

## Art in Plain Sight: Two Sculptures in Downtown Moline

Written by Bruce Walters

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Downtown Moline's industrial past is memorialized by two metal sculptures. One is abstract, the other representational. Both are reminders that the downtown riverfront was once crowded with factories and was at the heart of the "Farm Implement Capital of the World."

*Spirit of Place*, an imposing 19-foot-tall sculpture, stands between the i wireless Center and the Radisson hotel on a lawn that stretches from River Drive to the riverfront. The iron sculpture consists of a massive wedge seemingly piercing a geometric form atop a conical base. Unless one reads the nearby plaque that states that John Deere's first plow factory was built on the site

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in 1848, the artwork seem out-of-place in its pleasant surrounding.

The six-ton sculpture was cast at the John Deere Foundry in East Moline in 1981. The artist, Beverly Pepper, worked closely with the foundry to develop techniques and methods to produce this work – the first sculpture cast on a monumental scale in ductile iron. The impact of the artwork is shaped, in part, by the industrial process and materials used to create it.



Pepper described some of her massive works as “metamorphosed tools.” The wedge form that slices downward feels like an ax or a plow breaking through the soil. Pepper uses the wedge – one of the six simple machines – in combination with basic geometric forms to create a sense of something primal. Its scale and materials add a sense of power.

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