

= The Quest (Portland , Oregon) =

The Quest , sometimes referred to as Saturday Night at the Y or Three Groins in a Fountain , is an outdoor marble sculpture and fountain designed by Count Alexander von Svoboda , located in Portland , Oregon in the United States . The sculpture , carved in Italy from a single 200 @-@ ton block of white Pentelic marble quarried in Greece , was commissioned by Georgia @-@ Pacific in 1967 and installed in front of the Standard Insurance Center in 1970 . It depicts five nude figures , including three females , one male and one child . According to the artist , the subjects represent man 's eternal search for brotherhood and enlightenment .

As of 1990 , The Quest was considered Portland 's largest single piece of white sculptured marble . The abstract , figurative sculpture was surveyed by the Smithsonian Institution 's " Save Outdoor Sculpture ! " program in 1994 and underwent minor repairs . It has received mixed reviews . One critic appreciated how its flowing lines contrasted with the " stark " pillars of the adjacent building , and called the marble " impressive " . Another writer for The Oregonian wrote of her and others ' dislike for the sculpture , saying it serves as a " free sex @-@ education lesson " for schoolchildren .

= = Description = =

The Quest was designed by Count Alexander von Svoboda , an Austria @-@ born , Toronto @-@ based sculptor . It was commissioned by Georgia @-@ Pacific in 1967 and installed in front of the Standard Insurance Center (formerly known as the Georgia @-@ Pacific Building) at Southwest 5th Avenue and Southwest Taylor Street in downtown Portland in 1970 . The stone sculpture was one of nearly 400 in Georgia @-@ Pacific 's private collection , unveiled in Portland with the opening of its world headquarters . Rose Festival princesses presented the work at a formal ceremony .

The sculpture was carved in Carrara , Italy , from a single 200 @-@ ton block of white Pentelic marble , quarried near Athens . It depicts five " larger than life " nude figures , including three females , one male and one child . The statue is set on a pedestal within a fountain , surrounded by water jets . The figures ' forms curve upward , and two of the females have their hands raised , while the third " sleeps in the rear " . The male figure appears to float and is reaching up with both hands , while the child figure is located behind the foremost female .

The Quest measures approximately 20 feet (6 @.@ 1 m) x 10 feet (3 @.@ 0 m) x 15 feet (4 @.@ 6 m) and is sited on a concrete or stone base that measures 22 feet (6 @.@ 7 m) x 10 feet (3 @.@ 0 m) x 5 feet (1 @.@ 5 m) and weighs 17 tons . According to the artist , the sculpture is " symbolic of man 's eternal search for brotherhood and enlightenment " . Michelangelo inspired the work , but von Svoboda took a more " humanistic " approach , and 35 stonemasons assisted with the sculpture 's creation , which took two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half years to complete. von Svoboda 's Perpetuity , a hollowed @-@ out cross @-@ section of a redwood log with a bronze " seedling " radiating outward , served as a " companion " sculpture . Originally installed along the Southwest Fourth Avenue side of the building , the work was relocated to the World Forestry Center .

The Smithsonian Institution has categorized The Quest as both abstract and figurative . In 2002 , journalist Sallie Tisdale of The Oregonian described the sculpture as a " large tangle of snow @-@ white bodies in a fountain " . She wrote that the work is privately owned but in public view , and that it has been around " long enough that no one is quite sure how it got there in the first place " . As of 1990 , The Quest was considered Portland 's largest single piece of white sculptured marble . It was surveyed and considered " well maintained " by the Smithsonian 's " Save Outdoor Sculpture ! " program in January 1994 . Maintenance on the sculpture has included caulking and repairs to the male figure 's nose .

= = Reception = =

The Quest has received mixed reviews . During the unveiling ceremony , there was reportedly a "

momentary stunned silence then crescendo of applause duly recorded by local news media " . In 1970 , one Building Stone News contributor wrote that the sculpture 's flowing white lines contrast with the stark vertical pillars of white quartz on the adjacent building 's exterior , and called the marble " impressive " . In contrast , Tisdale said of the work :

The Quest has been around since 1970 , long enough for its provenance and purpose to sink into mystery ... No one seems to like it much , and others actively dislike it . But there it stays , a free sex @-@ education lesson for busloads of suburban schoolchildren , the uncertain limbs forever reaching somewhere or other , for something .

The sculpture has earned the nicknames Saturday Night at the Y and Three Groins in a Fountain . One writer for The Seattle Times , in a piece about differences between Portland and Seattle , referenced the latter nickname as an example of Portland 's " kitschier " art . In 2003 , Eugene Weekly published a book review that suggested readers should read Fugitives and Refugees : A Walk in Portland , Oregon , a recently published travelogue by Chuck Palahniuk , if they were unfamiliar with " Three Groins in the Fountain " . Palahniuk includes the sculpture is his " Portland vocabulary lesson " , which includes a list of his definitions for local words . The sculpture has been included in at least one published walking tour of Portland .