Out at one Financial Plaza, a bronze and glass urn by Howard Ben Tre provides a glowing beacon at night when illuminated.

Glass, sand, stone, water mix to make Ben Tre’s art public

**Providence, R.I.** 6/14

I caught up with Ben Tre last month as he was preparing to execute three large-scale sculptures for an upcoming show. In the airy studio of his Providence home, the artist is surrounded by the tools of his trade: a variety of paints, brushes, and watercolors. The walls are adorned with sketches and studies of his latest projects, which range in scale from small still-life compositions to monumental public artworks.

Tre, who was born in Vietnam and emigrated to the United States more than 30 years ago, has become one of the most prominent artists working in the Southeast Asian diaspora.

His latest work, “The Breakers, Newport,” is a series of sculptures that will be installed at the historic Breakers hotel on Rhode Island’s Newport coast. The pieces are part of an exhibit called “Sculpture in the Landscape,” which is being sponsored by the Rhode Island Foundation.

Tre says he was inspired to create the sculptures by the architecture and natural beauty of Newport. He describes the Breakers as “a beautiful, grand hotel that has a lot of history.”

The sculptures will include a large bronze fountain and a series of smaller works in various mediums, including bronze, stainless steel, and glass.

Tre says he hopes his work will complement the existing landscape and architecture of the Breakers. “I want to create something that is both modern and timeless,” he says.

Tre’s work has been featured in exhibitions around the world, including at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Tate Modern in London. He has also received numerous awards and grants for his art, including a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2013.

Tre says he works on several projects at once, always trying to push the boundaries of what is possible in his craft. “I’m always trying to find new ways to explore the possibilities of sculpture,” he says.

Tre’s work is known for its use of light, both in terms of the materials he uses and the way he incorporates light into his pieces. “I think light is one of the most important elements of sculpture,” he says.

Tre’s studio is filled with sketches and models for his upcoming projects, including a large sculpture for the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and a series of smaller works for a private collector in Hong Kong.

Tre says he is currently working on several projects, including a large outdoor sculpture for a museum in Singapore and a series of smaller works for a private collector in Paris.

Tre says he hopes his work will continue to evolve and push the boundaries of what is possible in sculpture.

He says, “I think sculpture is a form of expression that can be used to bring people together and create beauty.”

Tre encourages anyone interested in sculpture to visit his studio and see the work he is currently working on. "I think it’s important for people to see the process and understand where the ideas come from," he says.

Tre also urges people to support their local art community and to take the time to appreciate the beauty of the work being created in their own cities.

He says, “I think art is important for society because it helps us understand the world around us and our place in it.”

Tre is a member of the Asian American Art Alliance and the Rhode Island Artists Network. He is also a board member of the nonprofit arts organization Art in the Open. He says he is proud to be a part of the artistic community in Rhode Island and hopes to continue to contribute to it for many years to come.

Tre says he is constantly inspired by the beauty of the natural world and the history and culture of his native Vietnam. "I think these are the things that inspire me the most," he says.

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