

'TIME CAPSULE'



Staff photos by Lewis Marien
Jeremiah Ariaz smiles as he waits to be introduced during an event Thursday evening at K-State's Beach Museum of Art.

K-State photography exhibit documents KS newspapers

Brandon Peoples
brandon@1350kman.com

A Kansas native and photography professor is documenting the changing face of rural newspapers in the Sunflower State with a new exhibit on display at Kansas State University's Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art.

Jeremiah Ariaz, who teaches at Louisiana State University, began photographing newspaper offices across Kansas in 2022 and captured images at over 100 publications both inside and out to preserve a record of local journalism.

"The photographs are really a little bit of a time capsule," he said. "By photographing all of these newspapers at this specific moment in history, it was almost like coating it in amber in sort of a way to suspend this moment of time for us to consider newspapers, their role in

the community."

Ariaz hosted a discussion about his photography exhibit Thursday evening at the Beach Museum.

He said the project also reflects national trends, with two newspapers closing each week across the U.S. and nearly a third of publications shuttered in the past decade.

"When you see these former offices, you're not just seeing an old space," he said. "You're often seeing a very grand, a very beautiful space that was often on the main streets of those towns and now those operations are a much more humble affair."

Even though technology has changed the production aspect of how news is delivered, Ariaz said public trust in media continues to decline.

"A recent 2024 Gallup poll revealed that I think only 36% of the population still trust the media," he said. "That decline is in a lot of



Courtesy image
Ariaz's photo project "The Kansas Mirror" documents publications across the state.

aspects to do with the local news, including the community's trust, the public sway that the newspaper is able to have and just the very ability for people to read truth and facts in the public sphere that is going away."

Ariaz zigzagged across Kansas documenting sev-

eral different newspapers, photographing publications such as the Western Star in Coldwater, the Great Bend Tribune, Emporia Gazette, Marion County Record, the Kansas Chief and The Manhattan Mercury. He said he appreciated the "physical ephemera" each place offered.

"The cover of my publication, the Kansas Mirror is a photograph from the Manhattan Mercury, and it shows the printing press," he said. "There is something that I think is communicated in that space... both the physical press, but then also just the residue of the labor ... for example, hand prints, fingerprints on the walls, and nearby you get a sense of the labor that is the physical construction of the news."

Despite the decline of newspapers, Ariaz said Kansas still stands out for its number of active newspapers.

"I think the number of newspapers that we have per the population of our state is greater, I think, than any other state in the country," he said. "That there are well over 100 newspapers still in Kansas is something that I think would be envious to many states in our country."

Ariaz said he hopes visitors who see his photographs will reflect on the importance of local journalism.

"I hope it's an opportunity for people to more greatly support those newspapers, but also to contemplate what happens in our communities when we no longer have a newspaper," he said.



Portions of "The Kansas Mirror," at upper right, are available to view at K-State's Beach Museum of Art as part of the new "Rural America" exhibit that runs through September 2026.



An inkjet print by Ariaz is displayed at the Beach Museum.