



SCHEDULE 1 to the Minutes of the December 18, 2007 meeting of the Planning Committee.

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My patron and I: he builds, i . . .

Richmond collaboration of artist and developer demonstrates continuity of ancient enabler of creative impulse in our times, our place,

Tini Meyer

Special to the Sun

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I have a patron. His name is Amit Sandhu of *Am-Pri Construction* and he is my patron because he commissioned me to create artwork for permanent installation on the grounds of his family's Miora townhouse development in Richmond.



Sandhu went beyond the usual contractual terms and supported me throughout the project by giving feedback and actively collaborating with me. Even the marketing campaign of the Miora development was based on my artwork, and the Sandhu family showed great interest in seeing an artist manifest a new creation.

CREDIT: Ian Smith, Vancouver Sun

That collaboration motivated me to look more deeply into the contribution of the developers and builders of new-home projects locally, and their city hall regulators, to the creation of artwork for the public realm.

Amit Sandhu and Tini Meyer, the results of his commission and her work at hand. The giant concrete vases each weigh about a ton and were painted by Meyer. They were made and painted at a City of Vancouver's worksyard.

The artist-patron relationship is an ancient relationship, much studied because it is a paramount enabler of creative output, all places, all times.

Indeed, in art history, the study of the relationship is sometimes as critical as the study of the work of art generated by the relationship to an analysis of the work of art.

In Vancouver, several developers act as patrons to artists. The quintessential example is Polygon's Michael Audain, who has long been one of the most avid supporters of art in Canada. Through his Audain Foundation for the Visual Arts in British Columbia, he has been a benefactor to many artists, such as Jim Hart, whose bronze Haida statue in Kerrisdale's Quilchena Park area are the tallest ever created.

Audain says he enjoys "the creative association with artists in the realm of public art" and adds that "the artwork should animate the setting and provide a point of interest."

Some developers veto their input for public art to be installed at their project sites, but others enjoy collaborating with artists to ascertain artwork that best suits the spatial needs. Take the Waterfall Building, for example, designed by the iconic Arthur Erickson and developed by Stephen Hynes, who says "the intention of public space is to emphasize a sense of community."

Hynes pointed out the active collaboration with Erickson, who explores uniqueness in his work, to create a "celebration of Vancouver, a sculpture which collaborates with the rain." Erickson says the way a developer looks at a project is "not that different" from the way he does and the "input is equal, but independent."

Westbank's Ian Gillespie is a strong believer in contributing to the Public Art Program and this is obvious in all of the company's latest projects, such as Living Shangri-La, the Fairmont Pacific Rim and Woodward's. Gillespie says artists show a different kind of intelligence and he fondly remembers the collaboration with Diane Thater for the Shaw Tower. Of course, obligations to shareholders and stakeholders must be kept in mind, but Westbank is keen on progressing and taking more chances with its contributions to public art.

Westbank has often gone beyond the city's public art requirements, and "the benefits can exceed the actual cost of doing public art," Gillespie comments. Exciting indeed is the \$2.5-million endowment fund set up by Westbank for the Vancouver Art Gallery, which will fund ongoing exhibitions at the multi-functional show space provided at the Living Shangri-La project.

While most developers who contribute to public art are those with large-scale projects, there are smaller firms that still see the value of having artistic energy in the city. Developers such as the Salient Group's Robert Fung contribute to art in the city by supporting the arts and the creative economy in the communities they develop in. The Salient Group recently supported Centre A's "Intersection" exhibit in Gastown because "art reflects the depth of thought in the community", according to Fung.

While the Public Art Program is a requirement, it is also an opportunity to do something interesting, says Fung. When he was with Concord Pacific, Fung saw many public art projects installed in its developments and says Concord really "embraced the notion" of public art in the project and recognized the value of adding to the cultural landscape by doing so.

Bryan Newson, manager of the City of Vancouver's Public Art Program, says "developers need an introduction of the value and fun of contributing to public art." The program, implemented in 1994, obliges developers with projects exceeding 160,000 square feet to contribute 95 cents per buildable square foot to public art.

At first, there may have been great skepticism about the value of requiring developers to create art for the public realm. But according to former city planner Larry Beasley -- currently spearheading the development of Abu Dhabi -- "developers funding public art is not just a contribution to the city, but it also enhances the development project and the surrounding area. Public art tells a story, makes people feel, think about issues and react."

Public art plays several roles in society. An installation in public space is not just an esthetic supplement; it also serves as expression and awareness of social issues. As Beasley describes it, "public art is more than an embellishment, it is cultural expression at its most fundamental."

Art consultant Anne Campbell believes that public art can do so much for a cityscape and its community. It can be controversial, uplifting, interactive, beautiful, humorous and challenging -- as long as it engages the viewer, it has value.

"With public art, the audience is the community, rather than an individual and so the work takes on a different level and different interpretations as it interacts with much broader and more varied perspectives," Campbell says.

There are works of public art that people love and hate, which is better than people being oblivious to the artwork. It is not uncommon for people to complain about why public money is used for creating a "monstrosity." But then again, this is what makes public art in public spaces so interesting.

Controversy creates discussion, which is part of the purpose of public art in public spaces. As Simon Fraser University's urban geography expert Warren Gill puts it, "public art is a challenging and intellectual stimulus." When asked about SFU's Centre for Contemporary Arts at Woodward's, Gill said that the university is thrilled to be part of a development that is an extension of an "art factory" and celebrates art -- with the Stan Douglas mural, for example.

Public art can take many forms, whether permanent installations within a public space or temporary exhibits throughout a community. Temporary exhibits provide freshness and change as do the lives of citizens, thereby engaging them.

The Vancouver Sculpture Biennale is a wonderful example of fresh air brought to the city. Art aficionados such as Beasley love the "idea that the city becomes a gallery."

Barrie Mowatt, owner of Buschlen Mowatt Galleries and the person who helped bring the Sculpture Biennale to Vancouver, says that "art in public spaces serves as dialogue to engage people." However, he comments that Vancouver still "has a long way to go in terms of level of public art that's out there."

The Sculpture Biennale undoubtedly adds real value to the city and also is "a vehicle for developers to pre-select works," he says. "Developers should step up and make things possible, so that great works from the Biennale can stay in Vancouver."

Vancouver is a young, growing city, which is in the process of creating a legacy of art for the next generation. It is exciting to see who the developers will be patronizing and the creation of the relationship.

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