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OVERCOME
*Sculptures
in Chenal*



“OVERCOME”

BY SCULPTOR MARK LEICHLITER

PART 4 OF A 5-PART SERIES ON THE SCULPTURES OF CHENAL

Sculptor Mark Leichliter of Ft. Collins, Colorado is no stranger to Little Rock. He’s participated in Sculpture at the River Market for nine of the ten years it has been in existence, and Little Rock has fallen in love with his talent. There are presently eight of his pieces displayed throughout the city:

- ✧ “Interdependence”
— Bill and Hillary International Airport
- ✧ “Together”
— River Market
- ✧ “Shelter Stack”
— River Market
- ✧ “Mockingbird Shade”
— Arkansas Children’s Hospital
- ✧ “Through the Looking Glass”
— Arkansas River Trail, behind the Statehouse Convention Center
- ✧ “Rotary”
— River Market
- ✧ “Bookmobile”
— Episcopal Collegiate School
- ✧ “Overcome”
— Chenal Parkway

Mark grew up in Loveland, Colorado, the home of many sculptors who enjoy the proximity of numerous foundries in the area. He comes from a family of builders. His father, uncle, and grandfather constructed custom homes all over northern Colorado, and Mark worked along with them while in high school. He also began working in the studio of Dan Ostermiller, a local sculptor. Dan soon had Mark overseeing the foundry work and casting of his large pieces, mostly wild-life sculptures.

Eventually, Mark, who always enjoyed his high school art classes, started casting his own bronze sculptures. He moved on to stone and wood carving, and for the past twenty-three years he has specialized in large public sculptures, collaborating with architects, landscape architects, engineers, designers and a host of city planners and officials.

According to Mark, “‘Overcome,’ is my most complex design to date.” The shining, mirror-polished, hand-honed, stainless steel piece graces the median of Chenal Parkway across from The Promenade. Weighing 2,000+ pounds, “Overcome” is 16 feet tall and 11.9 feet wide at the base and the crown.

We’re lucky to have this incredible piece in Chenal at all. “The sculpture was originally proposed for the competition to commemorate the anniversary of the Little Rock Nine at Central High School,” said Mark. “The committee chose another piece, but local donors liked ‘Overcome’ so much, they commissioned me to go ahead with its construction, with the new placement to be in Chenal.” (You can see photos of the fascinating construction and installation of “Overcome” and more on jk-designs-inc.com/project-feed/category/leichliter)

“We are not afraid, we are not afraid.
We are not afraid today.
Deep in my heart I do believe,
We shall overcome someday.”

(Gospel/protest song from 1959
the anthem of the Civil Rights Movement)





They rise up and come together, and, leaning upon their collective strength, break their bonds to soar free. Each form is an arrow pointing skyward in continued aspiration for the greater good and an indication that more is yet to be done.

Ironically, another of Mark's Little Rock pieces almost didn't get off the drawing board either. "I participated in the public art competition through Sculpture in the River Market in 2013. My proposal, 'Through the Looking Glass,' was not chosen by the popular vote. Ted Schaal's cool piece 'Open Window' was the winner. After all was said and done (and much celebratory libations consumed), the powers that be decided they liked 'Through the Looking Glass' so much, they vowed to raise the funds to buy it, too. So,

in Little Rock, even losers can be winners."

Tragically, Mark's work at the Arkansas Children's Hospital, "Mockingbird Shade," was vandalized in 2017, as was the Rahling Road rotary sculpture "Embrace" by Kathi Caricof. The decision to dismantle and repair or replace "Mockingbird Shade" is presently under consideration.

A charter member of the National Sculptors' Guild, Mark also sketches, paints, and creates pieces on his iPad, but he doesn't participate in gallery shows, and he focuses strictly on public art for his livelihood. You can see many more of his impressive sculptures at (www.nationalsculptorsguild.com/artist_leichter.html) and more about his work on his blog. ♦

Wyatt and Riley, the grandchildren of Chenal residents Peggy and Bruce Munson quickly named this shiny sculpture "Frozen," a reference to the movie. So why is it called "Overcome"? Mark's proposal for the piece explains it all.

"We are not afraid, we are not afraid. We are not afraid today. Deep in my heart I do believe. We shall overcome someday." (Gospel/protest song from 1959, the anthem of the Civil Rights Movement)

On September 25, 1957, nine brave schoolchildren walked into Central High School and became symbols for a nation. They symbolized the righteous striving for equality and justice that continues to this day. I have chosen to refer symbolically to this event in my sculpture "Overcome" to honor both these students and what they represent to us all as a society and a culture. Nine shapes begin, caged by a lattice of injustice and segregation.



Interwoven will be the next Leichter sculpture placement by the Guild in Little Rock