

## SUNDIAL SCULPTURE TO BE DEDICATED ON I-40

A sundial that's a 100-foot by 500-foot work of art will be dedicated today at the Interstate 40 welcome center at Buffalo Valley.



That's almost an hour east of Nashville near Cookeville.

The sundial, which is 12 feet high, is titled "Marking Time," and represents all 95 counties, according to the Tennessee Arts Commission.

The work by Knoxville artist Preston Farabow is not just for show. It also keeps time.

The dedication today is at 2 p.m., Central Standard Time, at the Smith County Welcome Center on I-40, exit 268.

This makes a dozen Tennessee artists who have art pieces at state welcome centers, the announcement from the commission says.

ANNE PAINE

Thursday, 05/24/07: <http://www.tennessean.com>

## DRIVE-BY CULTURE

Knoxville artist's sundial is newest sculpture to be displayed at state's welcome centers

**By DOUG MASON, [mason@knews.com](mailto:mason@knews.com)  
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He laughs about making pretty objects for rich people. Except "objects" isn't the word he uses.

Metal sculptor Preston Farabow is a self-identified blue-collar artist with socialist ideas about sharing his talent. But he's also a realist with overhead costs and a family to support.

So he makes pretty "objects" for rich people. And he drinks from the corporate trough via an ongoing relationship with the company that produces Red Bull energy drink.

But last week, the Knoxville artist was guest of honor at the unveiling of a work he created for the people.

A large-scale stainless steel sundial - 100 feet by 50 feet, and approximately 12 feet high at the tip of its shadow caster - is now a permanent fixture at the Interstate 40 Smith County Welcome Center at Buffalo Valley in Middle Tennessee.

The work, "Marking Time," is the 12th piece of public art to be commissioned and placed at a Tennessee welcome center.

Farabow's art is free to be enjoyed by the masses. And it was paid for by the state. What more could a socialist want?

"Marking Time" is a functioning sundial. It marks solar time - so welcome center visitors still need to check their cell phones and watches to determine the correct time for Smith County, which is in the Central Time zone.

The Smith County Welcome Center is the most visited in the state, with about 3 million visits a year. It serves both east- and west-bound I-40 traffic.

It was a 121-mile commute for Farabow to supervise the installation of his art. He received a \$73,000 commission from the state. Anything left over after grading the land, pouring the concrete slab the piece sits on, and other labor and construction costs was the artist's fee.

The sundial includes 95 markers inscribed with the name of each Tennessee county. The work was originally designed for the governor's mansion.

Farabow submitted his design to a 2004 competition to create a piece of public art for the Tennessee residence. The Tennessee Arts Commission-sponsored competition was part of the renovation of the governor's mansion overseen by Tennessee first lady Andrea Conte.

The committee loved Farabow's sundial but chose another work for the governor's mansion. Conte charged the Tennessee Arts Commission with finding another spot for the sundial sculpture, so it was included in the ongoing welcome center art project.

The partners in the project were the first lady, TAC, Tennessee Department of Transportation and the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development.

Farabow broke ground in October 2006 and finished in April 2007. It was dedicated with a ceremony on May 24.

For Farabow, a theology scholar who nearly went to seminary, "Marking Time" is a contemplation of time and how we spend it. He was inspired by the year he took after the birth of the younger of his two sons.

The artist is co-owner of Ironwood Studios at 119 Jennings St., just off the intersection of Central Avenue and Broadway. Built circa 1924, the building was original the repair depot for the Consolidated Coach Co. Much later it was home to a specialty metals company that supplied Farabow with his steel.

Ironwood Studios is home to Aespyre, Farabow's business, and McGilvray Woodworks, operated by John McGilvray.

Aespyre is a design house and metal fabrication shop. Farabow, aided by two artist assistants, creates custom furniture and ornamental ironwork. The ironwork at Cha Cha Restaurant is his.

That represents about half of Farabow's artistic output. The other half is spent on his sculptures.

"I get real frustrated with the move toward conceptual art," he says. "That does more to alienate most people from art.

"I'm a socialist. I want to appeal to a broader demographic. The conceptual art movement, in my opinion, is more concerned with making art to impress other artists.

"I feel successful as an artist if (my work) appeals to a broader audience."

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