



PRESS RELEASE

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BIG ARTS CAUSEWAY PANTHER FINDS A HOME

Salvaged rebar from the Sanibel Causeway after Hurricane Ian has been magically transformed at BIG ARTS into a mystical metal sculpture that reflects the artist, Wendy Klemperer's, deep love of animals. It stands as an expression of the resilience of the Sanibel Island community. *Causeway Panther* is a stunning 8-foot-long sculpture of remarkable grace and movement that is a testimony to the transformational power of the arts. *Causeway Panther* was recently placed in the wooded area in front of BIG ARTS waiting for a permanent home.

Inspired by the message of resilience and transformation that the sculpture represented, David and Jackie Lurio made it possible for *Causeway Panther* to become part of BIG ARTS permanent collection.

"When we thought about it, my wife Jackie and I realized that so many more people for years to come would be able to see this beautiful expression of the Island's resilience if we made it possible for the Causeway Panther to have a permanent home at BIG ARTS. We didn't want it to cross the causeway and go off the island", said Dave.

BIG ARTS Gallery Director, Wilson McCray, personally retrieved the rebar from the causeway debris knowing that his artist colleague could reimagine the twisted metal to create a powerful sculpture emblematic of rebirth.

"The scope of this act of generosity is so far reaching. It creates a home for *Causeway Panther*. It will sustain the metaphor of resilience, it will keep the memory of our trials, our losses, and our survival alive. It will evoke the experience for all our community and visitors alike – that it's true, with vision and skill, we can take the remains of a terrible disaster, and create such beauty. We can recover. This is a message for generations to come," commented McCray.

See *Causeway Panther* at 900 Dunlop Road and visit BIG ARTS two galleries, sculpture garden and gift shop.

BIG ARTS on Sanibel Island was created by and for the community and will endure forever as a warm and welcoming cultural center that celebrates the artist in all of us. Visit BIGARTS.org for hours, details and programming information, and stay tuned for our exciting 2024-25 season to be announced this summer!

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