he was sometimes wary of living under Picasso’s shadow. Nevertheless, critics do see Vilató as developing his own unique style.

This painting was donated to the library by Nathan Cummings when the library was built in 1971. It was hidden in a boiler room (!) for years before being moved to the redesigned fiction room in the 90s.

Nathan Cummings (1896-1985)

Nathan Cummings was a businessman and philanthropist who founded Consolidated Foods, which later became the Sara Lee Corporation. He also amassed one of the world’s largest, most important art collections, including major works of French Impressionists and contemporary painting and sculpture.

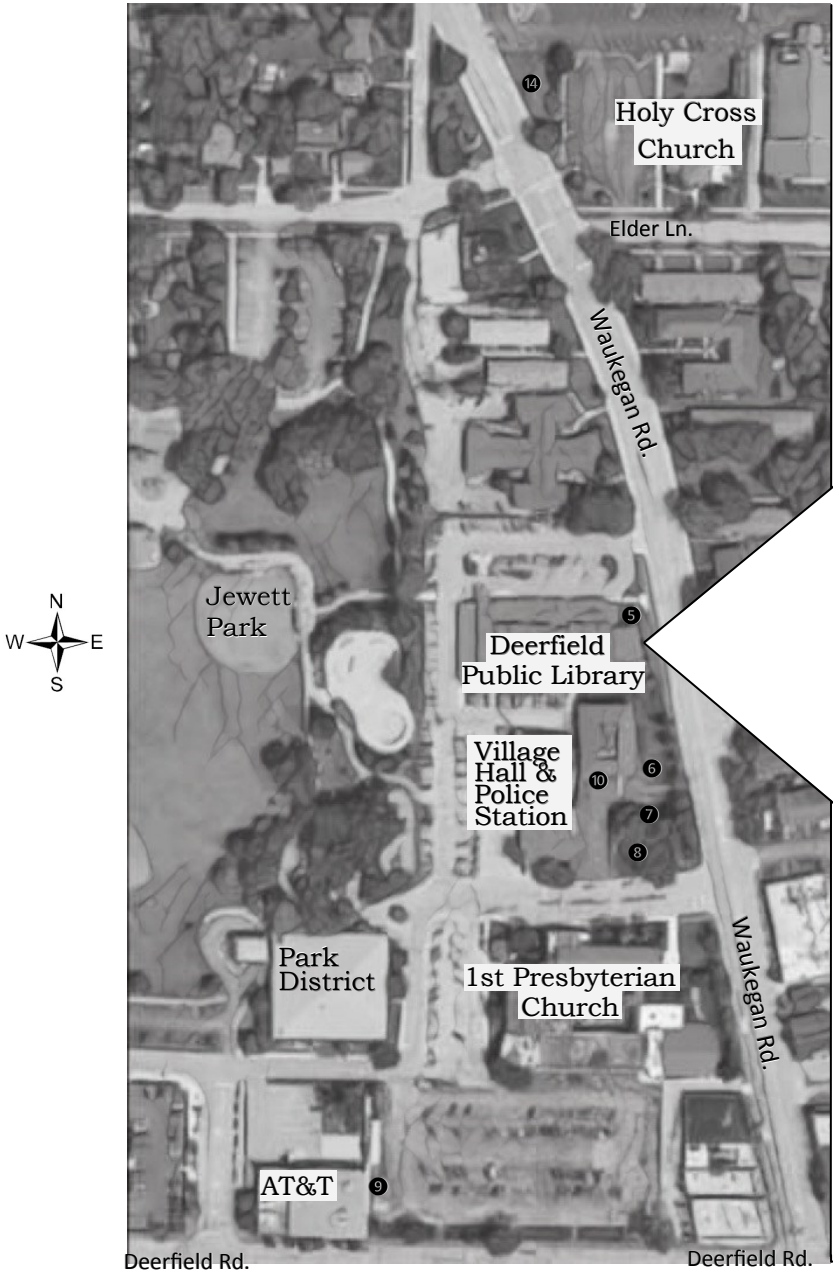
Despite never completing high school, Nathan Cummings had an instinct for business—and for collecting art, choosing works because he liked them, not for their value. He was famous for distributing paintings and sculptures to family and friends and to his businesses. He counted many artists, celebrities, and dignitaries among his close friends.

Cummings had homes in Winnetka, Chicago, and New York City. The Nathan Cummings Foundation was founded in 1949 and to this day supports social justice and Jewish causes.

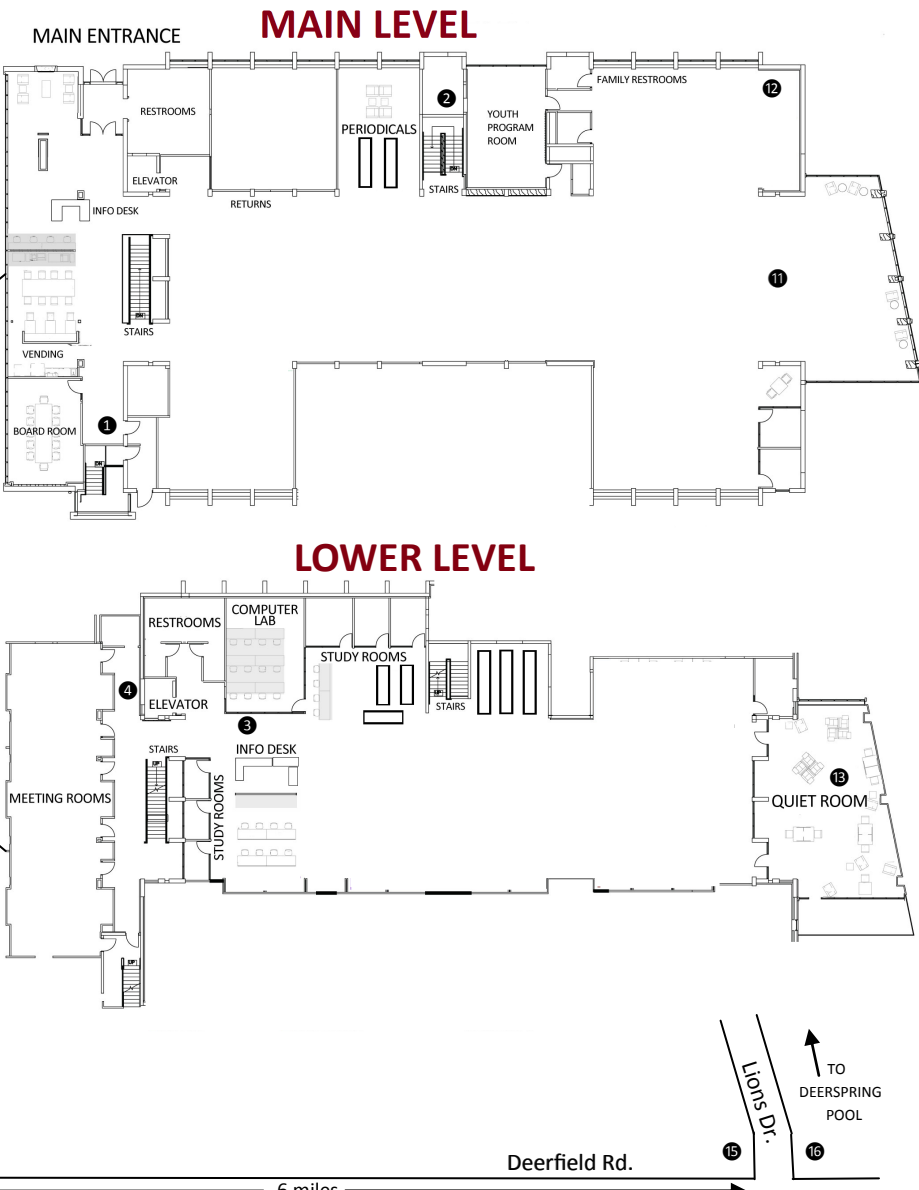


Cummings (right) and friend, Pablo Picasso

Map



Deerfield Public Library — Detail



6 Antoine Poncet (1928 —)

Altissimo, 1968
Carrara marble
Village of Deerfield
In front of Village Hall to the right of the building entrance

Named after Altissimo, the type of pure, white marble Michelangelo used for his sculptures, this sculpture has been particularly noted by critics for giving the illusion of being light and airy despite its weight. Like Agrippine, it contains an open space as a kind of visual “rest”. This sculpture also emphasizes another musical characteristic of many Poncet sculptures; the edges taper off gracefully, dissipating slowly like music. Poncet said of his work that he eschews the “drama of shadows,” preferring a more open, accessible form that doesn’t hide from the viewer. Poncet sculptures reward viewing from different vantage points—walk around the sculpture for new angles you can’t see from the street.

Altissimo was one of the Poncet sculptures originally erected at the Kitchens of Sara Lee in 1982 and has moved the most out of all the sculptures. It was placed at the corner of Waukegan and Deerfield roads in 1991, before moving to the Public Works building. It finally found a home in front of the Village Hall, creating a line of sculptures that stretches from the library and across the Village Hall lawn.



7 Mary Block (1952 —)

Generations, 2007
Concrete
Village of Deerfield
In front of Village Hall to the left of the building entrance

This massive concrete sculpture was originally commissioned in 2003 by the Village to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the founding of Deerfield. It was finally erected in 2007, after the Village Hall renovation. Weighing in at over 20,000 pounds, the sculpture was selected from an open call for proposals. The only restriction: no deer imagery. Block’s work was selected blind, without the knowledge that Block actually grew up in Deerfield. To Block, Deerfield means family. The statues depict a mother and father looking at each other with their children wrapped around them. According to Block, the particular shape of the statues and the way they lean towards each other was suggested by twisting tree trunks. The title was chosen after a naming contest.

Block also took into account the Poncet sculptures they’d be paired with, choosing softer concrete as a contrast to the hard smooth marble. She also remembers fondly the Poncet sculptures in front of Sara Lee and says that she counts them among her early influences, along with hours spent at the library. While her work is figurative, she says her work is primarily about space, a concern she shares with abstract artists.

With public work in many places around Chicagoland, Block is perhaps best known in the Northern suburbs as the sculptor of the young man standing on a swing at the northeast corner of Central Ave. and Green Bay Rd. in Highland Park. She also has works at the Chicago Bar Association and Columbia College and in many private collections. Block currently resides in Lake Zurich and works part-time as an occupational therapist.



8 Antoine Poncet (1928 —)

Uncorruptible, 1968
Carrara marble
Village of Deerfield
In front of Village Hall to the left of the building entrance

Poncet uses wordplay in many of his titles—in this case the word “incorruptible” is itself corrupted. This abstract form evokes perhaps an ear or a parent holding a child—or just a fascinating form. Try walking around the sculpture for interesting profile views.

This sculpture was also originally part of the Nathan Cummings Collection. Nathan Cummings’ “lifelong devotion to Antoine Poncet” has been cited in a book on his collections as, “an indication of the breadth of his taste and his willingness to go beyond the advice of art experts, many of whom consider Poncet to be a minor follower of Arp.”

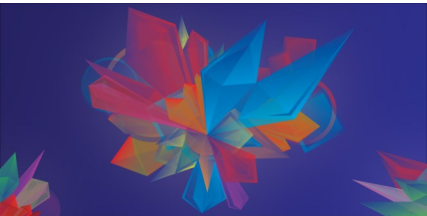
This critical opinion may be due in part to Poncet’s age—he is much younger than many of the Modernist sculptors with which his work was exhibited. But Cummings was truly devoted to Poncet’s work. Case in point: Cummings’ 80th birthday party was written up in the *New York Times* as a social event attended by artists, socialites, ambassadors, and politicians. As part of the festivities, Cummings’ friend Bob Hope popped out of a giant Sara Lee cake. The party favor for guests at the end of the evening? A miniature Poncet sculpture.



9 Ryan Wilde

Untitled, 2017
Digital print on vinyl
Village of Deerfield
On the East wall of the AT&T building along Deerfield Rd.

Wilde, a current Deerfield High School Student, depicts the interaction of light passing through crystals against a deep purple background in this 10’ by 20’ mural. The mural was created under the supervision of DHS art teacher Michael Moran as part of the Deerfield Fine Arts Commission’s new mural program. Moran used the project as an experiential learning project for his advanced graphic design students. They studied well-known mural and public art projects and how they interacted with the community. As with Mary Block’s “Generations” sculpture, the only requirement was that there be no deer imagery.



From a group of about 40 students, submissions were narrowed down to six students who presented their work to the Commission with an artist’s statement. The Commission voted to select the winning entry.

Wilde’s statement reads: “The idea of my work was to capture the visual that is created by light passing through crystals, or facets. The various colors, transparency, size, and tones that are displayed show how the crystals react with one another. I decided to use many different colors to show variation and contrast in the piece, as well as different intensities of light. The design embodies the form of crystals, but also has many abstract elements in it as well. I chose to include a variation of form and shape that the crystals appear in to bring about a more interesting overall movement to the piece.”

Mike Moran said that the work was made in Adobe Illustrator and that Wilde played with gradients and opacity to create a unique effect of light passing through crystals. Moran also praised the work for giving the illusion of extending beyond the borders with the bottom corners suggesting more crystal formations. The Fine Arts Commission had planned on doing a mural project five years ago, but delayed due to construction downtown. The plan is for murals to rotate yearly in this space. Wilde said the program “presents a great opportunity for young Deerfield artists.”

Extensions - There are many more works of public art in Deerfield—here’s just a few:

10 Deerfield’s Village Hall has several notable works and can be seen during their regular business hours:
8 am — 4:30 pm Mon-Fri.

Go up the stairs to your right and at the top of the stairs, turn to look at the back wall where the **Deerfield Bicentennial Quilt** is featured. Stitched by 50 Deerfield women in 1976, the quilt depicts Deerfield life, institutions, and history. Also nearby on the upper level by the stairs—note **Prince Duncan-Williams** meticulously stitched silk mosaic, *Jazzy*, inspired by jazz music and his family’s traditional Ghanaian silk art as well as modern European and American art. Check the labels for more information and note the temporary works in this space as well.

11 & 12 Back at the Deerfield Public Library, head to the **Youth Department** to check out *Fibonacci Sequence*, a photograph of sunflowers. It’s just past the Youth desk. It was made by **Linda Trytek**, a Deerfield resident inspired by one of our Youth Librarians—see the note below it for more info. In the corner next to Youth Graphic Novels is *Robots*, featuring nine prints of colorful robot characters from Chicago artist and illustrator **Jim Nelson**. His work is featured in many children’s books as well as games like *Dungeons and Dragons* and *Magic the Gathering*. Youth Librarian Amy Robillard (herself an artist) worked with Nelson to help select colors, placement, and framing.

13 In the **Library’s Quiet Room** (and several other locations) we have works on loan from local and area artists for the year as part of the Deerfield Fine Arts Commission’s Public Art Program. As part of the program there are also works in **Deerfield Village Hall**, the **Deerfield Park District**, **Deerfield Public Works**, **DBR Chamber of Commerce**, the **Patty Turner Senior Center** and some local businesses. Artist info, including contact info, is printed next to each work.

14 **T. Barny**’s Italian alabaster sculpture, *Catena* is in the collection of **Holy Cross Church**, located just north of Elder Ln. along Waukegan Rd.. It was donated by the Turner family, members of that congregation. While not strictly a “public” work of art, Fred Turner was directly inspired by the sculptures in front of the Library and Village Hall and thought there should be other sculptures along Waukegan Rd. The artist’s intention is to depict interconnected ideas.

15 & 16 **Neal H. Weinfield** is a lawyer, sculptor, and Highland Park resident whose work is “inspired by physical, metaphysical and emotional storms.” He donated two metal sculptures to the Village of Deerfield, located along Deerfield Rd. at the entrance to **Deerspring Pool**, on either side of Lyons Dr.. *Cross Currents* is in blue and abstractly depicts crashing waves. *Cascade* is painted red and was inspired by matter orbiting a new star—the beginning of planet formation. It was just donated recently, and a dedication ceremony will be held this summer.