

# A Legacy in Bronze



**OU Artist in Residence Casts Oklahoma History in Bronze**

**W**hether they realized it or not, most Norman residents are familiar with Paul Moore's work.

With more than 150 commissions to his name, it's no wonder the sculptor is considered among the most prolific sculptors in America, with projects ranging from portraits to monuments.

"Most artists will do about 30 commissions in a lifetime. I've already crossed 152 commissions," Moore said, standing before a clay horse cut into pieces and mounted in his Norman studio in preparation of being molded and cast in bronze.

His work can be seen around the world in prominent museums, galleries, universities, embassies and other institutions, including the U.S. Capitol Collection, the Smithsonian, The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, and locally at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum and virtually every corner of the OU campus.

As a fifth generation Oklahoman whose family tree has roots as far back as the Trail of Tears, Moore's art is just one way he has helped shape the landscape and stories of Norman and his home state.

"My big focus is on education and trying to raise funding for education; and trying to figure out how to help the artists in the state," Moore said.

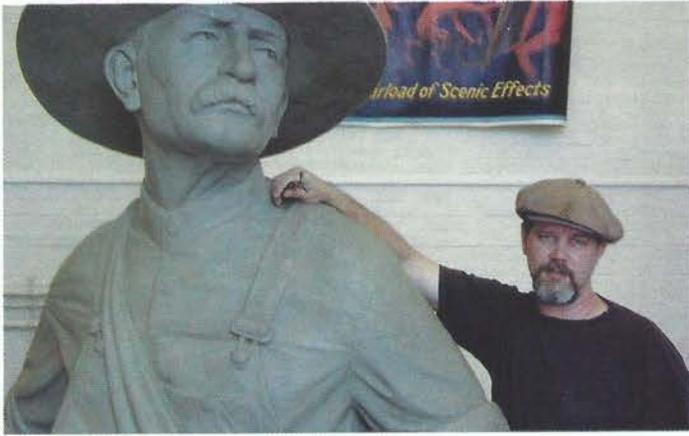
Self-taught, Moore said he was just as surprised as anyone when, during the mid-1990s, University of Oklahoma President David Boren asked him to revive the university's figurative sculpting program after a 28-year hiatus.

Leaving his home in Santa Fe, N.M., Moore moved to Norman in 1997 to do just that. To date, Moore is only the second professor of figurative sculpture in OU's 129-year history.

"Since I'm locked in [the studio] all the time, I don't really think about how I affect other things," Moore said. "I do know that several of my students have gone off to be professional artists. I'm always in contact with them, and they're calling me up for advice. That's something I never had."

"I had a guy [Joe Beeler, co-founder of Cowboy Artists of America] give me

(this page) Photo by: Mark Doescher



one day of his life, which changed my life. That's the main reason why I came to OU, because that one day changed my life, and I just hope I can help other people out and give back to the art community."

In addition to helping his own students, Moore has also helped fund numerous scholarships, which have benefited student athletes, Spanish and Latino students, as well as students in the School of Art, through the sale of his sculptures.

"We did a 22-inch version of the Seed Sower which we sold. A hundred percent of the profits went into scholarship funding," Moore said. "In fact, through the sales of sculptures, (we have raised) probably close to \$400,000."

"Just recently, I did a small sculpture that we used to help promote the newly-formed Board of Visitors for the School of Art, and we were able to raise over \$50,000."

Moore recently celebrated his 21st year with the university, and in that time, he's made his mark in many ways, including scouting sites for new artwork and advising on just about everything connected to the arts such as museums, restoration and installation, among other things.

Not long after his arrival in Norman, Moore sculpted the Seed Sower, which has become one of the university's most iconic images, appearing at all three OU campuses as well as on the official seal, among other materials.

He also is the artist behind the OU seal that is displayed in the floor of the Stuart Landing in the Oklahoma Memorial Union, as well as countless statues, reliefs and busts around the Norman campus.

"Just recently, we installed the Bob Stoops sculpture and the President Boren sculpture. It's been an honor to be a part of honoring the giants of OU," Moore said.

Although Moore continues to teach at the university, he spends much of his time in his Downtown Norman studio, where he works with his two sons, Ryan and Todd.

"It's nice working with my sons," Moore said. "My youngest son [Todd] actually started working with me when he was 8. He comes in and helps out when he's not busy in the office. He's also my photographer and graphic designer, so he does a little bit of everything. And Ryan's a mold maker and the sculptor's assistant in here, and he's a great sculptor in his own right."

Moore and his son's have spent years working on a 20-year contract project to create the Oklahoma Centennial Land Run Monument, which Moore refers to as his Mount Rushmore.

"We used every trick in the book to pull it off," Moore said. "I worked at foundries in the early part of my career and taught myself enlarging. I'm glad I did that, because if I didn't have that experience, I couldn't have finished this project. Art is not instant gratification. There's a process that you have to really understand from beginning to end ... and that takes time and life experience."

"My life is sculpting," Moore said. "People ask, 'what do you do when you get home at night?' Well, you know, I lay down on ice packs and get myself going for the next day, and I normally have a sculpture at home that I'm working on. It's not a glamorous life. It's a lot of hard work. But I enjoy it."

Moore averages two to three land-run monument pieces per year. The monument sits on either side of the Bricktown Canal, south of Bass Pro in the southeast corner of Bricktown, Moore expects to have the project wrapped up in the next year, which would be one year ahead of schedule.

When complete, the monument will consist of 45 pieces, all at life-and-a-half scale, depicting the raw energy of the land run that helped settle Oklahoma Territory. It will rank as one of the largest bronze sculptures in the world. — BSM