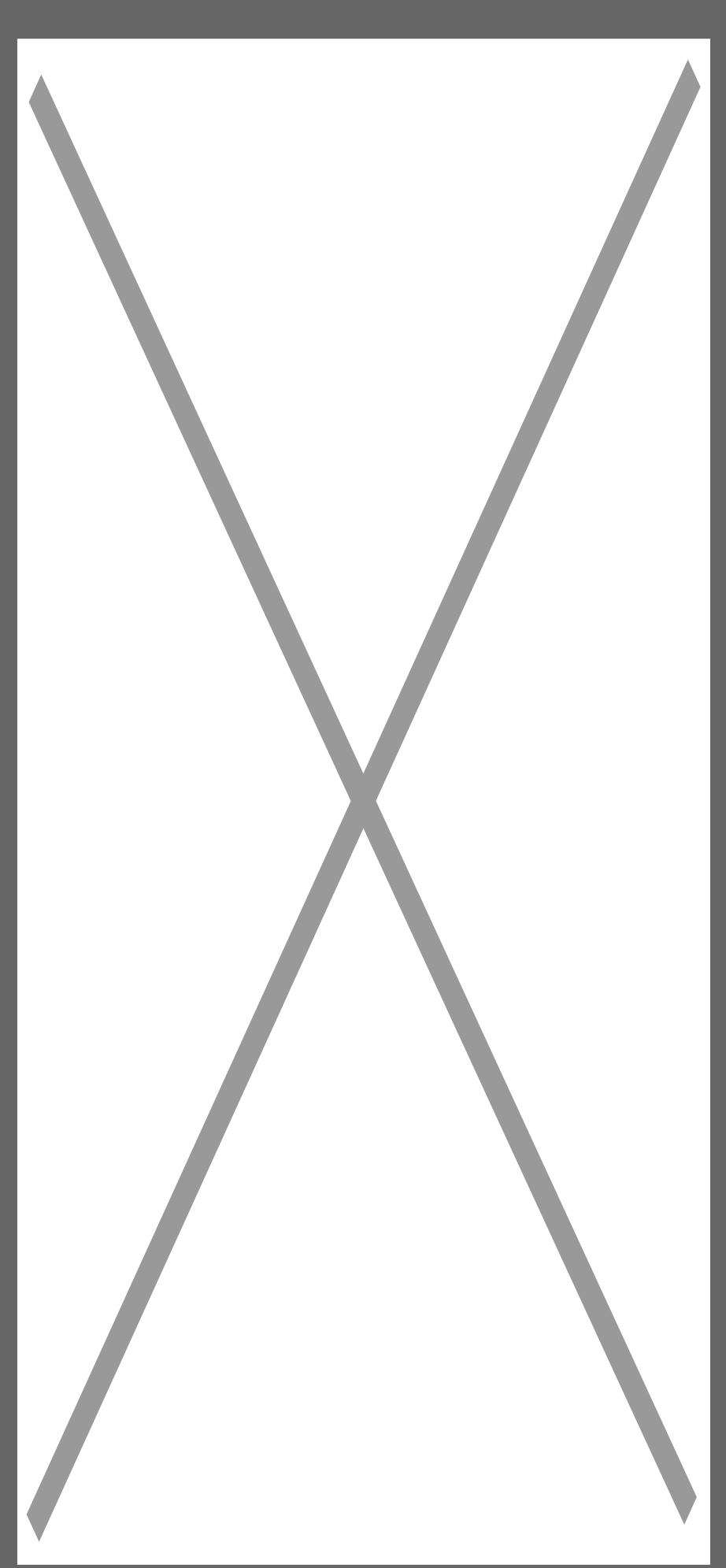


Gene Schmidt's *Apology Tour*

by [Maria Fee](#) in the [January 2026](#) issue
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In *Catching the Light*, Joy Harjo notes that “language is a living being” pulsing with the specificities of time and place. That’s a useful lens on Gene Schmidt’s *Apology Tour*. This ongoing series consists of photos of the artist’s 2024 cross-country trip, during which he inserted the phrase “I’m sorry” in various locations. Schmidt tethers viewers to the particularities of place, injects depth and energy into the act of contrition, and provides an active map of reconciliation.

It takes the poetic to amplify earth’s utterings. Schmidt’s visual language of confession requires locality as both witness and absolver. Art becomes the means to pursue reconciliation between God, humanity, and the land—a triad that is central to the Hebrew Bible. Place, a living entity set to extend God’s glory and purposes, has become a muted and exploited commodity.

Schmidt’s procession through time and place performs a penitential story. It embodies the cyclical nature of forgiveness and harm delineated in Matthew 18, in which Jesus’ reply to the question, “How often should I forgive?” suggests an infinite number of times. The artist’s meditation, then, is not meant for passive viewing. It becomes an invitation for others to also perform the movement from shame to pardon and to practice vulnerability, adaptability, and grace.

Before geographical coordinates, maps functioned as visual itineraries recounting landmarks to orient travelers as to where to eat, sleep, and take in local wonders. This type of mapmaking is living language, necessitating the slow progression through place that allows people to become present to it. Schmidt sets an itinerary that follows creativity, physicality, and prayerful attentiveness to address living stones with the bold words, *I’m sorry*.