

Finding Outdoor Art in Ross

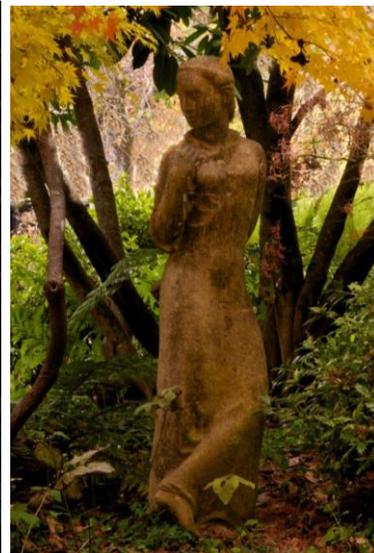
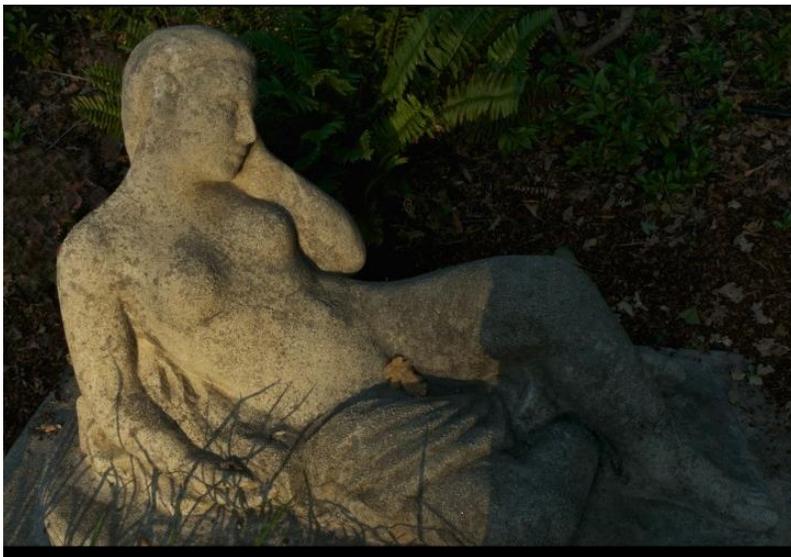
Fran Cappelletti, Jose Moya del Pino Library/Ross Historical Society

Look around Ross and you'll find some wonderful outdoor art. Each piece has a story behind it.

Start out next to Town Hall on Sir Francis Drake at Lagunitas. In 1972 a statue of a Bear was placed here. Sculpted by Beniamino Bufano, it is one of many of his works found throughout the Bay Area, as noted in a San Francisco Chronicle article.¹ In our book ROSS, CALIFORNIA —THE PEOPLE, THE PLACES, THE HISTORY, Jerome and Peggy Flax sold their property in 1971. Ross Councilman Maginis was walking by the Flax driveway late one afternoon when he saw his friend Jerry surrounded by several laborers preparing to load a Bear sculpture onto a truck. Maginis learned the plan was to donate the sculpture to the Marin Art and Garden Center, but he asked his friend if he might reconsider and donate the bear to the town. After consideration, the Ross town Council gratefully accepted the gift from the Flax family by a unanimous vote. The iconic symbol of the town remains in place today.



Cross the street and visit the Marin Art and Garden Center. You'll find several Japanese lanterns scattered throughout the grounds, remnants of the days when the Marin County Fair took place here. Follow the paths to the Memory Garden, just to the left of the Octagon House. In the back of the garden you'll find Adaline Kent's Reclining Lady and Standing Lady. Adaline was the daughter of William Kent and respected artist.



¹ Sam Whiting, "Taking a citywide census of Benny Bufano sculptures", San Francisco Chronicle, August 10, 2017, at <https://www.sfgate.com/art/article/Taking-a-citywide-census-of-Benny-Bufano-11745259.php#photo-13633086>

If the Octagon House is open, take a look inside and you'll find some paintings by Jose Moya del Pino, including a self-portrait, his wife Helen, Caroline Livermore and others. We also have an early draft of his panel for the elevator lobby at Coit Tower and draft panels for the mural he produced at the 1939 Exposition on Treasure Island.



Travel back toward the main entrance and visit The Studio, the long barn-like building to the left of the main parking lot. Along the way you'll see the giant basket, constructed just last year. Behind the Studio building, to the right of the back door is an obelisk that was once a mystery. Theories abounded, but no one could identify the artist. Some thought it was a Bufano. Only recently, the artist was identified as Cliff Hanssen, an architect who designed the 1962 addition to the Gallery².

Crossing the Lagunitas Bridge, continue up Lagunitas Road for about a half mile and see a once controversial sculpture at 160 Lagunitas Road. Sculpted from an old Cypress tree that was ordered removed, this was an innovative way to preserve part of it in an artistic way.³ As of February, 2018, the old tree still appears on Google Maps, providing a fascinating comparison to the present day.

In addition to these sights, more art can be found in frequent shows at The Studio and in the much loved Laurel House Antique Store. And let us know if there is more art to see in town. Contact the Jose Moya del Pino Library/Ross Historical Society at rhs.moya@gmail.com or call 415 258-9595.

² Fran Cappelletti, "[The Mysterious Obelisk in Ross](https://www.moya-rhs.org/uploads/1/1/8/7/118735376/the_mysterious_obelisk_in_ross.pdf)" at https://www.moya-rhs.org/uploads/1/1/8/7/118735376/the_mysterious_obelisk_in_ross.pdf .

³ Joe Wolfcale, "Tree of Life: Idaho wood sculptor creates organic vision from deceased cypress tree in Ross", Ross Valley Reporter, February 13, 2013, at http://www.marinscope.com/ross_valley_reporter/news/tree-of-life/article_68e9bc18-7638-11e2-b579-0019bb2963f4.html .