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## Lawrence Argent

Ghost Trolley

By [Michael Paglia](#)

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Lawrence Argent, one of the four featured artists in *Looking Up* at Metro's CVA ([see review](#)), has emerged over the last decade or so as the region's premier conceptual artist. But unlike most of his fellow travelers in this brainiac pursuit, Argent has been successful in getting public commissions. Selection juries in the public-art realm are notoriously unsophisticated, and most have little or no knowledge or understanding of art, so how does Argent get away with it?



Subject(s): [Denver public art](#), [Lawrence Argent](#)

I think I know. An Argent piece operates on many levels simultaneously — so if you're art-savvy, there's plenty to ponder, but if you're not, there's still lots of appeal. The trick lies in Argent's basic forms, which, though hardly examples of contemporary realism, depict recognizable things. Think of "Virere," on South Broadway in Englewood, a giant tuft of metal grass, or "Pillow Talk," a stack of white marble pillows at 20th and Pennsylvania. Perhaps the best example is "I See What You Mean," the giant blue bear at the Colorado Convention Center, which has got to be one of the most successful public artworks ever erected in Denver.

The most recent Argent to sport his signature high-low quality is "Ghost Trolley" (pictured), which was installed a couple of weeks ago on East Colfax Avenue between Elmira and Emporia streets, directly in front of the newish Martin Luther King Jr. Library.

The imagery of a trolley is appropriate, because before 1920, trolleys used to run on Colfax. Argent's piece conjures up the memory of one of those long-gone vehicles. He apparently began with an image of a trolley, then used computers to turn it into a design for a flattened three-dimensional form. The finished sculpture is ten feet high and twenty feet long, but only two feet thick, and has been carried out in an icy-green fiberglass. Its placement, parallel to the traffic and right in the middle of it, helps the underlying narrative and makes it seem more like a real trolley.

"Ghost Trolley" is smart as well as accessible, a difficult pair of attributes for any artist to juggle but exactly what's called for in a public sculpture — something Argent apparently understands.