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## Mason woodcarver Tom LeComte leaves desk job to set out on artistic career



Tom LeComte of Laurel Hill Studio in Mason at the Nature Play Area at the Beaver Brook Association in Hollis, where this past summer, he created a rope walk, wobble bridge and climbing post, and carved a wooden beaver and owl. STAFF PHOTO BY ASHLEY SAARI— » Buy this Image

Tom LeComte of Laurel Hill Studio in Mason at the Nature Play Area at the Beaver Brook Association in Hollis, where this past summer, he created a rope walk, wobble bridge and climbing post, and carved a wooden beaver and owl. STAFF PHOTO BY ASHLEY SAARI— » Buy this Image



By [ASHLEY SAARI \(/byline?byline=By ASHLEY SAARI\)](#)

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Woodcarver and chainsaw artist Tom LeComte of Mason has found his niche – or rather, he has carved it out for himself, striking out on a career as a full-time artist over the past year after a decade behind a desk.

LeComte, who owns Laurel Hill Studio in Mason, has been involved in several large projects since officially quitting his office job to dedicate his time to his studio work. He carved out and designed the Little Free Library on the lawn of Mason’s Pickity Place from the tree made iconic by its inclusion in the storybook illustrations of Little Golden Book’s version of “Little Red Riding Hood” after the tree broke due to rot.

He has also been involved in creating natural playscapes and wooden animal and fantasy creature carvings for the Beaver Brook Association in Hollis and Molly Stark's Wildwoods in Stark Park in Manchester.

All of his creations, he said, start with a large piece of wood, a chalk outline and a chainsaw.

Chainsaw carving is a unique subsection of the woodworking art form, and is just what it sounds like – using a chainsaw, instead of a chisel, to create wood carvings.

LeComte said he does use other tools, including an angle grinder and sanding disc, once he has reached a point where he can't get any more detail with the chainsaw without risk, but said the majority of the process is using the saw to narrow in on the vision until the shape he wants emerges.

### **A new course**

LeComte's art is a big change from his previous work.

When COVID-19 hit in 2020, LeComte decided it was time for a change in course.

For a decade, he had been working behind a desk, working for a conference production company in the tech industry. He spent his days connecting buyers and suppliers, and doing marketing and website management.

It wasn't what he really wanted to be doing, he said.

"I had always wanted to go out on my own, and do my own thing," LeComte said. "I've always been all over the place with interests and focus, and it came to a time when I needed to break loose and spend my time doing things that really helped to cultivate motivation in me."

LeComte first became interested in art while attending College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., where he became interested in studio art and the creative thinking required. But it wasn't until 2021 he jumped into making art a full-time career.

LeComte, who was diagnosed as a child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, said working with a chainsaw is a good outlet for him, and a way to engage at a high physical level with his work.

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"With a chainsaw, more specifically [I didn't try it] until after school. I've used chainsaws before, to cut up and process firewood, and I thought, 'Hey, this makes sense. I already dwell in this area for a utility purpose, might as well see what I can do with this tool,'" LeComte said.

He found it fit his personality.

"Power-carving is its own little modern style. It's so much quicker, and there's a level of risk to it, and that interests me, as well – not the danger, but the physicality needed to carve, because it is inherently more dangerous, so you need to be confident in what you are doing, and anticipate anything that might happen to prevent injury. When you're inside a tree with a chainsaw running, you better know what's going on," LeComte said.

LeComte has found his groove in creating animals and nature, and said that's where he's most comfortable. He has "zero interest" in carving man-made things, he said. He comes by his interest in nature honestly, he said, as it has been a fascination since he was young.

"My mom used to take me to the Bedford library, and I'd walk out with a box of books, all on animals and nature. It just has a lot of material to source from, and it's all pleasing," LeComte said.

He has a special fascination with birds, and said he wants to explore carving more plants and flowers, but he's also not ready to completely limit himself to one box.

Since opening his studio, LeComte said he has experimented with other art forms, including learning how to do stained glass – a feature that was included in the Pickity Place library – and experimenting with laser-cutting. Sometimes, as with the piece commissioned by Pickity Place, the art forms come together.

LeComte said he doesn't know where his art might take him in a year or two, but he always wants to evoke surprise. It's one of the reasons his sculptures tend toward the larger-than-life scale.

“People get excited, because it’s all unexpected,” LeComte said. “I find the level of interest grows with the size. You scale it up, and you make it more interesting; it captures the viewer’s attention.”

LeComte said when he started out, he was more focused on trying to do something totally original. Now, he said he has accepted that every artist is influenced by any number of things. It’s more important to do work that brings joy than to be completely original, he said.

“The young version of me would be happy with what I’m doing now. They would be excited and psyched to know I was making these cool playground features and animals with chainsaws and power tools. It’s a nice feeling to have, because these features and the artwork affects people in a positive way, and it’s nice to spend time, here on this Earth, that brings about positive energy in people,” Le Comte said.

For more information on LeComte or information about commissioning work from him, visit [laurelhillstudio.com](http://www.laurelhillstudio.com) (<http://www.laurelhillstudio.com>), see [Laurel Hill Studio on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/laurelhillstudio) (<https://www.facebook.com/laurelhillstudio>) or [laurel\\_hill\\_studio](https://www.instagram.com/laurel_hill_studio/) ([https://www.instagram.com/laurel\\_hill\\_studio/](https://www.instagram.com/laurel_hill_studio/)) on Instagram.

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