



TOP: "OLD GLORY," by Mark di Suvero, represents the American flag with its red stripes against a blue sky and white clouds. The work was acquired by the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery through funds from the Olga N. Sheldon Acquisition Trust and Friends of the Sheldon.

ABOVE: "TORN NOTEBOOK," which sits on the northeast corner of 12th and Q streets, symbolizes learning and reflects the artists' impressions of Lincoln. Created by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, the work was commissioned by the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and paid for through funds from the Olga N. Sheldon Acquisition Trust and Friends of the Sheldon.



JAY TSCHETTER created his 1991 brick sculpture, "Iron Horse Legacy," over a two-month period. The work, located in Iron Horse Park at 7th and Q streets, was funded by the H.J. Winnett Trust and Community Improvement Financing Funds.

who
gives?
who
gets?

the public art debate

story by jason hardy ■ photos by mike warren

The streets of Rome are tighter than most alleys in the United States. Like a labyrinth, they wind in and out of buildings washed with time's endearing but sometimes destructive brush, and they present an overwhelming amount of sights, sounds and smells for any traveler to experience.

Along the way, one can see stories illustrating the culture's colorful past. It's a culture's identity told through a city's art.

In Lincoln, a similar voice can be heard, but on an obviously different scale. And who pays for these emblems of culture is often a point of contention.

Public art is scattered throughout the city, reflecting Nebraskan heritage while inspiring and challenging Lincoln's inhabitants every day.

Atop the Capitol, a solitary sower defines a city's skyline. At the building's base, a somber statue of Abraham Lincoln remembers a country's past.

In the Haymarket, a locomotive springs to life and brings with it a bygone era, while on the campus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Mark di Suvero's "Old Glory," a colossal combination of steel and space, illustrates Lincoln's modern advances.

"In my opinion, public art is an important ingredient for the quality of life. We've come to expect it from all the great cities," said Margaret Berry, executive director of the Lincoln Arts Council. "It's as important as libraries, schools and roads."

Because of her enormous role in the Lincoln Arts Council, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating and educating about the Lincoln arts scene, Berry has firsthand experience with every aspect surrounding public art. It's a cause she proudly supports.

"I've been banging on the public art drum for seven years," she said. "I



ELLIS BURMAN created the concrete sculpture "SMOKE SIGNAL," located in Pioneers Park, in 1935.

hope the time is right for the citizens of Lincoln to start clamoring, too."

The reason Berry sounds like such a lobbyist is simple: In many ways, she is one. And by constantly battling to raise awareness and funds for Lincoln's public arts, Berry has developed some fantasies.

"My fondest dream would be if Mayor Wesely and the city of Lincoln would say, 'Hey, this is important,'" Berry said. "Many of our public and great municipal buildings are completely devoid of any concern for the aesthetic experience. And yet, you'd think these buildings would be the first place you'd find it, because they serve every citizen and our city's visitors."

One of the main reasons for any aesthetic holes in Lincoln's cityscape is the fact that there is no budget set aside by the city solely for the purpose of acquiring public art. This puts the weight of paying for the art on the

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