

"Half-Blood Prince" keeps Harry's spell unbroken

Rowling conjures the strongest tale yet in the lead-up to the final confrontation in the Potter series

By Claire Martin
Denver Post Staff Writer

Sinking into the first lush paragraph of "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince" has the deeply rewarding familiarity of settling into a luxurious bed after a very long day, and the sixth book in J.K. Rowling's extraordinary series only gets better as it goes on.

The penultimate story of Harry Potter, boy wizard, begins with the uncomfortably frequent collisions of the Muggle and magic worlds.

The British prime minister is discomfited to learn from the minister of magic that collapsing bridges, misdirected hurricanes and other destructive phenomena are the result of evil, not chaos.

Headmaster Albus Dumbledore arrives

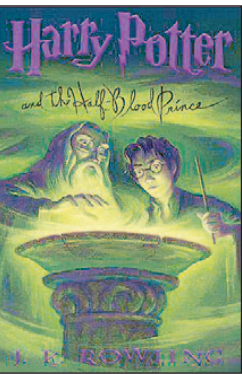
at No. 4 Privet Drive to personally confront Harry's malicious Muggle relatives and to escort Harry, now 16, on the first of many missions that elicit Harry's increasing wizardry skills.

He is still boyish enough to evade approaching female admirers and fret over his friends' reaction to the girl he finds infatuated. His impetuosity continues to earn detentions from Professor Snape,

who finally seizes the Defender Against The Dark Arts job. And Harry still appalls Hermione's sense of orthodoxy by yielding occasionally to temptation.

The riskiest lure is the secondhand Potions textbook heavily annotated by a preternaturally skilled previous owner who calls himself the Half-Blood Prince. The

> See **POTTER** on 10F



CINDY RODRÍGUEZ
Denver Post Staff Columnist

A welcome safehouse for Latinas

The name may raise eyebrows: the Latina Safehouse Initiative.

It's the brainchild of a group of volunteers who say battered Latinas need a shelter of their own. They are raising money and hope to open the non-profit shelter sometime next year.

But the name and its implied exclusivity raise the question: Why segregate? Others may wonder: How would people react to a Caucasian Safehouse Initiative?

Those seem like valid questions until you talk to Latinas who have been slammed into walls and pummeled by their husbands.

These women are often filled with so much fear they don't know whom to trust. Add to that the complications of not being fluent in English and coming from a culture that tells women to forgive their husbands, and it becomes clear why these women need a different approach.

Besides, area shelters are at capacity, and sometimes women are turned away, according to Ana Soler, director of the Victim Services Network, 51 agencies in the state that offer help to people who have been abused.

Soler is one of 10 volunteers working to establish the safe house.

Another is Millie Durán, whose recent master's dissertation was a feasibility study on the need for a shelter for battered Latinas.

Durán found there have been times when Latina immigrants were turned away because there were no Spanish speakers who could understand them.

Those two women, along with six other Latinas and two Latinos, form the advisory committee that's been researching for several months ways to create the Latina Safehouse. They are working on grant proposals, but so far they only have about \$3,000.

They hope to get a boost from a July 29 fundraiser at the Denver Botanic Gardens featuring guest speaker Josefina López, co-author of the Sundance-award winning movie "Real Women Have Curves."

Tickets for the event, called Latinas Honoring Latinas, are \$50 and include a day pass to the gardens and a buffet meal. Between ticket sales and a live auction, the Initiative advisory committee hopes to raise \$25,000.

Another honoree is Renissa Rowena, a 22-year-old immigrant from Guyana, an English-speaking country in South America, who said she grew up being physically and sexually abused by her father.

She is now interning at the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (headquartered in Denver) and plans to dedicate her life to the cause.

It doesn't matter that Rowena is of East Indian descent, as is half the population of Guyana. She exemplifies a spirit the organization celebrates.

Rowena said being abused "destroyed a part of me that I can't get back." She said little things — footsteps behind her, a sudden noise — make her heart race. "There is that constant fear of being abused again," she said. But having gotten away from her abusive father, she knows she can teach other victims from her experience. "I want people to know they can survive it."

> See **RODRIGUEZ** on 10F

THE BLUE BEAR IS JUST ONE OF LAWRENCE ARGENT'S BIG DEALS



RJ Sangosti | The Denver Post

"I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN"

Artist Lawrence Argent stands under his 40-foot-tall blue bear sculpture that will be dedicated at 5:30 p.m.

The artist beneath it all

"WHISPERS"
This public art commission at the south entrance to the Ritchie Center for Sports & Wellness at the University of Denver is composed of limestone, bronze and interactive sound elements.

Electronic sensors are activated when someone sits on the benches, triggering recordings of poetry readings and lectures.



By Kyle MacMillan
Denver Post Fine Arts Critic

For most of his dozen years in Denver, Lawrence Argent lived a relatively low-key artist's life.

He taught at the University of Denver. He took part in an exhibition here and there. He completed several public artworks, including a popular one in Englewood.

The 48-year-old, British-born artist gained a certain following in the local art community, but hardly anyone outside of that little world had heard of him.

But, then, in 2002, news began to spread about his concept for a 40-foot-tall sculpture of a blue bear that would whimsically peer into windows along the 14th Street side of the Colorado Convention Center.

The \$424,400 piece was part of more than \$2.4 million in art commissioned for the project under the city's 1 percent-for-art ordinance. The resulting nine works are set to be dedicated today during a public ceremony that begins at 5:30 p.m.

Public curiosity was quickly piqued by Argent's idea, and the interest kept gaining momentum. By the time the finished piece was installed in June, the bruin had become perhaps the most talked-about public sculpture in Denver's history — an immediate icon.

"That week when I was installing it, everybody was out there," Argent said. "And also following that, I've had e-mails and letters from people who have willing-

> See **ARGENT** on 10F

Colorado Convention Center artworks

DEDICATION | Nine pieces by artists such as Lawrence Argent, Bernar Venet, John McEnroe and Trine Bumiller will be dedicated; 14th Street atrium, Colorado Convention Center, 700 14th St.; today, 5:30 p.m. reception, 6:30-8 p.m. dedication and lecture by Jack Becker, founder and editor of Public Art Review | **Free; reservations requested** | 720-913-8220

"VIRERE"

Painted aluminum grass blades 15 to 20 feet high mark one of the boundaries of the city of Englewood. The site is landscaped with berms and ornamental grass.



Brian Brainerd | The Denver Post

ARGENT: Blue bear is "the kitsch playing on the kitsch," artist says

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ly just given appreciative comments and thanked me. How often does that happen?"

But appreciation has spread not only among the general public but also among art professionals as well.

Dean Sobel, project director of Denver's planned Clyfford Still museum and former director of the Aspen Art Museum, knew little about Argent's work prior to the blue bear. But like almost everyone else, he has taken notice.

"I think the piece is going to be very popular," he said. "It's engaging in a way that perhaps some of the other public art in Denver is not. And I think it could even become kind of a surrogate symbol for the convention center or for the city generally."

"So instantly, he (Argent) becomes infamous in a way that continuing on his other trajectory wouldn't have done."

Argent, who principally has devoted himself to small sculpture and photography, had completed three other public projects in the Denver area by the time he won the convention-center commission, so he was hardly a stranger to the field.

But he nonetheless struggled to gain major commissions outside the state. Sobel believes that will change with this piece, which he called a "career-defining" work, because of its size and the extraordinary attention it has garnered.

With this work, Argent has proven that he can successfully manage a large-scale, multiyear project and complete it on time

and on budget — all factors that are critical to public-art selection committees.

"It's like a movie," Sobel said. "You can't get a job being an actor until someone hires you, and then once you're hired it's a much easier proposition."

If anything, Sobel is worried that Argent might now become stereotyped as a public artist and actually have trouble gaining attention for his other, smaller works.

"Oftentimes, there are different worlds within contemporary art," Sobel said. "So there's the world of what we would call mainstream, avant-garde contemporary art. And then there is the world of artists who have become hugely successful doing public art, and it's interesting how those do become separate worlds."

But for now, at least, that appears to be a risk that Argent is willing to take. Graduating to bigger pieces just seemed natural to him, because of the visibility and accessibility of such prominent projects and the artistic challenges they offer.

"You don't make that much money off this," he said. "The hourly wage is probably five bucks an hour for what I get for them, which is crazy."

"So you do it, because it's the magic of one being able to have something realized. It's like having something in the studio, but I don't have to foot the bill for the cost of all this."

"Somebody else is, and I've got it realized, and it's great."

In the midst of all the buzz around Argent's blue bear, what has gotten lost to some degree

are the sculptor's intentions for the deceptively complex piece. It is meant to be more than just a blown-up depiction of a cute critter.

"It's an icon that you see in trinkets here," he said. "It's the kitsch playing on the kitsch. It's playing on what people think Colorado is."

"In a way, it's sort of a tongue-in-cheek approach. When somebody talks about Western art, this is kind of what they think Western art is, right? But I've taken it to the nth degree."

Argent has always been interested in dissecting perceptions vs. the reality of often everyday objects, such as a baby-bottle nipple or a woman's shoe, or archetypal forms.

At the same time, he likes to explore the intercession of technology and the parameters of the fabrication process, both of which played a significant role in the look of the blue bear, which is made of molded polymer concrete on a steel framework.

Argent used computer modeling and reductive techniques to shape the creature and articulate the 4,000 interlocking triangles that make up its faceted exterior.

"It's not a (Frederic) Remington (sculpture)," he said. "It's something else that has a language that is essentially Colorado in the natural and not so natural."

Fine arts critic Kyle MacMillan can be reached at 303-820-1675 or kmacmillan@denverpost.com.



Denver Post file photo

Public artworks

Here is a look at Lawrence Argent's public works in the metro area:

"Whispers," south entrance, Ritchie Center for Sports & Wellness, University of Denver, 2001. It is composed of five columns and four limestone benches, with carved reliefs of lips based on life casts and interactive sound elements.

▲ "Pillow Talk," 1985 Pennsylvania St., 2001. The 13-foot-tall main component of this three-section marble and granite piece in the courtyard of a residential complex depicts a stack of pillows.

"Virere," South Broadway median near Yale Street, Englewood, 2003. Argent's best-known piece prior to the blue bear, it consists of sinuous, bright-green evocations of grass blades 15-20 feet tall.

"I See What You Mean," Colorado Convention Center, 2005. Fabricated of molded polymer concrete, this 40-foot-tall sculpture depicts a blue bear on its hind legs peering into the building.

— Kyle MacMillan

POTTER: Boy wizard comes to Britain's aid

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scribed notes single-handedly propel Harry to teacher's pet status with an unctuous new professor, and bring Harry again under Snape's perceptive suspicions.

The question of the Half-Blood Prince's identity nibbles relentlessly as Hogwarts' academics pale against attempted murders and subterfuge within the school halls. Dumbledore adheres relentlessly to his view that Snape is an ally, not a turncoat. He refuses to hear troubling evidence that Snape protégée Draco Malfoy seems to be aligning himself with He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.

Equally extraordinary is Dumbledore's decision to tutor Harry personally in private lessons designed to illuminate the bleak thing that passes for Lord Voldemort's soul.

In a series of voyages through harvested memories, Harry begins to sound the monster's true depths.

Bringing Harry and the reader to the abyss floor is what makes "Harry and the Half-Blood Prince" the most muscular and insightful book in the series. Rowling's dispassionate summary of Tom Riddle/Lord Voldemort/You-Know-Who is an expert, compelling example of exposition that can fail to

Potter's plots

If you're playing Harry Potter catch-up, here are the previous books in the series:

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (1998)

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (1999)

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (1999)

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (2000)

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2003)

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (2005)

move only the most obtuse readers. Expect neither conversation nor attention from readers who have reached page 568. The final sortie inexorably presses Harry and Dumbledore toward a helpless, disastrous confrontation that poses as many questions as it answers.

Fans will be torn between their impatience for the conclusion — more than a year away, Rowling has warned — and their reluctance to see the story end.

Staff writer Claire Martin can be reached at 303-820-1477 or cmartin@denverpost.com.

Snapshot of an artist

1957: Born in England. Grew up in Melbourne, Australia.

1981: Spent a year traveling in India.

"I tried to find the late '70s and early '80s spiritual path, I suppose, and it was great. It really was an amazing experience, and that fueled me for when I came back and I finished my schooling."

1983: Earned a bachelor's degree

in sculpture from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

1984: Traveled to the United States to pursue a master of fine arts degree at the Rinehart School of Sculpture at the Maryland Institute College of Art.

"I wanted to go to a school that was cheap and not far from New York City, because I knew I couldn't afford to live in New

York, and I knew I couldn't afford the distractions."

1998-1991: Served as a visiting lecturer at the University of California in Santa Barbara, where he met his wife, Anne. They were married in 1991 and have two children, Quinn and Camron.

1990: Received a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant.

1993: Moved to Denver to join the

art faculty at the University of Denver, where he continues to teach.

"I was looking for a job in a place that was interesting," he said. "I didn't apply all over. I had a good feeling about Denver. In '93, there was this energy here. There were a lot of people moving here."

RODRIGUEZ: Language a barrier for abused Latinas

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Of course it helps if the women have a place to go.

It might take more than a year to get the Latina Safehouse established. The first step is to conduct a series of focus groups in low-income neighborhoods, because studies show domestic abuse is five times more prevalent in families living below the poverty level, said volunteer Benita Muñoz, who works as a Community Justice Advocate in the Denver District Attorney's office.

They want potential clients to have a say in what kind of shelter they'd create and where it should be located.

Come winter, volunteers will try to rent or build shelter space. It seems a long way off, but a year isn't so long to wait considering Latinas in Denver never have had a safe place of their own.

Cindy Rodríguez's column appears Tuesdays and Thursdays in Scene. Contact her at 303-820-1211 or crodriguez@denverpost.com.

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