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# Meet The Man Behind the Metal Animal Sculptures Popping Up All Over Peoria

By [TIM SHELLEY](#) · 3 HOURS AGO[Share](#)[Tweet](#)[Email](#)

*Monte de Gallo's Giraffe Sculpture on N. University.*

TIM SHELLEY / WCBU

You may have seen Monte de Gallo's art while driving around Peoria recently.

He's using scrap metal to create life-sized African animal sculptures, like the giraffe recently set up on display near the intersection of University and Columbia Terrace, or outside a house at War Memorial Drive and Knoxville.

Artist Monte de Gallo is also known as Nic di Caro.

He said the inspiration came to him seven years ago during a trip in Kenya, where he was awed by the giraffes, elephants and other animals.

"When you see them in their natural setting, it's nothing like seeing them in a zoo. And I swear to God, they seem bigger when you're in person, like so close to them," di Caro said.

After seeing metal animal sculptures created by Kenyan artists, he said an idea hit him. He couldn't bring the African animals back to Central Illinois, but he could replicate the experience.

"So I thought, what if I could collaborate with these artists, and we will produce these magnificent, spectacular sculptures of these life-size African animals, so people can enjoy their beauty and their splendor," he said.

About two weeks ago, he began displaying the metal sculptures across the city. He's already sold one of the pieces to a businessman in Indianapolis.

He has ideas for his next works, such as a 14-foot tall giraffe covered entirely in pennies, which he said signifies small blessings in life like finding a penny on a sidewalk; and a "chameleon elephant."

On October 12, his art will be part of the Big Picture Street Festival in the Warehouse District.

[Learn more about his work by clicking here.](#)

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