



ART PARK

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calm back down.

The main issue wasn't just organizing the festival itself, it was public perception. In the wake of Athens' largest confrontation of old and new, establishment and change, peace and war, Art Park sought the middle ground of non-partisan artistic expression.

But this was only a year after Woodstock, only two months after nationwide outrage over the United States' involvement in the My Lai Massacre, only two weeks after firebombings on OU's campus caused \$120,000 in damage. To be eccentric, but dedicated sculptors in the woods was to be viewed as anti-establishment. Suffice to say, those viewed as anti-establishment in 1970 were not given much of a free pass.

"This is not a commune, there is no drug angle, no alcohol, this is not a haven," professor and organizer David Klahn insisted. "The police have been invited. Townspeople have been invited. There are a lot of children involved ... this is not Woodstock, it is a community-

minded program."

The festival ended and those at Art Park began developing a three-year goal to help the location grow. At the state level, Art Park got plenty of support. The Ohio Arts Council even gave a \$2,000 grant in early 1971 for them to keep hosting other community events.

The Athens County Health Department was not as kind. Whether simply motivated by code enforcement or for ideological reasons, one might never know.

Throughout 1970 and into 1971, Art Park's sanitation consisted of two modest outhouses. To host events for 10,000 or more visitors, state code evidently required at least 31 toilet seats, 18 urinals, 24 sinks and 10 drinking fountains.

And that experimental aluminum house a few artists had moved into? The health department forced the inhabitants to move out until they built a new roof, adequate siding and installed a potable water supply.

Well.

Organizers were not much interested in turning Art Park into an artsy theme park.

Things were supposed to be simple, and now the spot was becoming a headache.

For their part, officials claimed it was nothing personal against Art Park.

"If they wouldn't have large gatherings there, we'd let this whole thing drop," a county sanitarian said. "Hostetler brings his art classes out there during the day for a few hours — that's fine with us. But there are no facilities for a long stay, for a whole day's activities ... we didn't close it maliciously."

When the primary focus became bathrooms instead of clay, codebooks instead of kilns, the answer was clear. Art Park and the Terrell Road area was heading back to the ashes.

Hostetler and others complained about the health department's "hassles," saying it would require too much time and energy away from art to make Art Park compliant with all the rules. For a time, professors continued bringing small groups of students to those grounds. Most of the work was eventually moved back to campus.

Hostetler told a reporter his Art Park idea was ahead

of its time. Would it have succeeded two years earlier, two years later, or perhaps any time where historically-tense protests didn't immediately precede Art Park's premiere public opening? Who knows.

As for the organizers — Klahn eventually became associate director of OU's School of Art and died in 2001. Allen taught at the Philadelphia School of Art and as of 2014 was listed as an Assistant Professor Emeritus of Art at OU's Zanesville campus. Kokis became a well-known ceramics lecturer at the University of Oregon and his art has been exhibited throughout the country.

Hostetler's accomplishments are too lengthy to list. His artwork is displayed everywhere, from OU's campus to the Trump Tower in New York City.

He died this month at the age of 88.

When Art Park shut down, Hostetler said he dreamed there would someday be a place in Athens where the community can gather to enjoy art and have a good time. In 2015, one imagines that is a dream that has been fulfilled.