

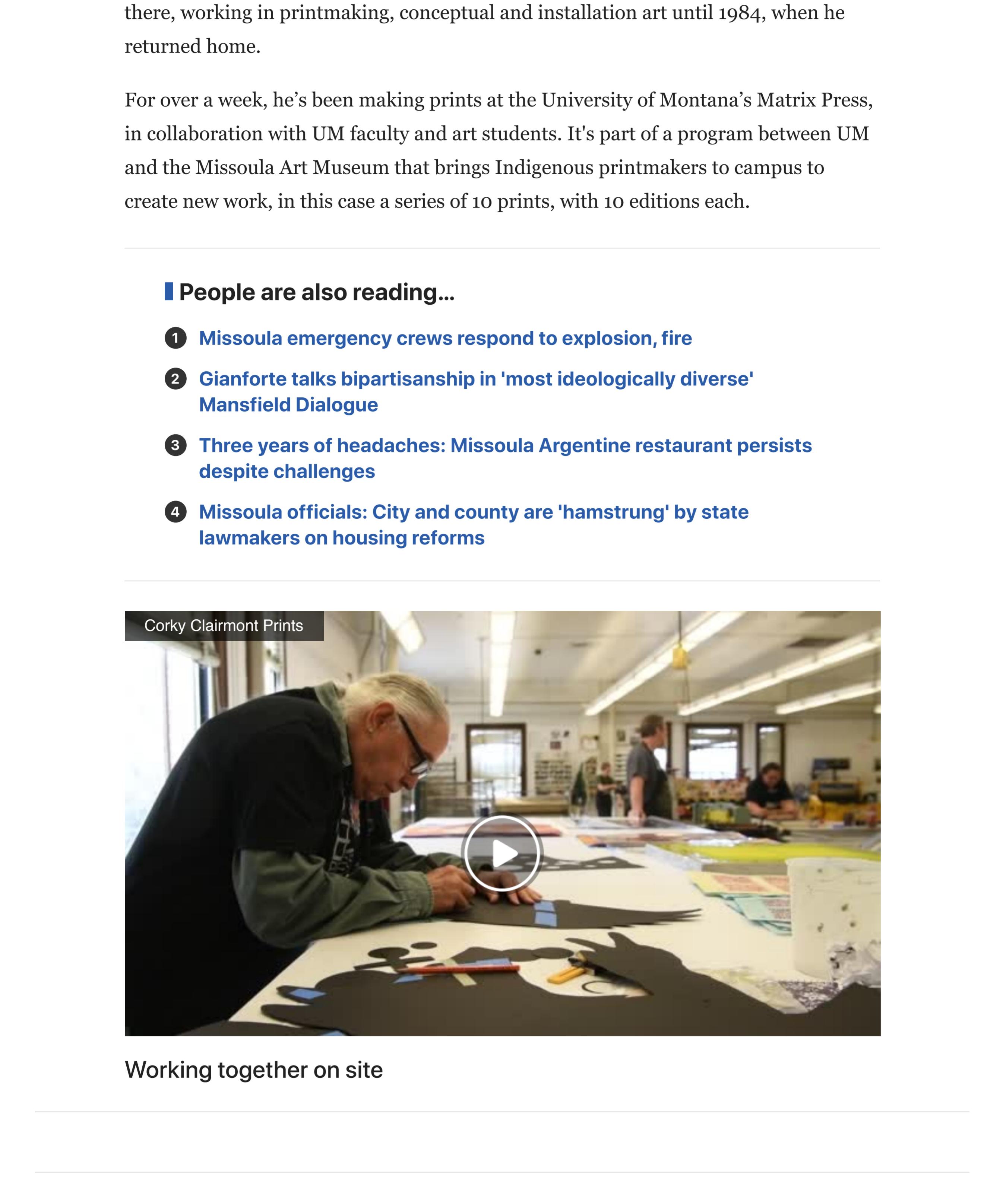
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EDITOR'S PICK FEATURED

# Corky Clairmont: Making prints starts on site

Cory Walsh 6 hrs ago 0

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Corwin "Corky" Clairmont talks about his latest series of prints he's been working on in collaboration with University of Montana faculty and art students at UM's Matrix Press last week.

TOM BAUER, Missoulian

Cory Walsh

The locations around Missoula's core that fed into Corwin "Corky" Clairmont's latest series of 10 prints aren't necessarily the ones you might see in a tourism campaign.

One is as nondescript as a spot along the railroad tracks looking toward the North Hills. Another is an alley.

The prints aren't a travel guide either, he says, and that's the point.

"When you select the site randomly ahead of time you won't know what you find when you get there," Clairmont said. "Every place has importance, and no place is necessarily more important than any other place."

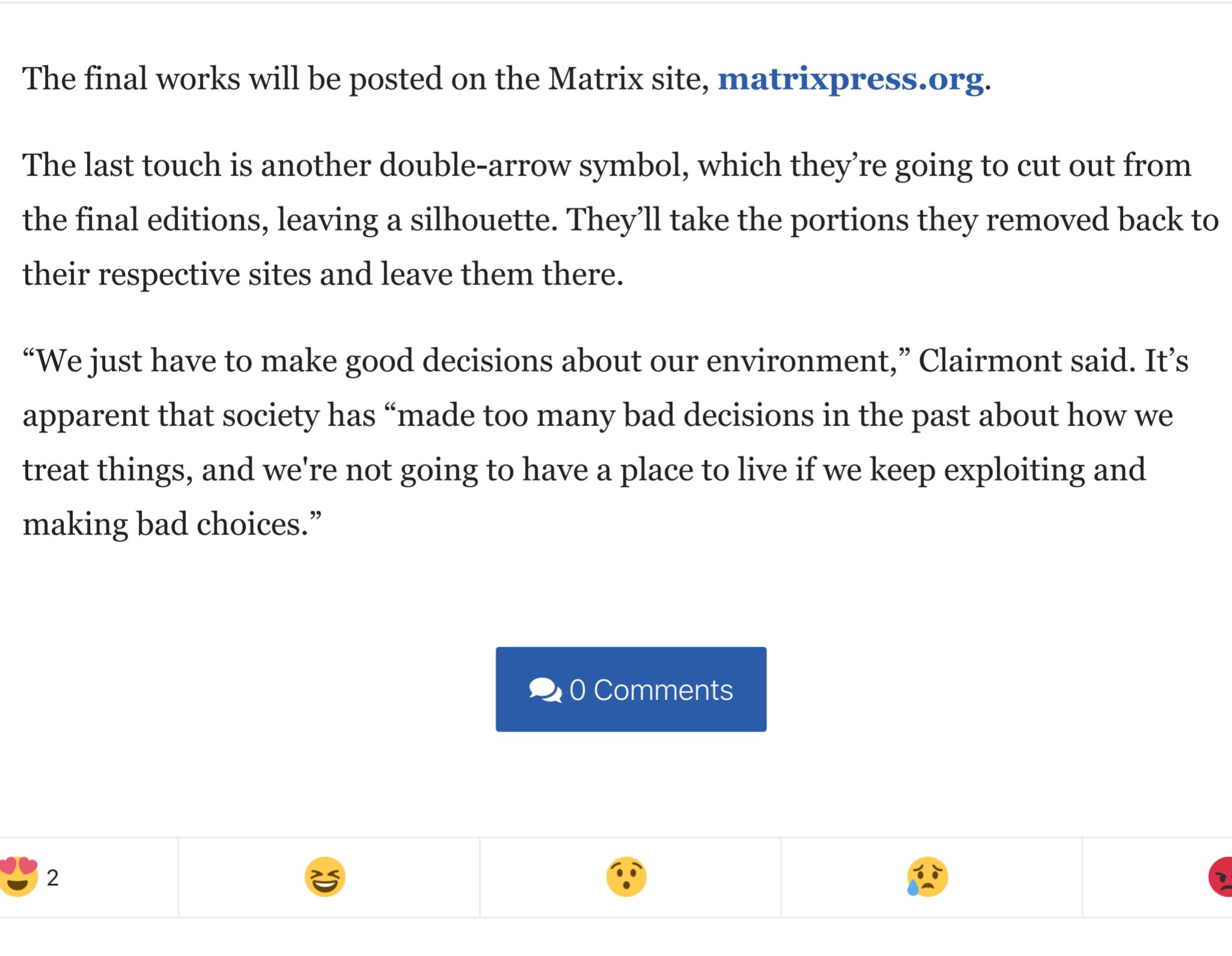
Salish-Kootenai artist Clairmont, who founded the art department at Salish Kootenai College, has been working in unconventional ways throughout his career. He began in Montana, then went to California State University for his master's degree. He stayed there, working in printmaking, conceptual and installation art until 1984, when he returned home.

For over a week, he's been making prints at the University of Montana's Matrix Press, in collaboration with UM faculty and art students. It's part of a program between UM and the Missoula Art Museum that brings Indigenous printmakers to campus to create new work, in this case a series of 10 prints, with 10 editions each.

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**Corky Clairmont Prints**



Working together on site

The prints combine personal and cultural symbols of Clairmont's, along with drawings made by members of their group on-site. The collaborations are then developed together in the print shop.

"We're always exchanging and collaborating, so for me it's more of a part of life," he said.

Going out on locations in a systematically random fashion might sound unusual at first, but not within Clairmont's way of making art. For "Two-Headed Arrow/The Tar Sands Project," he traveled from Missoula to the Athabasca Tar Sands in Alberta, Canada. The photographs and material he gathered at specific sites along the way became a [museum exhibition and catalog](#).

The prints started with Clairmont drawing a one-mile grid on an area encompassing, at the upper Northwest corner, Ogren Park at Allegiance Field. In the upper Northeast, the lower Rattlesnake. The southern border extends along South Avenue from the Southside Lions Park to green space on Mount Sentinel.

Next, he numbered the grid and drew 10 numbers at random. Each artist got a numbered grid square to explore.

On the second Thursday of April, just before the sudden revisit of winter, they set out for the areas and picked sites that might represent that area, he said.

## Final steps

Working with Clairmont has been positive for the students. They've been "learning, constantly learning," Gardner said, while screen-printing sheets of paper with custom QR codes.

Taking inspiration from artist [Molly Murphy Adams](#), they've generated the codes for each piece that will point people toward a page with photographs and more information about the sites.

In other projects, he's incorporated pictures and other documentation in the work itself. The QR codes are a way to include them in a different way.

The final works will be posted on the Matrix site, [matrixpress.org](#).