



# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS County of Dane

ROOM 362, CITY-COUNTY BUILDING  
210 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BOULEVARD  
MADISON, WISCONSIN 53703-3342  
608/266-5758 • WI RELAY 7-1-1



## MEMORANDUM

To: Personnel & Finance Committee

Cc: Mark Fraire, Dane Arts

From: Patrick Miles, County Board Chair

Date: July 25, 2025

Re: Donation of two wooden art sculptures from the Harry Whitehorse International Wood Sculpture Exhibit

From September 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025, in partnership with the Friends of San Damiano, the Harry Whitehorse International Wood Sculpture Festival was the first biennial weeklong artist-in-residence program, celebrating art, culture, and community. This unique festival brought Indigenous and international artists together to create remarkable wood sculptures, fostering cross-cultural exchange and preserving the legacy of the late Ho-Chunk artist Harry Whitehorse.

Harry Whitehorse (1927-2017) was a Madison-area artist known for his remarkably varied work across multiple media, including wood sculpture. Wood was one of his first mediums, reflecting the cultural practices and natural environment that shaped his early life. His work deeply connects to his Ho-Chunk heritage, natural surroundings, and cultural history. The Madison area is home to more than 10 of his public sculptures, several of which are from historic trees that had significant meaning for the community.

For a limited time, Olbrich Botanical Gardens and Garver Feed Mill exhibited the eleven wood sculptures created during the Harry Whitehorse International Wood Sculpture Festival. In addition to honoring an Indigenous artist and celebrating Harry's legacy, the festival and the artworks aimed to highlight the cultural importance of Ho-Chunk ancestral land in Dejope (Madison, WI area), foster relationships and collaboration between artists and the community, celebrate Indigenous cultures, and bring international ideas and culture to the Midwest.

Now, through the generous donation of Gene Delcourt, artist and founder of the Harry Whitehorse International Wood Sculpture Festival, Dane County has the opportunity to share a selection of these artworks with the public who visit the City-County Building into the future.

The two sculptures, which have been permanently donated to the county, are "No More Stolen Sisters" by Gene Delcourt (estimated in-kind value: \$4,500) and "Flow" by Michael Rofka (estimated in-kind value: \$6,500) (see images and artist information on following pages).

On July 23, 2025, the City-County Liaison Committee approved proposed location of both donated sculptures inside the entry vestibule of the City-County Building.

For the reasons set forth above, I ask that the committee authorize acceptance of the proposed donation of the wood sculptures.

Thank you.

# No More Stolen Sisters

Artist | Gene Delcourt

A red hand over the mouth has become the symbol of a growing movement, the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW) movement. It stands for all the missing sisters whose voices are not heard. It stands for the silence of the media and law enforcement in the midst of this crisis.  
#NoMoreStolenSisters.

Material: Basswood

Location: Olbrich Botanical Gardens - Atwood Ave Garden



## Gene Delcourt

WISCONSIN, ABENAKI/ PHILIPPINES

Gene Delcourt is a wood sculptor, who during his MFA studies at University of Wisconsin-Madison sought the guidance of Ho-Chunk artist Harry Whitehorse to further his education. During this time, Harry convinced Gene to attend wood carving symposiums abroad – leading Gene to participate in six European events. Honoring his mentor, Gene is a founder of the Harry Whitehorse International Wood Sculpture Festival.

FACEBOOK

# Flow

Artist | Michael Rofka

My main theme in making art is nature and the red oak used fits nicely with my theme. When making art, I think about geometry and above all the flow and form found in water, air, and shapes in nature. With these components I start an open creative process. I am influenced by the wood, the place, and the environment. There is no defined meaning in my work. An explanation would destroy my intent. My hope is that visitors can find a dialogue with the sculpture by feeling and finding her/his own meaning.

Material: Red Oak

Location: Garver Feed Mill





## Michael Rofka

LAATZEN, GERMANY

Michael Rofka had a deep affinity for trees and the natural world as a child. He would look for and gather stones. At first he wanted to become a scientist and studied biochemistry, but he couldn't see or experience nature. He therefore chose to enroll in a multidisciplinary academy to study fine arts. Painting and installations are included in his work, but sculpture has taken center stage. In more than 20 nations, he and his Ukrainian wife Anna, who is also an artist, have created stone and wood sculptures as well as land art pieces. While Michael doesn't use figurative art in his creations, he nevertheless views art as a means of artistically exploring and comprehending nature.