



# FIELD OF DREAMS

## Big, Bold Sculptures Hit It Out of the Park

BY DANA SHAVIN / PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAN HENRY & STEVEN RATAJCZYK

Donyale Grove believes that if you build it, they will come.

"It" is a fully designed and developed 30-acre park featuring 80 contemporary, large-scale sculptures from countries as diverse as Uruguay, Mexico and Germany, interlaced with water features, a visitors center, native plantings, small galleries, informational plaques, and an amphitheater, all of which will stand in bold relief against Lookout Mountain.

"They" are people passionate about public art:

artists, art-minded tourists, and a Chattanooga community that understands that, in the words of Pablo Picasso, "Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life." That and the fact that art — in particular, art in public spaces — lifts a city up, drives it forward and contributes to that city's financial bottom line.

"And," says Grove, "while art or sculpture may not be for everybody, *everybody* cares about the economy."

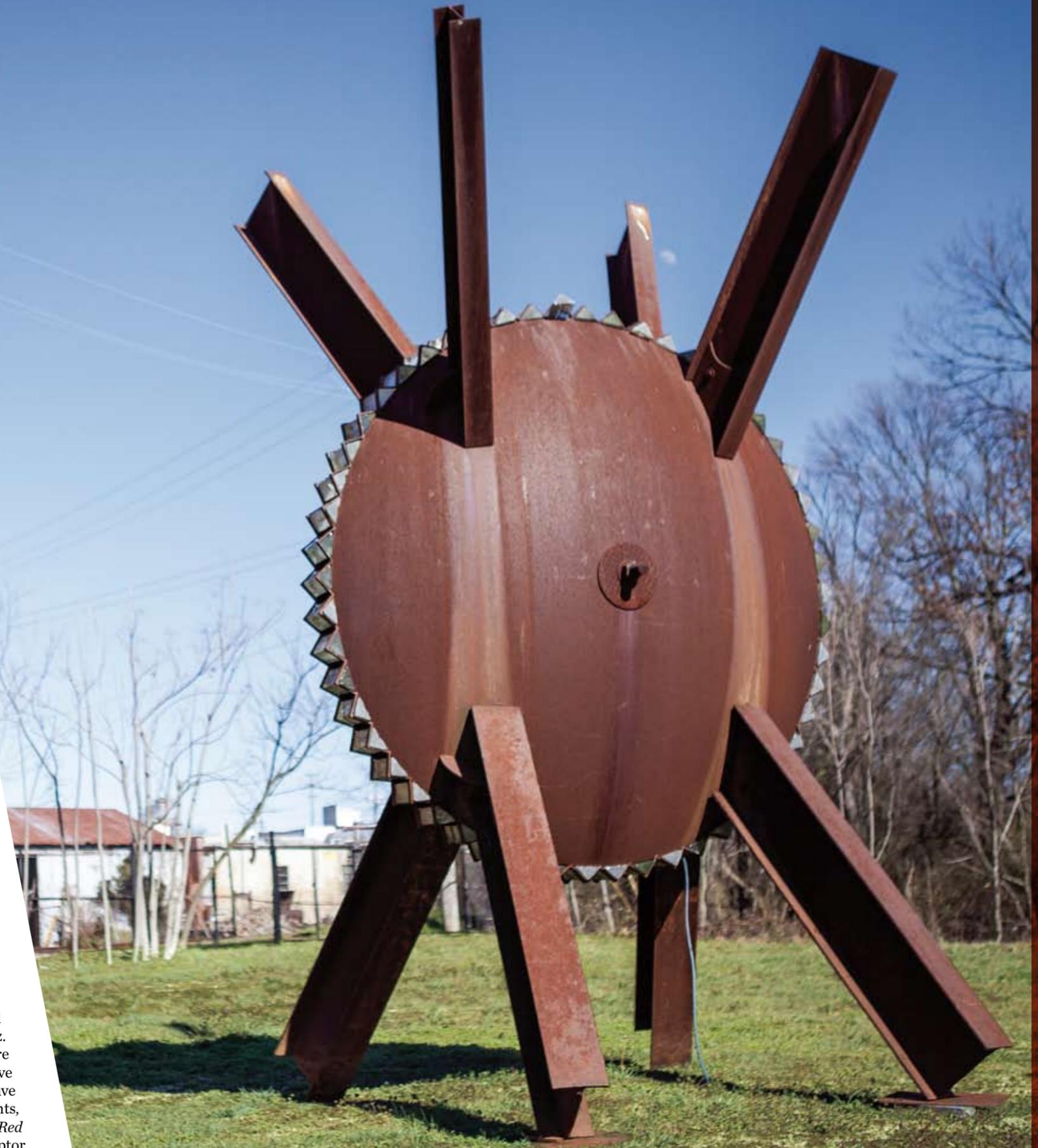
”Sculpture has this energy around it. It occupies space!”



DONYALE GROVE

Grove, a Tampa native who came to Chattanooga six years ago, is the executive director of SculptureFieldsatMontague Park (SFMP for short), a not-for-profit international sculpture park already beginning to take shape between 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Main Street, South Holtzclaw and Polk Street on Chattanooga’s Southside. There are 14 sculptures in place (twelve on loan and two that have been donated), plus four more awaiting installation and more on the way. But even in its early stages it’s possible to get a taste of what Grove means when she says that there is something about sculpture that people respond to dramatically.

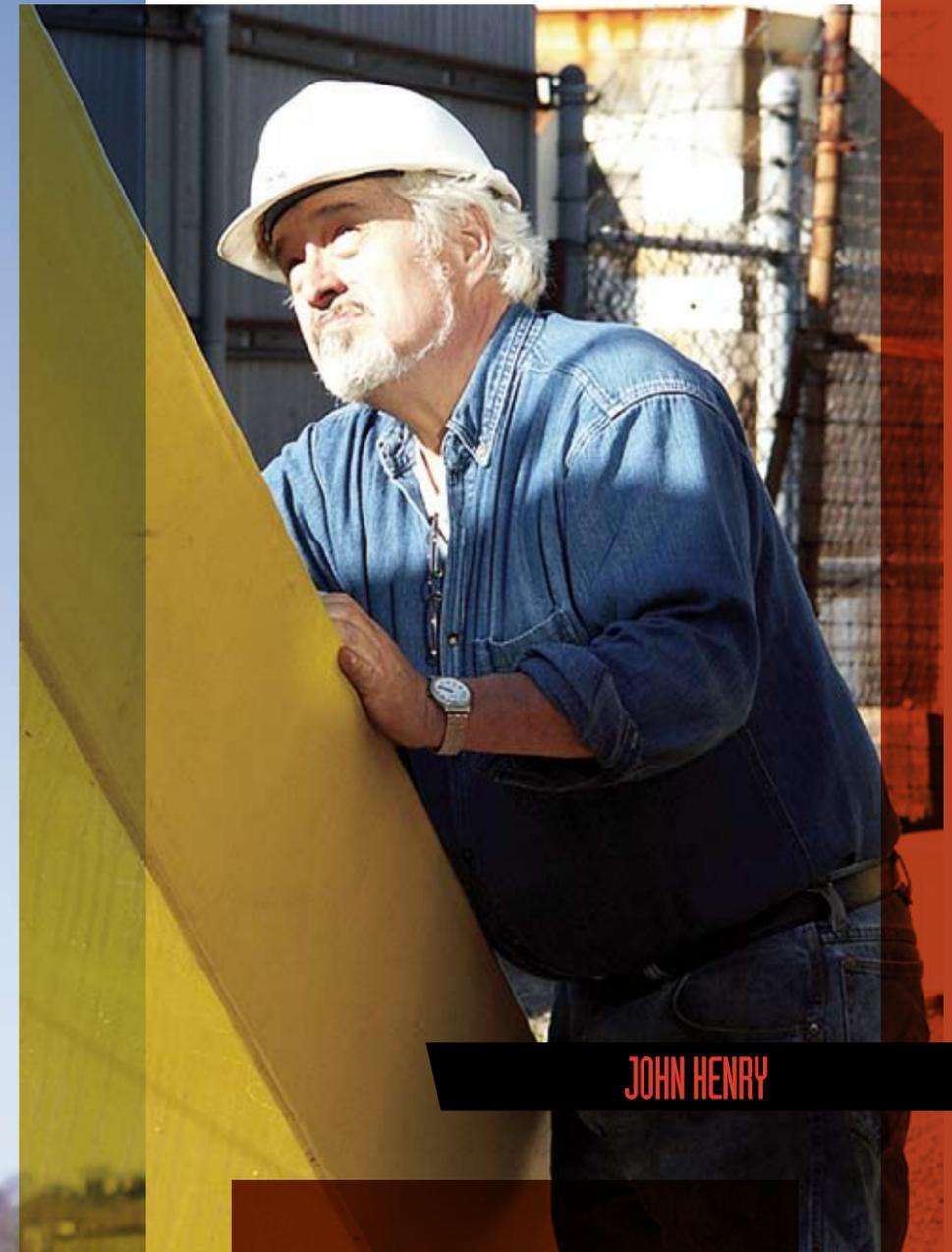
“Sculpture has this energy around it,” she says. “It occupies space!” A visit to the site confirms that and more. There is something otherworldly, almost Jurassic Park-like about the way the huge works of sculpture — there’s one that’s forty feet tall — populate the grounds. They feel almost warm-blooded, kinetic, eerily alive; some are even a tad bit threatening, like *Tick*, the fabricated steel, glass tubing and cast glass “bomb,” by a Kansas City artist named Stretch, and *RiverCityQueen*, a collection of welded red steel spikes by Doug Schatz. Most of the sculptures are considered non-objective art, though some have representational elements, such as *Watcher With Red Shoes*, by local sculptor Jim Collins.



And they are  
undeniably  
architectural.

“There’s a real connection between architecture and sculpture,” Grove says. The works of sculpture at the park are meant to be touched, walked through, even climbed on. Some are moveable, such as Jesus Morales’ granite and steel cylinder that visitors can crawl into and turn. *Temple Mayan*, by Bradenton, Florida artist Linda Howard is an aluminum structure 7 feet high, 21 feet wide and 21 feet deep, and built up on a berm. It’s expected that visitors will walk completely around, into and through it. And *The Boat*, a magnificent 30-foot-long, 12-foot-high aluminum and bronze vessel by Roger Colombik is expected to be a huge hit, given the tie-in with the Tennessee River and dragon boat races.

The idea for the sculpture park is relatively young, although the land on which it is being built was donated to the city in 1911 by the Montague family in the hopes that it would become a community meeting ground. While it fell into disrepair over the years, and was at one point even a dumpsite, it has been cleaned up and slowly re-energized. It was internationally known local sculptor John Henry who had a vision for a sculpture park after purchasing a parcel of land that abuts the Montague Park property. Henry formed the board and serves as primary curator; in addition, there is now a diverse group of artists, curators and people passionate about art behind SFMP, including Henry’s wife Pamela, sculptor Isaac Duncan, Hunter Museum director Dan Stetson, and Walter Schatz, a Nashville art collector and curator of the Vandy Fine Arts Gallery.



JOHN HENRY



At this time there is no formal submission process for artists hoping to have their sculpture installed; according to Henry, he’s either familiar with the artists himself or knows someone who knows them. “The sculpture world is fairly small,” Henry says, laughing. “Unlike painters, who can and often do tend to work in isolation, sculptors pretty much all know and rely on each other. We have to!”

That said, Henry does all the transport and installation at this time. “If I know we’re getting a piece from an artist in Texas, I’ll plan to pick it up when I go there to deliver one of my pieces. That way I don’t have to make two trips.”

Selected artists understand that their work will be on loan to SFMP for anywhere from one to five years, after which time it will be returned and replaced with work from another artist. While SFMP may purchase certain pieces for permanent installation, the idea is to keep the park fresh and ever-changing.

Inspired by Grounds For Sculpture, a 42-acre park featuring 270 large-scale works of sculpture in Hamilton Township, New Jersey, SFMP has big plans. Local architectural firm Barge Wagoner has been hired to design the park, which will include the aforementioned visitors center, water elements and amphitheater where educational opportunities including yoga and fitness classes can take place. There is even a plan to partner with a local or regional college to implement a "Sculpture Parks and Gardens" curriculum concentration and degree program. There will be multiple "galleries" within the park, which are actually landscaped areas around and between works that are intended to showcase smaller pieces. This, explains Henry, will make for a more pleasing aesthetic than simply dotting the rolling park plain with multiple pieces.

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— John Henry

Grove's confidence and enthusiasm about Sculpture Fields are infectious.

"Mayor Ron Littlefield has been super, super supportive. The impact this park will have will be huge. It is the first international sculpture park in the Southeast. It will add greatly to the allure of what's already here in the way of cultural activities, museums and things to see and do," she says. "But it will also bring people to Chattanooga just for sculpture alone."

It's all part of a larger vision, of "creative place-making," explains Grove. It's a concept that refers to the strategic shaping, through art and cultural activities, of the physical or social character

of a place. According to the National Endowment for the Arts, creative placemaking "...animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired." Creative placemaking also suggests that if you put a desired place or thing — a park or a restaurant or a museum, for example — into an area of town in need of revitalization, then the space in-between

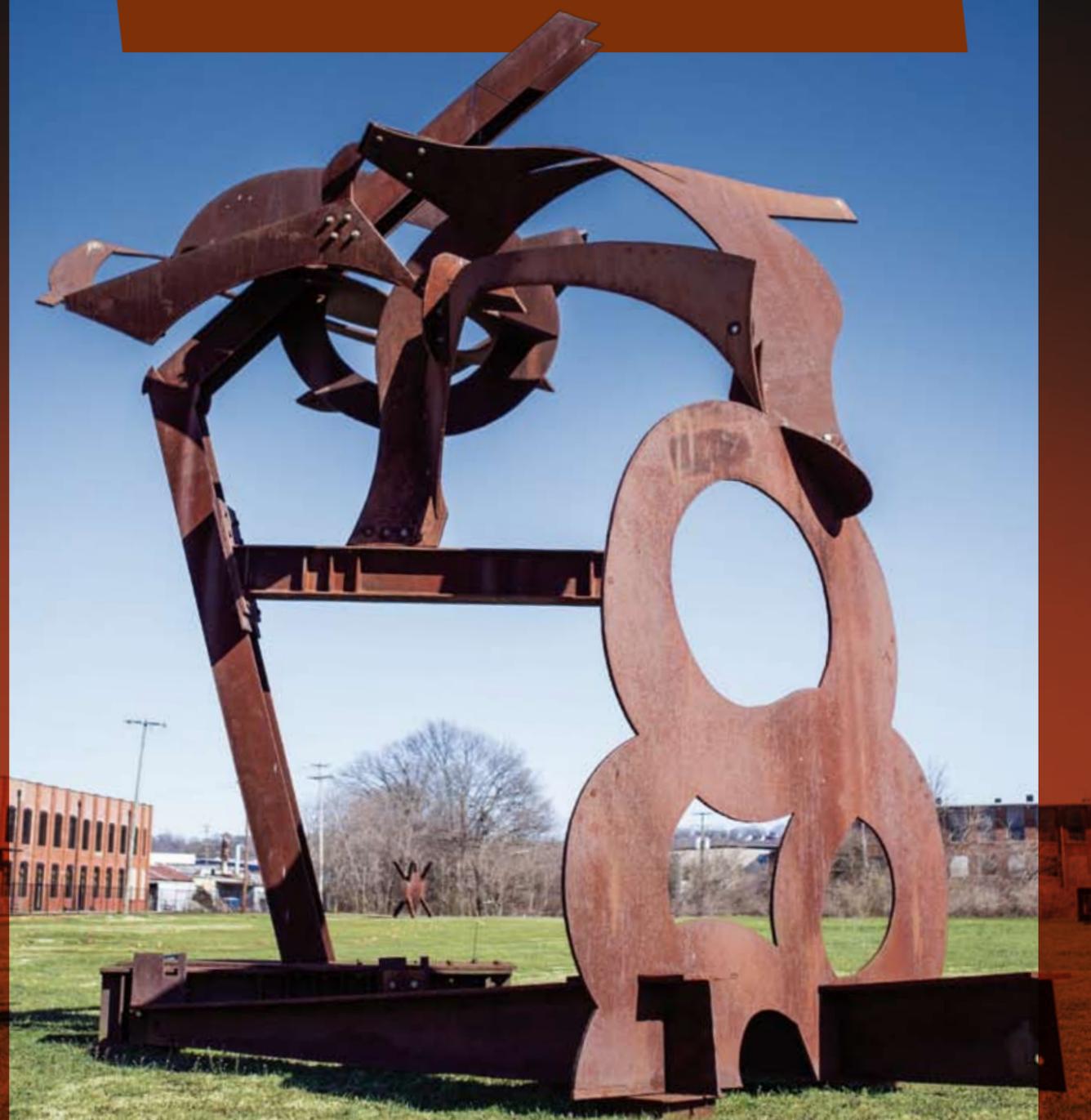
the already established and the newly established will naturally start to fill in. "My favorite Ruth Holmberg quote is, "Someone's got to go first," Grove says. "That's where we are... standing at the precipice of an explosion of growth."

According to Henry, phase one will likely open this fall, with the overall project completed within two years. "Although," says Henry, "I hope we are never complete. I hope we continue to evolve." He admits that

while the stated goal is 80 works of sculpture, the plan is to let the space dictate the final number. "There might be 60 and there might be 100 by the time it's all done," he says. "We'll see what we have room for."

The park will be open dawn to dusk, free of charge, and the hope is that it will attract people from all walks of life and be a place of enjoyment, connectivity and transformation.

These are no small goals. But then, these are no small works of sculpture.



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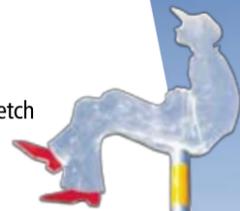


**Currently on View:**

- Tick, fabricated steel, glass tubing and cast glass, by Stretch
- Woman, fabricated steel, by Neltje
- Hugo, fabricated steel, by Lyman Kipp
- Oiler, fabricated steel pipe, by John Clement
- Watcher with Red Shoes, chrome and stainless steel, by local artist Jim Collins
- Dragon Fly, fabricated aluminum, by Lymann Kipp
- Keystone of Space, fabricated steel, by Carl Billingsley
- Captain Merkel's Ramming Dragon, powder coated stainless and aluminum, by local artist Verina Baxter
- Swizzle, fabricated steel, by Mark diSuvero
- Springfield, welded aluminum, by local artist John Henry
- One, fabricated steel, by George Schroeder
- Granite Windows, granite and steel, by Jesus Moroles
- River City Queen, welded steel, by Doug Schatz
- 3 Elements, welded aluminum, by John Henry

**Awaiting Installation or Soon to Arrive:**

- Temple Maqan, painted aluminum, by Linda Howard
- Scelch II, welded steel, by Klaus Duschat
- Cross of Stele, steel and granite, by Hartmut Stielow
- Gezeiten VI, welded steel, Jan Meyer-Rogge
- The Boat, aluminum and bronze, by Roger Colombik
- Odyssey, fabricated steel, by Ray Katz
- Chartres, fabricated steel, by Mark Shumake, currently on view at Chattanooga State
- Composer, steel, by Heinz Aeschlimann, currently on view at Chattanooga State
- Sculpture (TBA), by Leonardo Nierma
- Sculpture (TBA), by Pablo Atchugarry



**More:**  
 Sculpturefields.org (website under construction)  
 Sculpture Fields at Montague Park (Facebook)  
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