

# Local Artist...from Page 1A

200 nations acted together with the unified purpose of reducing global greenhouse emissions in the hopes of curbing the effects of climate change for future generations.

Critics of the agreement believed at the time – and still do – that it either didn't go far enough, went too far or publicized a problem that wasn't even a problem.

But for Nadia, whose home country of France hosted the United Nations Climate Change Conference in which the agreement was forged, the moment offered a rare glimpse into a possible future organized around global unity and cooperation toward common goals.

Ultimately, 195 countries ratified the agreement reached by consensus on that auspicious December day in the Parisian town of Le Bourget in 2015, and it was the overwhelming consensus around the issue that so amazed Nadia.

"To me, as president of a small company used to the difficulties of negotiating two or three-party agreements, the realization that 195 nations could all agree about something and sign on to it was immense," Nadia said. "This is what our planet should be."

"The whole planet needs to get together to solve our common problems, especially when the health of our children, grandchildren and all future generations is at stake."

"We have problems that need to be solved, and in order to solve them, they need to be solved globally by everybody getting together."

Added Nadia, "It was on that day, when all 195 nations agreed, that I felt the need to express the feeling I had of knowing that all the nations were working together to solve common problems."

Before she could share her vision with the world and truly embrace the title of artist, however, she had to concentrate on finishing her long career in the medical industry.

Nadia has a master's degree and a Ph.D. in the neurosciences with certificates in biology and psychology, and for decades, she worked as a scientist and owner of several companies.

She and biochemist husband Jean-Marie Girardot, Ph.D., moved to America from France in the early '70s, only to leave for France again several years later before returning and settling in Atlanta in 1984.

There, they founded the highly successful biotech company Biomedical Design, producing several lifesaving patents and other trade-related technologies like those used in Medtronic biologic heart valve implants sold around the globe to this day.

When they could get away from the hustle and bustle of big city life, the Girardots would retreat to the mountains of North Georgia, where, for example, they would spend Christmastime in quiet, secluded areas like Suches with their two children.

The family so enjoyed the natural beauty of these mountains, which reminded Nadia of the Vosges mountains near her childhood home in northeast France, that they opted to buy a house and property in Union County more than a decade ago.

Recently, the couple closed their Atlanta-based business and retired fully, leaving to their son Marc the rights to further develop technologies and products derived from their inventions.

Prior to retiring, though, Nadia had developed a tremendous dislike of working on legal agreements – all the paperwork, the lawyers, the minutiae and fine print that accompanies two-party agreements alone.

So, in 2015, when Nadia witnessed seemingly the entire world uniting to address an issue she cared so deeply about, she knew right away that she wanted to enshrine the



**An aerial view of Nadia's artwork, featuring Nadia and her dog Pooch.**

Photo by Marc Pilote/Pilote Photography

momentous occasion in art.

Nadia stresses that she is not a political actor. The issues of climate change and global pollution concern her greatly, but she doesn't subscribe to the divided discourse surrounding the topics.

Instead, she prefers to promote the unique qualities of the agreement, those being the themes of unity, shared purpose and collective vision, the massive scale of which originally inspired her to create art specific to Dec. 12, 2015.

But what would she create? Nadia had always wanted to pursue art as a hobby and passion, but for years, her professional and family lives consumed most of her time.

Looking toward retirement, she thought that maybe she would try her hand at painting, but a while before the Paris Agreement came into being, and several years before she fully retired, Nadia unearthed her medium of choice.

While in the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport one day years ago, she ran across a permanent art exhibit called "Zimbabwe Sculpture: A Tradition in Stone."

Nadia became so moved by the lifelike depictions chiseled in solid rock – the interplay of humanity and literal earth – that she decided then and there that rock sculpture would be her medium.

She tabled the idea of chiseling rocks herself until she could find the time to travel to Zimbabwe to learn from the artists there, but rocks remained her focus thereafter.

Fortunately, Nadia formulated another way to manifest her inspiration in stone. She would hike the mountains around her home just south of Blairsville, and she would collect sizeable rocks from among them that spoke to her inner muse.

One-hundred and ninety-five rocks she selected, 194 of which she hand-carried and planted upright in marching formation upon a westward-facing hill behind her home.

Taken together, the style of art is known as site-specific rock sculpture, and it serves as a new local landmark containing all the symbolism of hope and promise Nadia feels when

Just like her resolve to see the project through to completion – she's at 194 of 195 rocks – the rock medium itself is largely unbending, only breaking if made to.

In June 2017, President Donald Trump announced that he intended to withdraw the United States of America from the Paris Agreement by November 2020, due to his insistence that the terms of the agreement were not fair to the U.S.

Again, the specifics of the politics don't interest Nadia, who chooses to concentrate on her foundational belief that action on a united front can change the world, and not just with climate change.

Of course, her sculpture is still missing one piece, the biggest piece of all, which, when planted, will signal to her that mankind is capable of working with nature and not against it as one species instead of 195 separate actors.

The site-specific rock sculpture currently has a broken tree branch buried where the large centerpiece rock will go.

Nadia has already scouted out and picked the centerpiece, but it's so large that, when the time comes, she'll need special equipment to move it into place, as for the first time, a

she thinks about the goodwill that culminated in the Paris Agreement.

Each rock stands for one of the 195 signatory countries in the agreement, and like each country in the agreement, each rock has its own unique characteristics that make it an important ambassador in the overall presentation of the sculpture she refers to tentatively as "Nature's Art."

Depending on the light, the time of day and mood of the observer, the rocks resemble different faces – some human, some animal – and other forms that exist in nature. And all face in one direction, pointing toward a shared sense of destiny that undergirds the entire work of art.

Positionally, the rocks are situated in a clearing on a mountain hillside leading up to the edge of a boundary of trees marking the hind end of the sculpture.

Nadia said that this is meant to evoke an image of the amassed countries, or rocks, moving together in elemental form out from the darkness of mankind's ignorance and into the light of reason.

Further emphasizing the harmony promoted by the installation are observations made via trail camera erected at the site, which has captured images of nature regularly interacting with the sculpture.

A bear here, a deer there, and smaller but no less important wildlife have all been caught on the cam, highlighting one instance after another of peaceful coexistence in a space shared with humans and other living species over time.

The sculpture itself is both affected and unaffected by the progress of the seasons, as the composition routinely changes, while the rocks within remain resolutely in place despite the passing of time in that pristine place.

Brown, dormant plant life gives way to luscious yellows, greens and other vibrant colors over spring and into summer, and animal and insect activity picks up dramatically around the rocks.

The browning begins again in the fall, as it is wont to do, with leaves piling up and decaying as snow occasionally blankets the sculpture come wintertime.

rock she has chosen will be too big to move on her own.

Eventually, Nadia wants to organize a local educational program focused on art and science, perhaps in concert with the county and schools to hold nature classes at Meeks Park promoting environmental stewardship among today's youth.

This she sees as an ultimately worthwhile goal, regardless of political affiliation.

"I just hope that we're going to go back to all the nations walking together in order for our kids, grandchildren and the generations to come to be healthy," Nadia said.



**A trail cam image of a raven resting on one of the rocks in Nadia's site-specific rock sculpture.**

Photo/Submitted

