RIOT ARTWORK: CU alum uses artistry to bring change to Omaha

"For me, it was really good to get out of the Creighton realm and look into Omaha," said Rachael Hoffman, Arts & Sciences senior. "Here is an artist that could be doing anything, but he is using his profession as a vehicle to make change."

According to Cary Tobin, residency director for the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Dehaemers has a way of using history and stories to bring his artwork to life.

"The projects he does are quite relevant to the community," Tobin said. "He usually uses local materials. I thought this project was important and relevant to Omaha."

The fact that the artwork was done in such an innovative and literal format might be what has attracted the community.

"Contemporary artists are trying to find other ways to make people aware of art and history," said John Thein, associate director of the department of fine and performing arts. "We bury things in our community and ourselves. It makes an impact. You realize that 1919, in some ways, is not that far away and is something that happened right here."

Dehaemers will be around to keep the community thinking and reacting.

"As time wore on, I realized that the story itself and the text were most important," Dehaemers said.

"My hope is that the whole spectrum of people in the community can find something to relate to. People can use their own imaginations to feel what it must have been like."

For more information on Matthew Dehaemers’s work visit: matthewdehaemers.com or attend his lecture near the end of October at Creighton’s Lied Education Center for the Arts.