

LAWRENCE BUSINESS MAGAZINE

2025 Q4



The **IMPACT**
of **ART**

Collaborative Art at Home STAN HERD

A photograph of Stan Herd, an older man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a grey hoodie and tan work pants, working on a large, light-colored limestone rock sculpture. He is using a tool to carve the stone. The sculpture is a large, abstract, blocky form with some curved elements. The background is a clear blue sky.

Stan Herd carving a 30 ton limestone rock sculpture in Parsons, KS

Local earthwork artist, creates works that reflect beauty, politics and unity.

As an artist in your 70s, what keeps you inspired?

Inspiration is like every other human psychological attribute in that it evolves if you cultivate it—and if you can escape cynicism and self-doubt. I believe I am more inspired now than I've ever been, but I still question whether it is always a good thing.

My inspiration to become the best in the world at something—which I am still inspired to do—has not diminished and sometimes feels like it could become a burden. If you are inspired to be the best human you can be, the best father and the best at the skills you have chosen to pursue, all of that is affected by the circumstances and the times in which you live.

I have been leaning toward politics over the years, and the current climate is ripe for activism for all who cherish freedom and the law. It is a bit startling to find ourselves in the grips of antidemocratic forces. I truly never believed it possible in a nation that has been the guiding light in the world and represents freedom of speech and the right to assemble against the "powers that be," and rails against attempts to silence the media, artistic expression and the political opposition.

How do you produce an Earthwork?

My Earthworks have evolved, but the general approach has remained fairly constant: to create a workable sketch or concept, break it down into layers of light and shadow, then inform by the existing crops and the lay of the land. For the temporary works, subtracting that existing crop then adding materials that enhance the image completes the work. Current images are getting more detailed, and the China portrait from six years ago, as a permanent image with 20 different sorts of stone, marble, granite, seashells and dozens of different plants and flowers, is leading me to my final approach as I reach the last chapters in my life. My best work has yet to be realized, and if the political world settles, I hope to return to projects of a more historical nature and a visual dance with the inherent beauty in the world—and get away from politics.

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Stan as the guest of honor at a table of 40 members of JiCheng leadership and the head of Honghe tobacco and Chinese officials. "They always set me at the head of the table and I had three interpreters standing behind me"



Stan walking with the head of the JiCheng family and his leadership team for work on the Young Woman of China



Stan with a group sitting on the ground in the Manguinhos favela in Rio de Janeiro

How do you work with and direct your team of mostly volunteers?

The most powerful element of my work is the orchestrated engagement with my crew and those with whom we end up working in each new location. The China project put us into a complicated collaboration with more than 100 people for almost two years of my life. And the ability to engage my team, "Team Herd," has been the most enjoyable and rewarding aspect of my work and my life. I teach them, and more importantly, I learn from them, my son Evan in particular.

What are the different stages of producing an Earthwork?

We start with a gridded sketch, which evolves quite similarly to those of architects—from rough sketches to the overall design/build plans, leading to more complicated and precise drawings as we approach the site.

The commercial works, which have historically supported the more artistic Earthworks, created for my own inspired thought process, have their own pricing reflecting the client. The China project cost approximately \$2 million, if I had to guess, and my fee, which included 30 business-class flights, was approximately one-third of that. A friend and supporter of my portraits in Atlanta during the

past five years subsidized those works, and none of those five Earthworks brought in a profit but did expose me to the national media and new friends and fellow activists, and more importantly, kept my crew in rent money. My strong inclination to put profits from commercial endeavors back into works that seem important, such as the political works, has kept me financially unstable. That was supposed to change last year but remains to be seen. I've never had more large and significant projects lined up than I have right now. This year will be very interesting.

Some of the Earthworks or larger stoneworks such as the "Young Woman of China" are designed from the start as permanent images similar to a corporate garden with the logo in it that one would drive by every day. Some of the other temporary images have the capacity of permanence if the client or business wants to go to Phase 2 and establish the work with more permanency. The flower image on the riverbank in Lawrence is a good example. It was never discussed as a permanent image and, in my opinion, should be taken off the rock infrastructure or embellished with a more permanent base and kept as a more permanent design. Haskell's "Medicine Wheel" is a permanent design with the directional stones from the original Haskell buildings but has to be maintained yearly to keep it viable.

What are you working on now?

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum's government secretary of the exterior created a press release with the assistance of consulates here and in Texas regarding the recent portrait "Young Woman of Mexico," created on the Milleret farm north of Lawrence, in Linwood. I had established relations with both consulates during the process of creating a temporary portrait on a resaca one mile from the border in Brownsville, Texas, last year with guidance from consulate general Soileh Padilla Mayer, in Kansas City, and her contemporary in Brownsville, Judith Arietta Munguia. It was consular Munguia who suggested creating this second portrait to glean support from President Sheinbaum.

President Sheinbaum's embrace of indigenous people was the original impetus for this overall concept. Our strategy for pursuing this scope of work is to offer permanent portraits of the four indigenous women displayed on the banner of the consulates to Sheinbaum and the Mexican people.

That is where it stands today, and we are cultivating groups, individuals and corporations to assist us in making this a gift from the United States in the same vein as the Statue of Liberty was a gift from the citizens of France to the United States. It would be in poor taste to ask Mexico to pay for the works. We shall see. Of course, the idea is to strike a tone of civility with our friends and allies to the south rather than the fist of accusation and threat that seems to dominate national discourse from our government leaders today.

As to the FIFA World Cup multinational presence in Kansas City that we are building toward, we have made numerous efforts to be of service to city leaders regarding this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. They have not responded.

With international Earthworks in Brazil, China and Havana, and my position as the leading Earthworks artist in this region, we will establish our own presence with our FIFA guests, embracing the Midwest's top musicians, artists, film producers and writers with or without the help of our Kansas City leaders. We intend to create an Earthwork design, "Picasso's Bull," as the platform for these efforts, possibly on a rooftop in the West Bottoms. We will be working with Bradford Hoopes, Chel Rich and Stanley Sheldon, with his new band the Rhythm Republic, to connect with all things Latin as the games approach. Kevin Willmott, Marc Havener and the award-winning film and video teams will help lead with the vibrant Lawrence arts scene and create our own presence during this international gathering. Someone called us "The Lawrence Mafia." I like that. ▲

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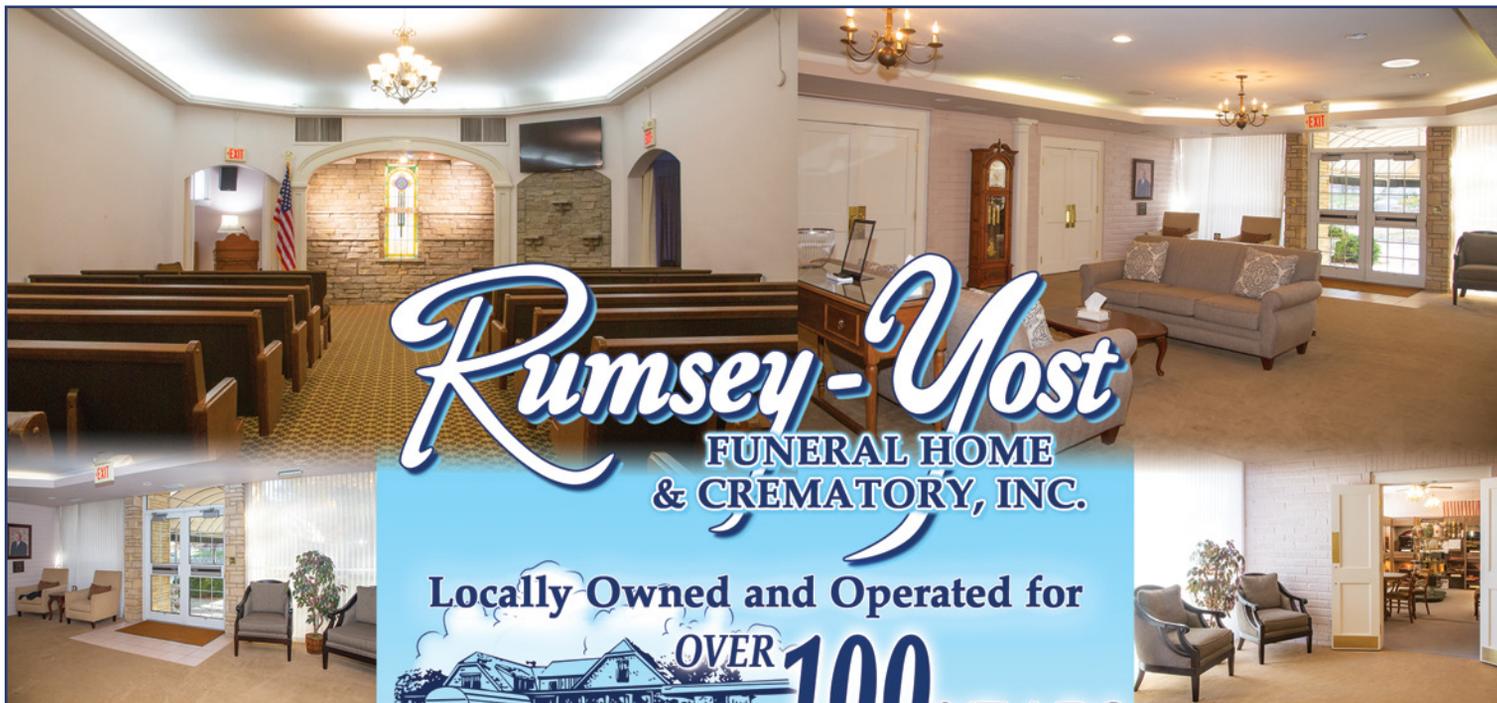


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