

Beat: Lifestyle

Eco Spirits “Haunting” Wynwood? Wooden Trolls Pop Up Around Miami

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USPA NEWS - Long ago, people believed that spirits inhabited the forests and wildlands around us, protecting them and their inhabitants from all manner of threats. Now, in the modern era, we know what the threats are and they come from man-made climate change, environmental degradation, and waste. It's hard to deny humanity's impact on the world around us, but it seems somewhat more difficult to grasp just how big the problem is - and how gigantic our guardians need to be.

Constructed out of wood and in larger-than-life proportions, one troll in Wynwood not only fits the description of a forest protector but also has some touches of modernity evident here and there with colorful nails resting on an overturned car on a Miami street corner. Created by Thomas Dambo from recycled materials, this troll, named Joenm “is fascinated by cars, and seems to have a curious yet peaceful nature.”

The choice of trolls both conforms to and breaks away from the Nordic tradition that Dambo is referencing. In Nordic legend, trolls are far from benevolent, kind creatures. Often the stuff of nightmares and warrior legend, trolls have a dark, violent nature that posits their position as the “guardian” of a wood alongside a spirit uncompromising in its duties.

Two other trolls join Joen in Miami and they are located in Pinecrest Gardens. Beyond the borders of the Sunshine State, Dambo's trolls are found throughout Europe, the United States, and even in Asia. In each case, the approach to the piece is the same: Utilize reclaimed wood or recycled materials, construct a larger-than-life guardian edifice, and position the troll in a way that is inviting, friendly, and eye-catching all at the same time.

As for the artist himself, Thomas Dambo was born in Odense, Denmark in 1979 and has created art all over the world. Some of his more famous works include the Birdhouse Totem in his home of Odense, the Remake Utopia in Copenhagen, and Steve the Shark in the Gold Coast, Australia. He maintains a website portfolio that also lists the various locations of his trolls around the world (among other works). He also maintains a YouTube channel where he details his projects and journeys across the globe.

The trolls are part of a larger work by Dambo called “Den Kæmpestore Troldefolkefest” or The Great Troll-Folk-Fest. Detailed in a YouTube video in which he explains his work, Dambo aligns his project with the greater movements facing the world in terms of ecological awareness.

For one, Dambo's project is not so much about changing habits as it is about bringing awareness to those practices in the first place. Often messages about green living and the need to preserve the environment are presented as binary choices with failure to comply hinting at some kind of moral lapse or lack of character; Dambo's approach is to utilize what is beautiful, mysterious, and unique about nature in light of the modern world and how we interact with it.

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