The better question is why not? Public art has been with us for time eternal beginning with the cave man. He drew murals on the walls of his cave to illustrate or advertise to others about his fruitful hunt, the size of his family and his day-to-day survival. Early inhabitants of the British Isles built Newgrange and Stonehenge to show their power and to mark their existence. The Egyptians constructed pyramids to honor their pharaohs and in the process created long-lasting reminders of their once great empire. Or consider the Greeks and the Romans, true masters of the carved edifice and statuary, a huge influence still felt today.

As Americans, we’ve come to this party a bit late and possibly a bit misdirected. Up until the late 1960’s, most public art in American was that of creating monuments to our heroes and memorializing wars; there is an important place for this honored art form. But, the 1960’s taught us that it is O.K. to make art for art’s sake, and that we don’t have to have a purpose! By the 1980’s, many cities and states were forming public art committees and sponsoring sculpture and mural competitions to engage the artists with their communities.

As we enter the new millennium, the engagement continues with temporary outdoor sculpture exhibits. These exhibits have gained appeal because of their accessibility and affordability (as many municipalities cut funding for the arts). Who benefits from these exhibits? Everyone. The exhibits serve to increase awareness of the visual arts, to enhance it! It is tough in these difficult times to justify public art in any form, but remember: Art is created not necessarily to sustain life but to enhance it!

Why public art?

### About Midwest Sculpture Initiative

Founded in 2004, the Midwest Sculpture Initiative (MSI) was formed out of Ken Thompson’s personal desire for more sculpture opportunities and was a natural extension of Flatlanders Sculpture Supply and Art Galleries.

Hence MSI’s mission is it: Provide outdoor sculpture exhibitions throughout the Midwest, promote cooperation among art and civic organizations, advance the role that the visual arts play in the quality of life and increase economic development.

In pursuing this goal, MSI has assembled 148 such exhibits thus far with more currently underway for 2019-2020. In organizing all of these exhibits MSI has collaborated with community members, committees, individual hosts, art professionals and sculptors. MSI possesses a database of over 900 sculptors to solicit work from, a website for promotion of exhibitions, large inventory of ‘rentable’ concrete pads, the heavy equipment necessary for the placement of pads and artwork, and the expertise to complete the task on time and on budget.

Our Founder

In 2004, the Midwest Sculpture Initiative was formed out of Ken Thompson’s personal desire for more sculpture opportunities and was a natural extension of Flatlanders Sculpture Supply and Art Galleries.

Ken Thompson holds a Master of Liberal Studies in Sculpture from the University of Toledo and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in painting and printmaking from Siena Heights College (University), Adrian, Michigan. Ken has been making sculpture for over thirty-five years out of a former car dealership now turned studio in Blissfield, Michigan. From this facility, he and his assistants operate Flatlanders Sculpture Supply & Art Galleries and the Midwest Sculpture Initiative. Ken is well versed in bronze casting and metal fabrication but prefers stone carving. For additional information about Ken, visit: www.knittthompson.com

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