

A Reprint from *Tierra Grande*, the Real Estate Center Journal



Yard art has long been a popular form of expression. From the now-classic pink flamingos to stone figurines to a high school football player sign in the neighbor's yard, yard art personalizes properties. For the past decade, Amarillo has been home to a unique style of yard art.

Stanley Marsh 3 (he's the third Stanley Marsh but deems "III" pretentious), creator of Cadillac Ranch (see photo, top right) has placed more than 5,000 yard signs throughout the Amarillo area. The signs, which resemble road signs, are on private property and vary from simple messages to replicas of famous paintings. Marsh's ranch was the site of the first sign — "Road Does Not End." Another early sign was a picture of Marilyn Monroe; it is on Monroe Street.

Signs can be found at homes in all price ranges as well as in store parking lots and on vacant land. When property owners with signs were asked why they wanted the signs, most responded that they thought they were fun and helped personalize their properties. An art teacher has a sign in her yard that says "ART's exalted character clears my brain." A former marine feels his sign says it all for him — "No Dishonor Before Death Semper Fi."

To request a sign, property owners simply had to call Marsh's office. He then arranged for one to be placed on the property for free. If a person decides they no longer want a sign in their yard, they can remove it or have Marsh remove the sign at no cost.



When asked how the sign idea got started, Marsh responded, "I'm an artist; I like to make things . . . it was just fun to make them." Marsh promotes noncommercial, nonadvertising art. He created the Dynamite Museum, a group of artists who came up with the sign content. These artists pulled ideas from books, television and their own imaginations.

Reaction to the signs has been varied. One resident who has a sign commented, "Ours is a conservative Republican city

that tends toward being overly conventional, consumption-oriented and alas, lacking in local color. Stanley's signs contribute just the right touch of amusing eccentricity to the place."

Another resident said, "the money that has been spent should have gone for something to benefit the community, like an activity center for underprivileged children."

While some residents say the signs are fun and entertaining to read, others call them an eyesore.



MONEY DOESN'T MATTER. (Left) Signs adorn the lawns of homes of all socioeconomic levels. (Top) Stanley Marsh 3 at Cadillac Ranch.

Wes Ninemire of Courtesy Sign Company printed about half the signs. He says that about half of the comments he receives are positive and half negative. He thinks the signs "are unique and are a conversation starter."

The Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University surveyed 210 local real estate licensees to determine their opinions about the signs. Responses numbered 108. Two survey respondents said that they have signs in their yards; one said his 13-year-old son called Marsh to request the sign.

Fifty-seven percent of responding licensees believe the signs decrease the value of property. One appraiser said he had not seen any change in the value of property as a result of a sign.

The sales price of homes with signs may be unaffected because the owner can remove them. However, signs can impact the sales of nearby homes, according to one licensee. If buyers do not like a sign on adjacent property, there is little they can do. One licensee found the sign next door to her home so distasteful that she purchased the house to get rid of the sign.

Eighteen percent of respondents said they had sold a property with a sign on it in the past year. Twenty-four percent said it can be more difficult to sell a property with a sign on it. However, only two licensees reported having lowered the price of a property because of a sign. Overall, licensees said clients from out of town considered the signs a curiosity.

A second survey was sent to 350 Amarillo residents who have signs in their yards or who live adjacent to property with a sign. One hundred fifty responded. Seventy percent of respondents who have a sign believe the signs have no effect on property values in their neighborhood. Of those respondents who live next door to or across the street from a sign, 42 percent believe the signs have a negative impact on property values in their neighborhood.

Marsh has stopped putting up signs. He explains that as an artist he intuitively knew when this work of art

was finished. When people inquire about getting signs, he refers them to a company that manufactures custom signs. One survey respondent reported he had one made for \$70.

Marsh's signs have begun to migrate. As people move, some have taken the signs with them. Signs have been sighted in Lubbock, Austin and in Despair, Texas, near the New Mexico border.

Public art frequently draws a mixed response. In the case of Amarillo, the art has been brought a little closer to home than usual. ♣

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