

## Biography



[John Kearney](#) was a Chicago sculptor who created welded steel sculptures from steel automobile bumpers and in bronze. They are primarily animal and figurative forms and are both large and small scale. His works are in major museums and collections through USA, including the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Detroit Children's Museum, Ulrich Museum of Wichita State University, Wichita, the Field Museum, Chicago, Illinois State Capital Visitors Center, Springfield, Illinois, Mitchell Museum in Mt. Vernon, Illinois, the City of Chicago in Oz Park (the Tin Man, Cowardly Lion, Scare Crow and Dorothy and Toto), the Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee Wisconsin, the Fayetteville Youth center, Fayetteville, Arkansas, Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Cape Cod, among others.

John Kearney was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1924. He received his formal art training at famed Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan after serving four years in the Navy during World War II in the South Pacific. He received an Italian Government Grant in 1963-64, through the University per Stranieri, Perugia, Italy, a Fulbright Award to Italy in 1963-64, and was a visiting artist at the American Academy in Rome, in 1985, 1992, 1998, and 2003. He won the Wallace Truman Prize at the National Academy of Design in New York, in 1953 among other prizes. He has had numerous One Man exhibitions since 1951, in New York City at A.C.A. Gallery 1964 to 1979, and in 2003/04, the Berta Walker Gallery in Provincetown, Mass., 1992 to 2005, and in Rome and Venice, Italy, Chicago, Detroit, Wichita, Wellfleet, Mass., and others. He had major retrospective at the Mitchell Museum in Mt. Vernon, Illinois in 1994. He has exhibited in Group curated exhibitions in Rome, New York, Santo Domingo, Niamey, Nigeria, Indianapolis, St. Paul, Minnesota, Omaha, Nebraska, the Art Institute of Chicago, Taipei, Sarasota, Florida and others.

John Kearney was the co-founder of the Contemporary Art Workshop in Chicago in 1949. The Workshop was a highly regarded non-profit Chicago institution, exhibiting young emerging artists and providing affordable studio spaces for artists for 60 years. Hundreds of emerging artists had their first exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Workshop. He taught and lectured since 1950 and was the guiding spirit over all the years. The Workshop closed its unique operation in May 2009 with high praise from the art community and the public.

John Kearney lived in Rome for two years and traveled extensively in Europe. he has traveled to Egypt, the Middle East, China, Tibet, Southeast Asia and Central America.

He lived in Chicago and Provincetown, Massachusetts. He was married to Lynn Haigh Kearney for 63 years. He passed away on August 10, 2014, a few days before his 90th birthday.

[An oral history interview with John Kearney](#) was transcribed for the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art.

# Curriculum Vitae

## John Kearney

### ONE MAN EXHIBITIONS

2009 Contemporary Art Workshop, Chicago, IL. February 17 - April 20, 2009  
2003 [A.C.A. Gallery, New York](#), NY. December 13, 2003 - February 7, 2004  
1998 [Dallas Museum of Natural History](#), Dallas, TX. Through 1999  
1997 [Berta Walker Gallery](#), Provincetown, MA. Also 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995  
Contemporary Art Workshop, Chicago, IL  
1994 [Mitchell Museum](#), Retrospective, Mt. Vernon, IL. February - April, 1994  
Contemporary Art Workshop, April  
1992 Cherry Stone Gallery, Wellfleet, MA. August 1992  
1991 Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, IL. November - January, 1992 and 1997 through April, 1998  
1987 Group Gallery, Provincetown, MA, August 23 - September 5, 1987  
1985 Goldman Kraft Gallery, Chicago, IL. May  
1983 Chicago Public Library, three branches  
1981 Contemporary Art Workshop, Chicago, IL. April  
1980 Prairie State College, Chicago Heights, IL  
1979 [A.C.A. Gallery, New York](#), New York, NY. Also 1964, 1969, 1972, 1974, 1976  
Dirksen Federal Building, General Service Administration, Chicago, IL  
1978 Park Forest Art Center, Park Forest, IL. May  
1977 A.R.S.G. Art Institute of Chicago, September  
1976 Edwin Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita State Univ. Wichita, December - January, 1977  
Illinois Institute of Technology, Hermann Hall, Chicago, IL  
1972 Tirca Karlis Gallery, Provincetown, MA  
1969 [Galleria Schneider](#), Rome, Italy  
1966 Ft. Wayne Art Museum, Retrospective, Ft. Wayne, IN  
Ontario East Gallery, Chicago, IL  
Martha's Vinyard Art Association, Martha's Vinyard, MA  
1965 Fairweather-Hardin Gallery, Chicago, IL. 9 kinetic sculptures  
East End Gallery, Provincetown, MA. Also 1960, 61, 62, 63, and 66  
1964 Il Canale Gallery, Venice, Italy, May  
A.C.A. Gallery, Rome, Italy, and 1963  
1962 Truro Art Center, Truro, MA  
1961 Garelick Gallery, Detroit, MI  
1960 Chicago Public Library, Chicago Cultural Center  
1959 Singer Gallery, Chicago, IL  
1956 University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN  
1953 Chicago Public Library, Chicago Cultural Center  
1952 Stuart Brent Gallery, Chicago, IL  
Design Center, Chicago, IL

### AWARDS

1998 [Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence](#), for creating sculpture awards for 25 years for recipients of their annual award, ie. Sarah Brady, etc.  
[American Academy in Rome](#), Visiting Artist again in 2003  
1995 [Oakton Community College](#) competition, for sculpture submission  
1993 [Illinois State Capital](#) sculpture competition award for 10" sculpture commission, installed in 1994  
1992 [American Academy in Rome](#), Visiting Artist  
1990 Artist in Residence, [Swedish American Museum](#), Chicago. Award May 30  
1985 [American Academy in Rome](#), Visiting Artist  
1977 [North Shore Art League](#), Chicago, Special Sculpture Award  
1965 New Horizons Exhibition, Chicago, Grand Prize for sculpture  
1963 Italian Government Grant to Rome, for one year 1963-64  
[Fullbright Award](#) to Rome, Italy for one year 1963-64  
Grant from Co-Indartes Foundation, to Santo Domingo, July, to work with developing artists  
1962 "Man of the Year" in the Arts, [Adult Education Council of Chicago](#) for his efforts in founding the Contemporary

Art Workshop, Chicago  
1960 Old Orchard Art Festival, Chicago, 1st prize for painting  
Ringling Museum, Sarasota, FL, 1st prize sculpture  
1953 S.J. Wallace Truman Prize, \$500, [National Academy of Design](#), New York  
1952 Chicago [Magnificent Mile Art Festival](#), \$500 First Prize, painting, Chicago Water Tower

## EDUCATION

[Cranbrook Academy of Art](#), Bloomfield Hills, MI, 1945 - 48  
[Universita per Stranieri](#), Perugia, Italy, 1963  
[Belles Artes](#), Rome, Italy, 1963 - 64

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS (Partial list)

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL. "Tree of Life" & "Starving Bitch"  
Aon Building, outdoor sculpture, Chicago, IL. [Three large Deer](#) Kansas Coliseum, Wichita, Kansas. [Two large Long Horn Bulls](#), bumpers  
Oz Park, Chicago, IL. "[The Tin Man](#)", steel, 1995  
Oz Park, Chicago, IL. "[Cowardly Lion](#)", bronze, 2001  
Oz Park, Chicago, IL. "[Scarecrow](#)", bronze, 2005  
Oz Park, Chicago, IL. "[Dorothy & Toto](#)", bronze, 2007  
City of Chicago, Chicago Park District, Sedgewick Park horses, bumper, 1975  
New School for Social Research, New York, NY. Hippopotamus, bumper  
Detroit Children's Museum, Detroit, MI, large bumper horse "[Silver Bolt](#)"  
Goudy Public School, Chicago, 2003, commissioned [bronze Puma](#) Goudy public School, Chicago, 2008, commissioned [bronze Cougars](#) Milwaukee Art Museum, WI, "Golden Bull", solid gold, 1970  
Ulrich Museum, Wichita State University, [3 large bumper sculptures](#), 1974, 75  
Racine Art Museum, "Cowardly Lion", 2002  
Marconi Automotive Museum, Tustin, CA. [Lifesize Clydesdale](#), 1994 (links to a video in which the sculpture appears)  
Philbrook Museum, Tulsa, OK. "[Pigmy Hippopotamus](#)", 1974, acquired 2004  
Illinois State Visitors Center, Springfield, IL. Commissioned deer  
Keith School, Rockford, IL. "Mother and Child", lifesize model of bronze, 1962  
Mitchell Museum, Mt. Vernon, IL. Commissioned [Horse and Gorilla](#), steel, 1994  
Fourth Financial Center, Wichita, Kansas, "Horsepower" and "Pig"  
Chrysler Art Museum, Norfolk, Virginia, "Bull", bronze  
Minnesota Museum, St. Paul, MN, "Mother and Child", bronze, 1962  
Ft. Wayne Art Museum, Ft. Wayne, IN, "Mother and Child", bronze  
Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown, MA. "[Harry Kemp](#)"  
Northwestern University, Theological Seminary, Evanston, IL. "Silver Chalice"  
Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, Kansas, [bumper cat](#), 1975  
Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, IL. Deer & Penguin, bronze  
La Cite' Hotel, Montreal, Canada. Horse  
Francis W. Parker School, Chicago, IL. Horse, bumpers, 3 bronze goats, and "Reclining Student", bumpers  
Kresge Building, K-Mart Corporation Int'l Headquarters, Troy, MI. large bronze horse  
Mundelein College, Loyola University, Chicago, IL. "Horsepower", bumper  
King Ranch, Raymondsville, TX. large bumper Horse  
Interfirst Plaza, Dallas, TX. Frogs  
Springfield Art Association, Springfield, IL. [Bison](#), bumpers, 1975  
Palm Springs Museum, Palm Springs, CA  
Hull House Chicago, Uptown campus. Gorilla, bumpers  
Daughters of Mirium Center, Clifton, NJ. "Lion of Judah", bumpers  
St. Lawrence University, Canton, NY  
Lawrence University, Appleton, WI. "Whooping Crane", 1986  
McCormick Theological Seminary, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL. Ram  
Graham Elementary School, Chicago, IL. Lion  
Arlington Heights Library, Arlington Heights, IL, "[The Ram](#)", 1983  
Canton Art Institute, Canton, OH, [bumper walrus](#), 1974  
Institute of Logopedics, Wichita, Kansas. Goat, 1977  
Rolling Meadows High School, Rolling Meadows, IL  
Bergen Museum of Arts & Science, Paramus, NJ. 1995  
Cranbrook Academy of Art Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI, 1993

Lee Barthel Construction Co., Northville, MI, "Horsepower", bumpers  
Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, PA, 1972 piece, acquired 1992  
Bristol-Myers-Squibb Collection, Princetown, NJ. Elephant  
Oakton Community College, Des Plaines, IL. Commission award, [bronze Deer](#), 1995  
Staley General Transportation, Munster, IN. 4 large works, [Horse and 3 Deer](#) Rockford Art Museum, Rockford, IL.  
"Giraffe" and "Wart Hog", 2007  
Fayetteville Youth Center, Boys Club, Fayetteville. ["Ark", "Giraffe", and "Gorilla"](#), 2003

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

["Figuratively Speaking"](#), Stamford, Conn., sculpture exhibit, June - August, 2006  
"Chicago Car Culture, Chicago Cultural Center, June - August, 2006  
Provincetown Art Association and Museum, July 2005  
Lincoln Park Art Initiative, sculpture competition, Chicago, Kodiak Bear, 2002  
"Trouble Shooting - Gun Violence", Hodges Taylor Gallery, Charlotte, NC, 2002  
"Sculpture of the 1949 Era", Thomas McCormick Gallery, summer 1999  
Sculpture Exhibit, Provincetown Heritage Museum, August 1998  
Elgin Fine Arts Festival, Sculpture on the Plaza, Elgin, IL, 1997  
Cape Museum of Fine Art, Dennis, MA, 1995, 96 and 97  
S.O.F.A. Chicago, 1995, 96, and 98  
Provincetown Portraits - First 80 Years, Portrait of [Richard Florsheim](#), 1995  
"New Acquisitions - Roy Slade Tenure", Cranbrook Collection, Nov 1994 January 1995  
Rockford Art Museum, Rockford, IL, [Francis & June Spiezer Collection](#), 1994, 95, and Nov 7, 2003 - Jan 18, 2004  
"American Art Fair", May Gallery, Taipei, Taiwan, summer 1993  
"Fine Art of Patronage", Cranbrook Academy, Jan - March, 1993  
"Matter Over Mind", Fermi Lab, Chicago, IL, May - October, 1991  
Randall Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri, 1988 and 1989  
Cherry Stone Gallery, Wellfleet, MA, 1987 through 1992  
Fulbright Alumni Exhibit, Northern Illinois Univ., Dekalb, IL, Oct - Nov, 1986  
"Basically Boxes", Klein Gallery, Chicago, IL, Nov 1985 - January, 1986  
"Alternative Spaces, A History in Chicago", Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL, 1984  
"Assemblage & Construction", Provincetown Art Museum, July 1984  
Art Expo, Chicago, IL, 1983 through 1992  
"Chicago Area Artists for Peace", Peace Museum, April 1983  
"Masks", Spertus Museum, Chicago, IL, 1983  
Tactile Gallery, Art Institute of Chicago, 1978 - 1980  
"Humor and Satire in Art", New School for Social Research, New York, 1975  
31st Illinois Invitational, Illinois State Museum, Springfield, IL, 1975  
"Animals in Art Exhibition", Arkansas Art Center, 1972  
Art in Embassies Program, Niamey, Nigeria, West Africa, 1967 - 1969  
"Twelve Chicago Sculptors", Roosevelt University, Chicago, IL, 1967  
Ravinia Festival, Highland Park, IL, 1967  
Illinois State Museum, 20th North Mississippi Valley Exhibition, July - Oct, 1967  
"Form in Sculpture", Devorah Sherman Gallery, Chicago, IL, 1966  
"Chicago Fulbright Artists", Institute of International Education, Chicago, 1966  
"Precedents and Antecedents", Chrysler Art Museum, Provincetown, MA, 1965  
Ft. Wayne Art Museum, Ft. Wayne, IN, 1965  
"Painting and Sculpture Today", John Herron Museum, Indianapolis, IN, 1964-65  
"American Fulbright Artists", Palazzo Venezia, Rome, 1964  
Vendita di Opera D'Arte, Pro Casa Italiana, Anna Frank, 1964  
"Sculpture Today", Ontario East Gallery, Chicago, IL, 1964  
New Horizons Exhibitions, Chicago, IL, 1964, 1966  
Anna Frank Exhibition, ACA Gallery, Rome, 1963  
Kalamazoo Institute of Art, Michigan Designer Craftsmen Exhibition, 1962  
St. Paul Gallery & School of Art, Exhibition, Contemporary Art Workshop, 1962  
Chrysler Art Museum, Provincetown, MA, 1962, 63 and 65  
Society of Contemporary Art Exhibitions, Art Institute of Chicago, 1962, 65 and 66  
Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, Memphis, TN, 1961  
Ringling Museum, Sarasota, FL, 1960  
Group Gallery, Provincetown, MA, 1960, 1986 - 1990  
"God and Man in Art", American Federation of Art Travelling Exhibition, 1958 - 1959

Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, 1958  
Addison Gallery of American Art, 1958  
Smithsonian Institute Traveling Exhibitions, Rochester, NY to 14 cities, 1958  
Sculpture Exhibition, Provincetown Art Assoc. & Museum, 1957 through 1987  
Midwest Designer Craftsmen Exhibit, Art Institute of Chicago, April 1957  
Issac Delgado Museum of Art, New Orleans, 54th Annual Exhibition, 1955  
Provincetown Art Association and Museum, for 40 years  
Corcoran Biennial, 23rd Exhibition, 1953  
Detroit Art Institute  
Minnesota Museum, St. Paul, MN, Contemporary Art Workshop Exhibition  
University of Chicago, Renaissance Society, Chicago, IL, 1953  
National Academy of Design, New York City, 1953  
Chicago and Vicinity Show, Art Institute of Chicago, 1951, 52, 54, 60 and 62

#### **ADVISORY BOARDS, etc.**

Art Rental and Sales Gallery, Art Institute of Chicago, Board member, 1976 - 80  
Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, MA, former Advisory Board member  
Provincetown Art Association & Museum, V.P. and Trustee, 1960s  
Adult Education Council of Chicago, 1965  
[Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence](#), Trustee 1978 - 1995  
Listed in Who's Who in America and Who's Who in American Art

#### **PUBLICATIONS, VIDEOS, ND FEATURE ARTICLES**

March 12-13, 2009, Smithsonian Institute, "[Oral History Interview with John Kearney](#)" for the Archives of American Art discussing the artist's life and work.  
Jan. 26, 2009, Colombia Chronicle, "[All Good Things Come To an End](#)", p. 15, article on John Kearney's direction of the Contemporary Art Workshop  
Jan. 8, 2009, Chicago Tribune, "Contemporary Art Workshop Will Close Its Doors", review of 60 year history with John and Lynn Kearney as a Chicago institution, by Alan Artner  
Dec. 15 2008 New City Art "[Eye Exam: Contemporary Art Workshop Bids Farewell](#)", by Jason Fournberg  
2005 Annual Issue, Provincetown Arts, "John Kearney", p. 78-79, by Chris Busa  
July 28 2005, Time Out Magazine, "[40 Great Outdoor Art Works](#)", pg. 12 John Kearney's Oz Park  
June 26, 2005, ABC, Chanel & Holly Grishim interview on Scare Crow bronze  
Apr. 28, 2005, Time Out Magazine, "[The Man Behind the Curtain: John Kearney](#)", p. 4  
Sept. 2004, Marmac Guide to Dallas, Dallas Museum of Natural History, p. 432  
Jan. 8, 2004, WLS-TV, "Someone You Should Know", interview by Harry Porterfield of John Kearney and his sculpture.  
Oct. 23, 2003, Chicago Skyline, "[Cougar Prowl at Goudy School](#)", p.1  
July 4, 2003, New York Times, "[What If A Bumper Can't Take the Bump](#)", p. D- 6, by George Blumberg  
Jan. 2002, Car and Driver Magazine, "Ten best Things Made From Car Parts", p. 60  
2001, "On Equal Ground", Artists photographs book by Norma Holt  
2000, Tulsa Photography Collective, "Tulsa Images", calendar, photographer Betty Hall Meredith, of Kearney's Hippopotamus from Philbrook Art Museum, Tulsa  
Oct. 5, 1997, Nickelodeon Cable Network, Nick News with Linda Ellerbee  
Feb. 23, 1995, "Artist to Artist", half hour TV show devoted to sculptures of John Kearney, P. Cohen and E. Silverman producers  
1993, "Celebrate Reading, Project Book", ¼ page on John Kearney, by Scott Foresman  
June 2, 1992, WFMT, Studs Terkel interview on bronze boxes  
May 10, 1992, Chicago Tribune Magazine, "First Person - Sculptor John Kearney", p. 33, Marion E. Kabaker interviewer  
Apr. 5, 1992, Chicago Tribune Sunday, Tempo Section, "Dinosaurs of the Highways, A Bumper Crop of Fascinating Sculpture", p. 1 and 7  
Jan. 9, 1992, CNN National News repeat of "Chicago's Very Own"  
Jan. 8, 1992, WGN-TV, Channel 9, "Chicago's Very Own", review of Kearney's sculpture, Mike Curtis interviewer  
1991 Annual Issue, Provincetown Arts, "Memento Mori", p. 134-135  
Sept. 23, 1991, CAMBIO-16, Madrid, Spain, magazine article, "Una Isla Para el Talento y La Libertad", Barbara Probst Solomon reviewer  
Feb. 1990, BURDA publication Ambiente Magazine, Die Kunst Zu Leben, "Die Chrom Menagerie von John Kearney, Bildaurer"

1989, Project Beauty, "Beautifying Wichita Through Sculpture", p. 36  
 Oct. 17, 1989, WFIR-Radio, Roanoke, West Virginia, half hour program on John Kearney sculpture, John Schreiner interviewer  
 Oct. 16, 1989, People Magazine, "John Kearney - Bumper to Bumper", p. 94, by Peter Alson  
 June 1989, Art Works, "John Kearney with T-Rex", p. 24  
 1983, "Here's Chicago", Multi Media Film, Chicago Water Tower  
 1983, University of Chicago Press, "A Guide to Chicago's Public Sculpture", p. 166-167, by Ira J. Bach and Mary L. Gray  
 Dec. 11, 1983, CBS-TV, "Two on Two", Bob Wallace Program featuring the art of John Kearney, half hour program  
 Mar. 1983, American Way Magazine, "A Bumper Crop of Art", p. 124-128  
 1982, "I Love Chicago Guide", by Marilyn Appleberg, 2 photos  
 1981, ABC-TV, "Off the Record", documentary on John and Lynn Kearney, half hour program, by Rob Weller  
 1981, University of Chicago Press, "Chicago Sculpture", p. 24, 89, 158, 264-265, by James Riedy  
 Mar. 22, 1981, Chicago Sun-Times, Parade Magazine, "The Man Who Turns Bumpers into Beasts", p. 14-20, by Barbara Varro  
 Aug. 1978, Horizon Magazine, profile, p. 66-67  
 Oct. 1976, CBS-TV, "Two on Two", documentary on John Kearney's sculpture  
 Oct. 1976, Body Engineering Journal, "Bumper Art", p. 75-78  
 Oct. 10, 1976, Chicago Tribune, "The Chrome Menagerie", by Ron Nielsen  
 1973, Philip O'Hara Inc, "Chicago on Foot" 2nd ed., p. 267 and 275, by Ira J. Bach  
 1973, Rand McNally, "Instant Chicago", p. 129, by Jory Graham  
 1972, Crown Publ. "Sculpture Casting", p. 130, by Dennis Kowal and D. Meilach  
 1969, Reilly & Lee Publ., "Creative Carving", p. 14-16, 57, 82, 112 and 116, by D. Meilach  
 1969, Little Brown Publ., "Of A Fire On The Moon", A Burial by the Sea, about John Kearney's burial of a car and sculpture, p. 107-110, by Norman Mailer  
 1968, Reilly & Lee Publ., "Creating Art From Anything", p. 85, by D. Meilach  
 Feb. 4, 1968, Chicago Tribune Magazine, "The Big Noisy Art of John Kearney", p. 64-64  
 1966, Crown Publ., "Direct Metal Sculpture", p. 127, by Don Seiden & D. Meilach  
 1965, Illinois Art Education Assoc., "Craftsmen in Illinois", p. 17 and 45  
 1964, NBC-TV, Johnny Carson Show, guest artist, interview by Johnny Carson  
 1963, WTTW-TV Channel 11, "Festival on Art of John Kearney", one hour program, Victor Summa director  
 "A Walking Guide to Chicago Architecture", 4th edition, by Ira J. Bach, ,also 1, 2, & 3 ed.  
 "Chicago Architecture", by Arthur Siegel  
 "Art in Detroit Public Places", revised edition, p. 106, C-9 with photo of Detroit Horsepower IV (Silverbolt) and text, text by Dannis Nawrocki

*John Kearney has traveled extensively in Europe, India, Asia, Central and South America, Egypt, Morocco, and Southeast Asia. He has lived in Rome for two years. In the summer he lives in Provincetown, Massachusetts. He taught and lectured since 1950. He was the co-founder of Contemporary Art Workshop in Chicago in 1949 which continued until its closing in April 2009.*