

“WE LIVE IN A WORLD IN OUR HEAD THAT CONSISTS OF IDEALS, SO IF YOU HAVE GOOD ART AND THE VIEWER INTERACTS WITH IT AND HAS A SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH IT, THEY CARRY IT WITH THEM THEIR WHOLE LIVES.” — DR. ZENON DUDA



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Dr. Zenon Duda, a Cape Girardeau podiatrist and artist, posed with a model of his sculpture, “Unforgotten,” which will be constructed in Honduras.

## IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH

# ART

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Earlier this week, podiatrist Dr. Zenon Duda was working at the Cape Foot Clinic. Today, artist Zenon Duda travels to Honduras to work on a large sculpture that will remain in the capital city of Tegucigalpa.

It was only about two months ago that Duda found out he was chosen as one of the artists to participate in Art for All, a project in Honduras created by the United Nations Volunteers and the office of the first lady of Honduras.

“I was pretty ecstatic,” Duda said. “Once the ecstasy wore off, I started to look at how I was going to make it work.”

Duda was told of the project by a sculptor friend and was intrigued by what he read.

Art for All: First Encounter of World Artists for Honduras is a project that aims to integrate art into the capital city where it will be accessible to the public. The art must be either a large sculpture or murals, and both must integrate the topics of the so-called millennium development goals.

These eight goals are intended to be met by all 191 United Nations member-states by 2015. They are:

- Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

Duda said he came up with the idea for his sculpture, “Unforgotten,” after waking up in the middle of the night.

The image in his head was a memory of taking one of his daughters horseback riding. He leaned over to pick her up and place her in front of him on the saddle.

“It’s a pretty strong image,” he said. “The image is of someone picking someone else up and bringing them to their level, and that’s what the development goals are about.”

He sketched out his ideas and e-mailed them to his friend, who then e-mailed the director of the project.

Almost immediately, Duda received a message from the director asking him to participate.

“My initial reaction was that I was scared out of my pants, but some of my friends said, ‘You can do this,’” Duda said.

He said he had an interest in art even as a child, but his career in medicine took him in a different direction. It was only about six years ago that he renewed that interest and dedicated himself to it.

He started tutored by art teacher Brenda Seyer and Southeast Missouri State University professor Ed Smith. He even enrolled in some ceramics and welding classes in the university and the Cape Girardeau Career and Technology Center.

Duda is now a member of the Arts Council of Southeast Missouri’s Visual Arts Cooperative, where he regularly has his work on exhibit. He also has a studio in St. Mary, Mo., where he spends his weekends.

Although he also paints and makes mobiles, Duda likes sculpting with metal, which he “allows you to create big effects.” He continues to learn about different mediums and subjects.

Earlier this week, Duda

returned from France, where he was taking a portrait sculpture class with internationally known sculptor Martine Vaugel. Vaugel’s statement that the purpose of art is to make artists struck a chord with Duda, who said his mission as an artist is “to create works of art that allows me to interact with others in a way that improves their lives.”

According to Duda, the Art for All project can help the people of Honduras improve their lives because art — whether it’s sculpture or cinema — encourages people to feel or act one way all the time.

“We live in a world in our head that consists of ideals, so if you have good art and the viewer interacts with it and has a spiritual relationship with it, they carry it with them their whole lives,” Duda said. “The spiritual is who we are at our core, so when we see something that touches us deeply, that’s the real nature of a spiritual relationship.”

Whether “Unforgotten” will touch those who see it is uncertain, but at 24 feet tall and nearly 16 feet wide, it will be hard not to notice.

Duda has made some minor changes to the sculpture since designing the maquette, the small model on which he will base the large sculpture. Part of the changes include putting hinges on the figures to allow them to move.

Duda will be working on his sculpture in Honduras for two weeks and will be provided with the materials, as well as assistants.

“Everything is exciting about [the project], but I guess the most exciting part is getting to make something that has the potential to reach other people,” Duda said.

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Dr. Zenon Duda’s career took his life in a different direction, but today he begins work on a 24-foot sculpture in Honduras that hopefully will touch lives.