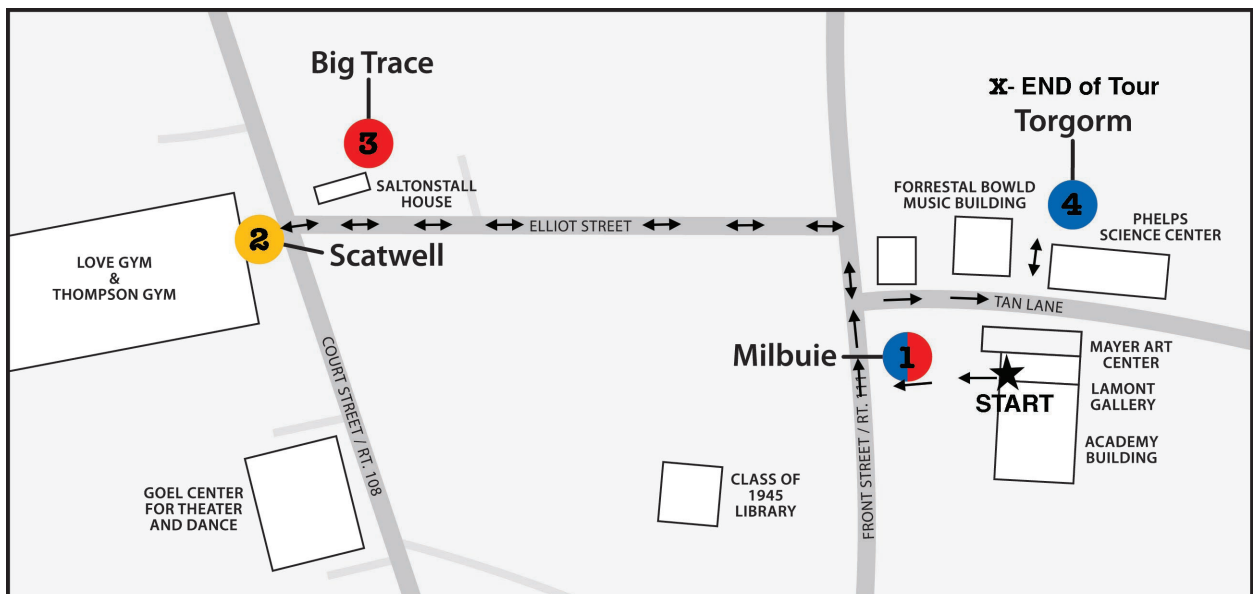




Self-Guided Gerald Laing Sculpture Walking Tour



The Gerald Laing Sculpture Walking Tour begins and ends at the Lamont Gallery. It should take about 20-30 minutes to move through and covers about .90 miles. Please use the map below for reference.



First, some context for your tour - Who was Gerald Laing?

Throughout his life, **Gerald Laing** (1936-2011) was many things – a military man, an expatriate, a painter, a screen printer, a sculptor, a textile designer, and an awarded self-taught historic restoration expert. Laing’s ability to be so many different things speaks to his hands-on and intrepid exploration of artmaking throughout his 51-year career. As an artist, he did not adhere to one specific aesthetic, but rather worked in experimental periods. Beginning with Pop Art paintings, Laing then transitioned to abstract sculpture, followed by figural sculpture, and then ending his career with a critical return to Pop Art paintings.



Image Source: The Drive

In 1960, after growing up in England and serving in the military, Laing became a student at Saint Martin’s School of Art in London. After spending the summer of 1963 in New York, working in American Pop artist Robert Indiana’s Coenties Slip studio in Lower Manhattan, Laing moved to New York. During this time, he started experimenting with small-scale sculpture and highly polished finishes, bringing dimension to the shapes he often repeated in his screen-printing.



Source: House & Garden UK

Tired of the drama and demands of the New York City art world, and needing more space to continue his sculptural experimentation, Laing bought Kinkell Castle in Scotland’s Black Isle in 1969. It was during this year with space, time, and solace that Laing started to renovate the Castle while also simultaneously creating the four large scale sculptures that are now in the Lamont Gallery’s collection. He created ***Big Trace*** and ***Torgorm*** in 1969, ***Milbuie*** from 1969 to 1970, and finally, ***Scatwell*** in 1970.

These four works are a significant moment of change in Laing’s career as an artist. From a letter in the Lamont Gallery archives, Gerald Laing shared:

“The four sculptures, made in the Highlands in 1969-70, are a development from the last phase of my work before I left New York, but are larger, stronger and more roughly made in response to the new environment of the Scottish Highlands. They were, in other words, a response to the landscape and intended to be sited in the landscape.”



Milbuie, 1969-70

Painted red and blue steel, 6 units each 12' long

Location: In front of the Lamont Gallery, at the intersection of Tan Lane and Front Street.



Original Sculpture Location, Scotland
Source: The Estate of Gerald Laing

Gerald Laing named *Milbuie* after the “Mill Buie” Mountain in the Scottish Highlands. This photo shows how the long, angular shapes of the sculpture relate the mountainous terrain of its namesake.

Looking at *Milbuie*, installed in front of the Frederick J. Mayer Arts Center and the Lamont Gallery, visitors may wonder how Gerald Laing’s sculptures ended up here? Gerald Laing did not attend Phillips Exeter Academy as a student or teach at the school. The sculptures came to the Lamont Gallery thanks to a generous alum, Ken Wilson ’65. From his collection of outdoor sculptures that were installed at his home, Mr. Wilson gifted *Milbuie*, *Torgorm*, *Big Trace*, and *Scatwell* to the Lamont Gallery in December 1991.



Milbuie, *Big Trace* (right background) and *Torgorm* (left background) installed on Ken Wilson’s property before coming to Exeter

These four sculptures have been in the Lamont Gallery’s collection for almost three decades, and have been installed, deinstalled, stored, conserved and then reinstalled.

Milbuie is the only sculpture that has remained in the same location throughout its time at Phillips Exeter Academy. Throughout those years, the sculptures have weathered freezing New England winters, blistering summers, and even skateboarders using *Milbuie* as a grind rail. Although *Milbuie* remained prominently installed in front of the Mayer Arts Center, *Scatwell*, *Big Trace*, and *Torgorm* were temporarily de-installed in the late 1990’s and stored in the rear yard of Facilities Management, where they continued to endure the elements.



Milbuie in 2013, before conservation.

It is normal for public works of art to require annual maintenance, and in April 2015, with the help of the **Gerald Laing Foundation** and public sculpture conservator **Rika Smith McNally and Associates**, the sculptures were sent to **ARC Electrostatic Painting** in Auburn, New Hampshire where they were sandblasted, repainted and returned to their original glory.

While the newly conserved sculptures were stored off-campus, the Lamont Gallery lead focus group meetings with students and employees to decide upon new and purposeful locations for the recently conserved works that more accurately reflected how Gerald Laing “sited” the works in the landscape of the Highlands and how the sculptures could be “sited” in Exeter’s landscape. The results are what you will see on this tour.

2 **Scatwell, 1970**
Painted yellow steel, 24’ long
Location: Love Gym, across from the intersection of Elliot Street and Court Street

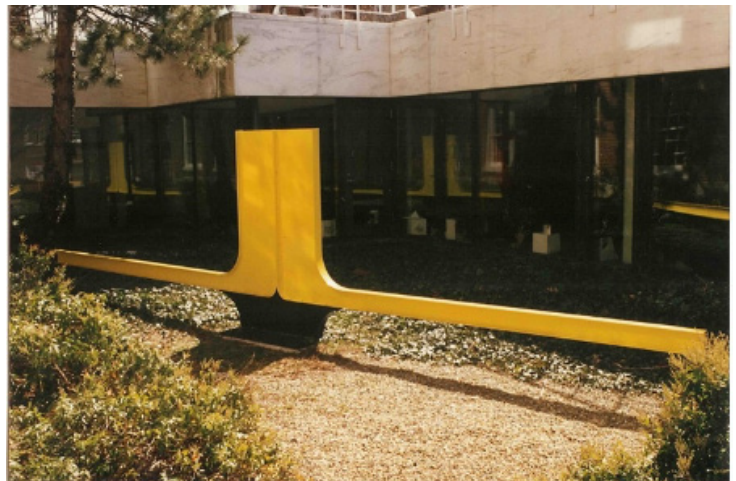
Spanning 24 feet, *Scatwell* has the largest footprint of the four sculptures. It was a challenging piece to find a new site for on campus. In the 1990’s it was placed in the small courtyard between the Mayer Art Center and the Academy building.

While finding a new site for this piece, the sculpture’s scale as well as the artist’s intentions for the work was considered. Gerald Laing was inspired by the natural environment and expansive spaces of the Scottish Highlands and created these sculptures to be surrounded by nature.

Wanting to give the sculpture more space and greater visibility, the Committee came up with a location that would allow the viewer an opportunity to walk completely around the sculpture, while also considering Laing’s intent. Also pleasing, is how *Scatwell’s* horizontal lines echo the appearance and weight of the Love Gym’s concrete structure.



Original Sculpture Location, Scotland.
Source: The Estate of Gerald Laing



Sculpture in courtyard between the Mayer Art Center and the Academy building

Gerald Laing may have gotten the name for this work from the Scatwell House, an estate located about a twenty-minute drive from Kinkell Castle. The Mackenzie Family received

the property in 1528 through a royal charter and since then, the Scatwell House has passed from one family to the next, with its most recent sale in 2009. Just North of the estate is also a hamlet called “Little Scatwell.” According to the current owners of the Scatwell House, the word “Scatwell” may be derived from the Norse word “skati,” which means “large timber or logs.” Alternatively, the Gaelic interpretation suggests that it means “common grazing land.”

After making *Scatwell*, Laing never returned to making large-scale abstract works in the landscape. Instead, he shifted towards figural sculpture, with many of his later works commissioned for public spaces throughout England and Scotland.

3

Big Trace, 1969

Painted red steel, 14' high

Location: Backyard of the Saltonstall House at the intersection of Elliot Street and Court Street (*Piece can be seen from Elliot Street*)



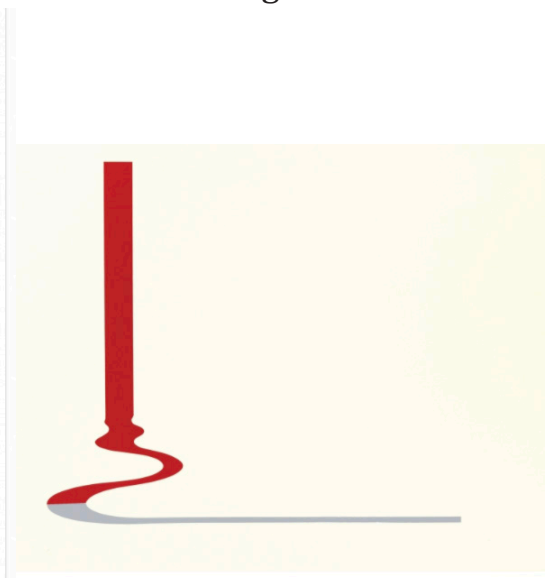
Original Sculpture Location, Scotland
Source: The Estate of Gerald Laing

Unlike *Scatwell*, *Milbuie*, and *Torgorm* the title of *Big Trace* does not have a direct connection to the region in which it was created. Instead, it directly ties to the work Gerald Laing was making right before his move to Scotland. In the late 1960s, the artist was enamored with what he called “trace” shapes. Laing made several prints and small-scale sculptures with this shape in various colors, like *Red Trace* and *Purple Trace II* below.

When he moved to Kinkell Castle and found inspiration from the Highlands around him, Laing immediately took this shape and increased the scale. He moved it outside of his studio and placed it in conversation with the mountains and horizon line surrounding him.

Center:
Gerald Laing, *Purple Trace II* (1968)
Lacquered aluminium and chrome-covered
brass support, polished marble base

Far Right:
Gerald Laing, *Red Trace* (1968)
Screenprint with diecut Mylar



4

Torgorm, 1969

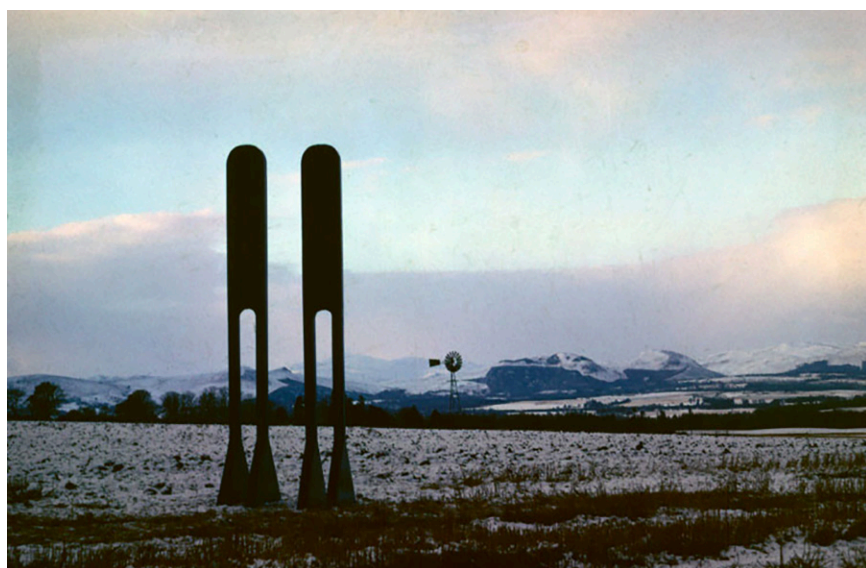
Painted blue steel, 2 units 10' high

Location: Behind the Phelps Science Center located on Tan Lane.

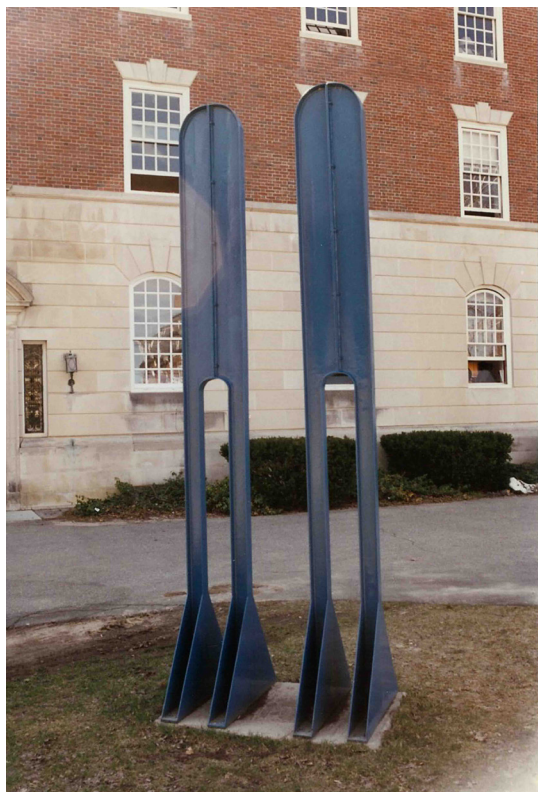
One can tell that Gerald Laing was absorbing the mountainous terrain around him in the 1960s when he relocated to the Black Isle. But, he was not only noticing the physical landscape, but also the language around him. He looked to hamlets, historic names, castles, and geographic features located around Kinkell Castle as inspiration in creating and naming his work.

Torgorm means “blue hill” in Gaelic, a fitting name since this sculpture rises up from the ground in twin peaks. In its original home in the Scottish Highlands, this piece stood among the hills that inspired its creation.

Torgorm was originally installed near Phillips Hall. Documents found in the Lamont Gallery archive explain that this location was chosen because the shape of the arced sculptures mimicked the arcs in the ground floor windows.



Original Sculpture Location, Scotland. Source: The Estate of Gerald Laing



Sources for tour content include: Lamont Gallery Collection Archives and the Gerald Laing Foundation.

Thank you for taking the Gerald Laing Sculpture tour! If you have any thoughts or questions, please stop by the Lamont Gallery or email us at gallery@exeter.edu

Gerald Laing website: www.geraldlaing.org

Visit the Lamont Gallery website to learn about our exhibitions and events: www.exeter.edu/lamontgallery

Special thanks to Olivia Knauss for her research and help in creating this tour.