

Santini sculpture donated to IRCM

BY MARTIN C. BARRY



Photographed on August 20, Laura Santini is seen in the ground floor lobby at the IRCM next to her sculpture, "Maiz," which is on permanent display there.

kiln for a week during which the plant material and the wax burned off. Following this, the ceramic mold was filled with molten bronze. Acid was applied to the bronze to produce a suitably organic colour on the final work, which took a year in all to complete.

"It's very tricky," Santini said of the process, while adding that the owners of the Italian foundry who were collaborating with her had their doubts. "They thought I was crazy and said 'You're losing your

time, our time, forget about it.' But I pushed and pushed. At first, we tried with small sections. As you can see in the end, it worked."

At least one of Santini's works may be familiar to Westmounters. Her sculpture, "Veritas," sits on the front lawn at Selwyn House school on Côte St. Antoine Rd. at the corner of Stanton St.

See November 16-17, 2010, p. 22.

An intricate bronze sculpture depicting one of the world's most fundamental crops – maize, a.k.a. corn – was donated by Westmount artist Laura Santini, the sculptor behind the piece, and her husband Ken MacKinnon to the Montreal Institute for Clinical Research (IRCM), where it was unveiled on June 14.

According to a press release issued by the organization, "Maiz" pays tribute to a long history of genetic research, beginning with the work of Gregor Mendel in the 19th century up to today.

In a statement describing the 6-foot-high by 9-foot-wide piece, Santini recalled that, historically, corn intermingled or was made to intermingle with other species.

"Its ability to incorporate different elements into its genetic make-up has made it stronger, more resilient and a staple of North American agriculture and culture for centuries," she wrote, while noting that corn offers a perfect example of how genetics work.

Why the IRCM? Santini said she chose it because another of her art works had previously been donated by an art collector to the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal, with which the IRCM is affiliated.

She explained the elaborate technique she developed to create "Maiz." After gathering corn plants, roots and all, from fields in Italy, where she also maintains a studio, they were disassembled.

"The corn – every leaf, the roots, the stalk – were cut into small pieces," she said. "I dipped everything in wax three or four times until I got the right thickness, and then I put each plant together the way I want. That's the fun artist's part."

A ceramic mold, made of cement, water and plaster, was then placed over the wax-covered plants and the whole was put in a

Skateboarders remove tree cage, intercepted

A call to Public Security September 3 reported that five skateboarders had "destroyed" city property and were practising on de Maisonneuve west of Greene. When officers responded at 8:19 pm, they found a protective cage had been lifted from a tree and was being used as a jump. The boarders stated the idea had come from an online posting. The five, aged in their early 20s, lived in Montreal, St. Agathe and Van-kleek Hill, Ontario.

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