



Possible Utah monument latest land fight/8C



Scottish quartet to perform at arts center/3C



Artist Mike Leckie lightly sands a bas-relief sculpture of decathlete Ashton Easton recently in his Eugene studio.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Sculpting until the cows come home

Olympians provide inspiration for Eugene sculptor

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East Oregonian

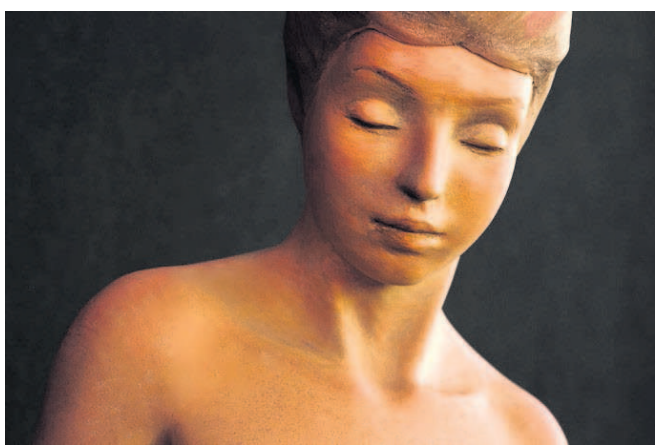
In Mike Leckie's world, cows and classic sculpture are the perfect mix.

The Eugene sculptor grew up on the back of a horse on his family's Fossil-area ranch. Though he spends hours every day in his Hobbit-hole studio in Eugene creating art, Leckie begins each day by tending to his small herd of cows.

"I get up and feed the cows and then work all day and go back and feed cows in the evening," he said. "I use the cows as bookends to my extremely busy days. They keep me grounded."

In the summer, Leckie and his neighbors drag out plastic chairs and adult beverages to a spot near the pasture fence for what they call "cocktails with cows."

Last week, Leckie took a break from his daily routine, manning his vendor booth in the shadow of the Hayward Field grandstands for the



LEFT: The Reluctant Goddess.

RIGHT: As a boy growing up in Eastern Oregon, sculptor Mike Leckie considered Chief Joseph one of his heroes.



Contributed photos

Olympic Trials.

In the corner of the booth, a bronzed woman he calls "the Reluctant Goddess" looked shyly away from passing track fans. Her price tag? Fifteen thousand dollars. On the walls, Leckie had displayed less pricey bas-relief sculptures of Olympic athletes he made from a substance called Hydrostone — part plaster, part cement. Bas-relief pieces are sculpted images that arise out of a flat background. Think of a coin.

"Every coin back throughout history is a tiny bas-relief sculpture," Leckie explained over the roar that

exploded from the Hayward Field crowd. "It's an ancient, ancient form of sculpture."

His Olympian models included decathlete Ashton Eaton, discus thrower Mac Wilkins, high jumper Jesse Williams, marathoner Sally Kipyego and middle distance runner Amy Yoderbegley. Leckie sculpted his first Olympian in 2008: pole vaulter/decathlete Bob Richards, the first athlete to grace the Wheaties box. This year he portrayed long distance runner Andrew Wheating, who would race the 1,500-meter later that day in an unsuccessful

attempt for another Olympic berth. Leckie had hung signs proclaiming: "Go Andy."

The 66-year-old artist loves to sculpt nudes, busts and other homages to the human form. And who has better human form than a track-and-field athlete?

"Where else am I going to find these bodies?" he asked. "These bodies are exactly what I want to sculpt."

He chose athletes based on their physique, talent and personality.

"They are all amazingly nice, egoless individuals," he said. "They are surprisingly humble. I'm not interested in

sculpting people who aren't."

It's not surprising that Leckie abhors swagger. He is a down-to-earth sort of guy who avoids crowds and swears he usually doesn't wear such a clean shirt. It's hard to believe he has an inkling of introversion in his psyche, though. Leckie talks animatedly and when he is amused, a laugh starts deep in his chest and bursts out like lava from a volcano.

"He's a country boy from Eastern Oregon with a Eugene twist," said Carlos Aguilera, a friend helping out in Leckie's booth. "He pretends he likes being

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— Mike Leckie,
Eugene sculptor

secluded from everything, but he has friends all over the place."

Leckie, however, happily spends hours on end alone in his home-based studio. His mark is everywhere in the abode. In the middle of the kitchen table sits a bronze of Chief Joseph, one of Leckie's boyhood heroes. Leckie is in the midst of painting the bust to give it a buckskin look. Everywhere there are sculptures of stone, bronze, clay and wood, paintings, glasswork, figurines, torsos, busts and masks. Piles of stones Leckie buys at rock

See SCULPTOR/2C

OUT OF THE VAULT

Kinzua teen rules over tiny town he created

Like Gulliver in the fictional land of Lilliput, Otis Cody towered over a tiny town built in the community of Kinzua. By July of 1971, 19-year-old Cody had been building the miniature logging town for seven years, and his model community covered a good share of the hillside behind his family's home.

The town of Codyville included tiny logging equipment, homes and even paved roads. Log decks and stacks of tiny finished lumber dotted the hillside. And when Cody was not hammering and sawing to add to the town, he was managing the weeds — though he left a few to serve as trees. "It gives me something to do," Cody said.

Deer from the forest around Kinzua

often wandered through the town at night, leaving only tracks. Human vandals, however, once raided Codyville under the cover of darkness and caused damage that took weeks to repair.

The adults in Kinzua, including Cody's parents, loved to show off the miniature town to visitors. Ray Cody worked as a truck driver for Kinzua Corp., while his wife worked on a manufacturing line in the mill, along with the wives of several other Kinzua employees.

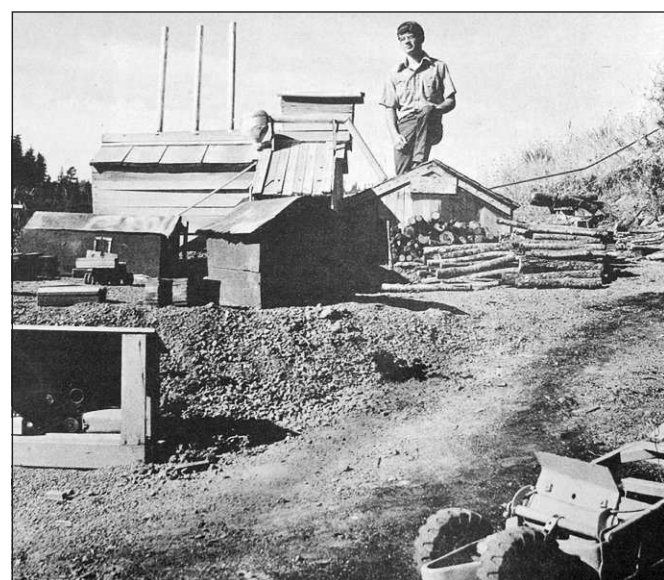
"We're proud of the town Cody has built," said Allen Nistad, Kinzua's general manager.

The town of Kinzua was owned by Kinzua Corp., which operated a lumber mill south of Fossil in Wheeler County. Kinzua was founded in 1927

to house the mill workers and included its own post office and a Union Pacific rail line to ship lumber to Condon.

Once the timber supply started to decline and operating costs increased, the mill was shut down and operations moved to Heppner in 1978. Kinzua Corp. removed all the buildings of the town, including Codyville, and allowed the area to return to a natural state. The only thing remaining of the original site is Kinzua Hills Golf Club, a member-owned six-hole golf course 11 miles east of Fossil.

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Otis Cody of Kinzua looms over his miniature logging town in July of 1971.

EO file photo