Jackson, TN/Union University Sculpture Tour

Outdoor Sculpture Competition and Exhibition 2008-09
Historically, art is one of the elements that defines a community and, indeed, cements it together. The JUST program has become exactly this kind of enhancement to life in our own community. And how exciting to see high quality aesthetics form the basis of this partnership between the classic realms of “town and gown!”

Dr. Gene Fant,
Dean of Arts and Sciences, Union University

Union University is pleased to once again participate in sponsoring the Outdoor Sculpture Competition and Exhibition 2008-09. At Union University, we regard the arts as an important aspect of our society. We have all been given creative abilities, but some have special gifts and talents that enable them to communicate in a dynamic and powerful way. Union University is thankful to be a part of a community such as Jackson that values the contribution of the arts.

The community-at-large benefits from this competition in direct and indirect ways. It benefits directly, of course, by the new sculpture that is added to our city. It benefits indirectly by the growing appreciation and awareness for the artists in our area and the creative work they produce. Art is for everyone, and outdoor exhibitions such as this invite all members of our community to enjoy and experience these wonderful contributions. As Jackson continues to grow and prosper, Union University is delighted to be a partner in a city that thrives on cooperation. This sculpture project has been a welcome addition to our community and our region.

David Dockery,
President, Union University

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As Jackson has grown into a significant urban center in West Tennessee, it has become essential for it to establish itself as an urgent art center as well. One way to accomplish this is to introduce, maintain and advocate a sculpture tour. Populations have always established the arts as a fundamental way to promote their communities and culture, and sculpture has always been the venue of choice. When communities want to celebrate, commemorate, honor, observe or consecrate something about themselves, they often choose sculpture. The major purpose of this tour is to promote the City of Jackson and to encourage our citizens in the participation and enjoyment of the visual arts.

February 5, 2008 brought reminder of why the tour began six years ago. We saw first-hand the essence of community as the people of Jackson and its surrounding areas brought aid to those who suffered from the devastating tornado. We are thrilled to introduce the sixth year of the Jackson Union Sculpture Tour! The City of Jackson and Union University continue to seek venues in which they can partner to develop a stronger and more vibrant community. Our hope is that the tour encourage an eager audience to take pride in their downtown area and experience this unique exposure to such artworks.

The sixth year has brought many new and exciting additions to the Jackson Union Sculpture Tour! We were thrilled to judge numerous international sculptures, ultimately accepting what we thought to be the best show of creativity, craftsmanship and community building potential. We feel that the winning sculptures will offer the city of Jackson a vast variety of artwork that focus on social issues, environmental studies and the state of man. The 2008-2009 Jackson Union Sculpture Tour also presents its first international artist, Mr. Kees, who is widely known in his native Japan for his sculptural studies of space. It is with much excitement that we present to you the artists and their winning pieces. On behalf of our team, I want to thank you for your interest. Please take time to follow the map around town to view our newest additions as well as the Purchase Award Winners from previous years that now adorn the streets of downtown Jackson permanently. We look forward to seeing what the future has to offer!

Lily Zopfi, Assistant Director, JUST

The 6th Annual Jackson, TN/Union University Sculpture Tour

Aaron Lee Benson Sculpture Tour Director
Lily Zopfi Assistant Director
Kelsey Nagy Design and Development
Rebekah Frost Campus Liaison
Caleb Booth Meagan Comeaux Michaela Witzke Support Staff
From a young age, a strong work ethic was instilled in me. Not from chastisement or reward, but from a compelling example of knowing what should be done and doing it, whatever it takes.

When thinking about my artwork and a unifying statement that transmits throughout, I came to the conclusion that the more words I used, the less I actually said. My drive is not to write but to communicate visually in three dimensions. However, during my search for words, one appeared over and over: WORK*.

This small four-letter word expresses a great deal about my sculpture and my process. This world and I have a great deal in common.

*Work: act, act upon, body of work, cultivate, employment, exploit, figure out, form, function, influence, make mold, operate, piece of work, play, put to work, shape, solve, study, turn, workplace, wreak.
Much of my work explores how private faith functions in the public sphere. It investigates the role of private faith outside of the self. I aim to explore the boundaries of faith by blurring the lines where public expression is permitted and prohibited. My challenges lie in what it means to carry an individual belief into a world where everyone believes different things. I try to navigate somewhere between the boundaries of propaganda and censorship.

This piece fuses humor, sarcasm, and sincerity. It has produced a myriad of reactions from sincere use, humorous use, offense, praise, etc. It aims to highlight and spark further debate about the contemporary difficulty of religion within the public community.
I try to capture movement in a medium that does not move. Using steel, which is an inherently rigid material, I work to convey a sense of fluid action in space. My work explores the wide range of movement of the human figure informed through my study of drawing the human anatomy. My sculptures seek to convey the motion of the body in extremely stressful and beautiful positions; the moment that a dancer is at the peak of a jump, the weightless split second before a body succumbs to gravity. I am describing an ephemeral action in steel to convey this moment for eternity. I want the viewer to visualize the actions that led up to a given pose and the actions that will follow it. Using the brightly colored surfaces separates the figures from the landscape, making them stand out in much the same way people do when they wear clothes. The brilliant colors serve as protections for the steel from the corrosive outdoor environment as well as adding excitement to the steel to aid in the sense of movement. The work explores the range of possibilities and flexibility of the material as well as the subject matter. The display of my work in the outdoor public arena is the perfect place for the inherent academic roots to be brought to every person in an easily recognizable and accessible way, bridging the gap between the gallery or fine art institution and the general public.
The concepts and forms that make up my artwork generate from an interest in melding physical and cultural history into compositions that exhume, analyze, and challenge issues from yesterday and today. Through an assortment of media I create artwork that compiles and preserves information in layered, stacked, and eroded forms. The finished product most often references the link between geology, history, and everyday life, such as social stratification, political fissures, or historical sedimentation and erosion.

In the end, I like to believe that the artwork I create is in some way an amalgamation of various landmarks and artifacts. A landmark is more than a simply object or place; it is a reminder of an emotion, experience, or discovery. An artifact is a clue into secrets, secrets that have resisted the effects of time, to tell old underlying stories. The landmarks and artifacts presented in my work, through material, forma, and content, investigate our shard contemporary existence as it sits teetering atop a world or accumulated beliefs, traditions, and misconceptions.
Charred wood and blackened earth conjure up ideas of life, death, and rebirth, as well as the burning away of illusions and desires— a reference to the fierce deities of Tibetan Buddhism that represent cutting through or overcoming our desires. Yet it can also be seen as a reminder of war, destruction of the earth, corruption within ourselves, and the close relationship between purification and destruction. Fire, air, water, earth, and space are the five elements in eastern culture. I use these natural elements in my work, often burning wood. The burned surfaces are very durable to the elements, handling, and transportation. Similar sculptures have been exhibited outdoors for months to years in sculpture parks and galleries.

“…Sacred writing speaks the work of the Great Spirit: what shall we bring forth, purification or destruction?” – Hopi Prophecy.
As an artist I am always interested in creating a space with its own unique atmosphere through using sculpture. The moment you place a sculpture on a site it changes and actually alters the surroundings immediately in such a strong way that as for instance, if it was taken away you would really be missing it and the space in which it was previous placed would become empty and incomplete! This quality of sculpture of changing our view, our perception and experience of a place, is very strong and powerful and excites and gives me energy. To fully optimize this quality I have to make sculptures which are strong and will blend into the surroundings. Searching for work which has the quality of permanence, stillness and a balance that feels natural to me. Always looking for the lasting and essential. What that might be I really do not know for myself yet, the only way to find out is to work every day, making sculptures. The main materials for creating my sculptures are stone, iron and wood, because of their natural given qualities of texture, form and color. During the process of creating my mind is blank, thinking of nothing. I only use my hands and tools not my mind. I do not have a preconceived idea or design, I just follow my intuition and get inspiration and guidance from the materials I work on. Only through attacking, destruction and assembling of the material you will make a discovery and can create and maybe find a touch of brilliance. Sculpture is created by change in only a brief moment of time and is not reproducible. For many years now I have created in Japan my own environment, my own space to live, study and work in. Getting inspired by the surrounding nature in search of beauty.

Owen Kees,
Seiyo-City, Japan

Featured International Artist

THE SOUND OF SHADOW

located on Union University’s campus
Previous Purchase Award Winners

PA 1  2003-04  Earthen Passage
      Glenn Zweygardt

PA 2  2004-05  Reaching for the Sun
      Wayne Trapp

PA 3  2005-06  Untitled #2
      James Davis

PA 4  2006-07  Mother and Child
      Jim Collins

PA 5  2006-07  Gethsemane
      Shawn Morin

PA 6  2007-08  Autumnal Equinox
      Hannah Jubran

Current Installments

1. Fire Tree
   Adam Garey

2. Prayer Booth
   Dylan Mortimer

3. Gendron
   Jack Howard-Potter

4. Burden of Proof
   Chris Wubbena

5. Purification 2
   Thomas Matsuda
Jackson, TN/Union University Sculpture Tour

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