

## This urban art walk works

Late artist Jules Olitski said, "Sculpture is the stuff you trip over when you are backing up trying to look at a painting."

Since Olitski was a painter who also sculpted, it's unclear whether he was mocking that particular art form or merely being self-deprecating.

Which brings us to the 25 sculptures recently deployed along downtown sidewalks in Mankato and North Mankato.

About them there is nothing to mock. In fact, the organizers of the CityArt Walking Sculpture Tour warrant kudos for placing all that eclectic eye candy amid the usual visual malaise of banks, brickwork and stoplights.

When it comes to art, I'm a near-Philistine. My artistic sensibilities fall somewhere between "Dogs Playing Poker" and the "Moaning Lisa," which is like the "Mona Lisa," only pornographic.

That said, I know what I like, and those 25 sculptures mounted on their limestone cube pedestals are likable to the eye. They class up the place, as it were.

The works by a national cast of artists will remain in place for a year, then be replaced by 25 others.

The public also gets to vote on its

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Free Press

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favorite sculpture, which is fun and interactive, I suppose, but basically wrongheaded because voting on art is like voting on colors.

Your favorite is red; my favorite is blue. Point?

A salient feature of the downtown sculpture ensemble is its paradox: The pieces boldly stand out, yet blend in with their surroundings.

The works are small, walk- up accessible and complement their spaces rather than dominate them, unlike the storied Mankato Piece, a hulking heap of steel- beam welds that formerly reposed downtown before being carted off to Riverfront Park where it abides, in poetic justice, mere yards from a scrap iron yard.

The pieces comprising the CityArt Walking Sculpture Tour are broadly diverse. They range from a New York artist's clay work resembling age- fused pieces of hard ribbon candy you'd find in grandma's dish to a work titled " Blue Chain Jane," a female torso fashioned from the type of heavy chain you might use to yank out stumps with your pickup.

And as an added bonus, explanatory placards on the pieces contain some bangup examples of artspeak.

Here's what a Wisconsin sculptor wrote about his " Seedling III": " It explores the formal relationship between opposing forces such as nature versus artificial, dynamic versus static, while attempting to create an ambiguous narrative between these disparate elements."

But of course.

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