

Newport Beach Independent

Newport Beach City Council Approves Artwork for Phase VII of the Sculpture Exhibition in Civic Center Park.

By Christopher Trela - February 17, 2022



The selected works for Phase VII of the Sculpture Exhibition are (clockwise, from upper left): "A Novel Idea" by Craig Gray; "Eve" by Joe Forrest Sackett; "Got Juice?" by Stephen Landis; "Pathway Parabola" by Greg Mueller; "Prey" by Mr & Mrs Ferguson; "David" by Miggy Buck; "Where Have All the Birds Gone" by Marguerite Elliot; "The Archaeology of the Everyday" by Tyler Burton; "Plumera Sculptura aka The Feather" by Kirk Seese; "Cross-Section" by Tim DeShong.

At the Newport Beach City Council meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 8, the City Council unanimously approved the selection of ten artworks for Phase VII of the Sculpture Exhibition in Civic Center Park.

According to information provided by Arts Orange County, the entity that has been contracted by the City of Newport Beach to manage the program since its inception in 2013, the City Arts Commission reviewed the submissions for eligibility and then Newport Beach residents were invited to register their top three preferences in a month-long online poll.

The top ten ranked works (and four alternates) were then recommended by the City Arts Commission for approval by the City Council.

The works will be displayed for two years in various locations throughout the park beginning immediately after the de-installation of the ten works from Phase V. The selected works are "A Novel Idea" by Craig Gray; "Eve" by Joe Forrest Sackett; "Got Juice?" by Stephen Landis; "Pathway Parabola" by Greg Mueller; "Prey" by Mr & Mrs Ferguson; "David" by Miggy Buck; "Where Have All the Birds Gone" by Marguerite Elliot; "The Archaeology of the Everyday" by Tyler Burton; "Plumera Sculptura aka The Feather" by Kirk Seese; "Cross-Section" by Tim DeShong.

Artist Craig Gray of Key West, FL working on his granite sculpture "A Novel Idea," one of the artworks to be installed as part of Phase VII of the Sculpture Exhibition



Arts Orange County President Richard Stein addressed the city council at the meeting and reminded them that "this is not our exhibition, this is your exhibition. These are not our selections, these are the selections of the people of Newport Beach."

He walked the council through the 10 approved works of art that were ranked the highest, plus four alternates.

Council Member Diane Dixon said that the sculpture exhibition was an excellent program, and thanked the Arts Foundation for taking on the project and raising funds for the Sculpture in the Park. Council Member Joy Brenner suggested that in the future the voting procedure might be altered to have the public vote for their 10 favorite artworks pieces instead of the current three pieces.

Council Member Brad Avery commended the arts commission and noted that "a lot of effort goes into a rotating exhibit like this. It adds a certain pizzazz to our city hall site."

According to a staff report prepared by Tim Hetherton, the Newport Beach Public Library Services Director, the acquisition program that the City Arts Commission developed for the exhibition created a model in which pieces are loaned for a two-year period (or phase). Sculptors of works chosen for the exhibition are provided with a small honorarium to loan their work to the City. The City is responsible for installing the art, while sculptors are responsible for the maintenance and repair of their work.

Admission is free and the exhibition continues to be enjoyed by residents and guests of all ages and sensibilities. As Hetherton noted, the exhibition has become a "museum without walls" that offers the temporary display of public art in a unique, naturalistic setting. Moreover, the City is able to exhibit a well-balanced representation of public art, with artistic merit, durability, practicality, and site responsiveness as criteria in the selection of work. The rotational nature of the exhibit ensures that residents and guests are exposed to a variety of work.

Borrowing the pieces remains a cost-effective alternative to owning and maintaining permanent public art.

Since 2014, the City Arts Commission has presented six phases of the Sculpture Exhibition, with the completion of Phase VI in June 2021. On September 28, 2021, the City Council approved a Professional Services Agreement with Arts Orange County for \$119,000 for Phase VII of the Sculpture Exhibition in Civic Center Park. This amount includes project coordination and management fees, in addition to installation and de-installation fees.

According to the staff report, Arts Orange County was established in 1995 as the nonprofit, countywide arts council of Orange County. Arts Orange County has been recognized by the California Arts Council as a model agency based on the quality of its work and has served as the officially designated arts agency and state-local partner of the County of Orange since its inception. The Arts Orange County project team successfully managed all previous phases of the exhibition and has strong working relationships with the City Arts Commission and City staff. Hetherton noted that as in previous phases, the City Arts Commission utilized private funds to augment the total cost of Phase VII. The Newport Beach Arts Foundation, the City designated support group for the City Arts Commission, has donated \$20,000 toward the project. These donated funds will be used to pay artist honorariums.

For Phase VII, the City Arts Commission turned the selection process over to the public. Through an online survey, Newport Beach residents voted for their favorite sculptures and selected the pieces for inclusion in Phase VII. The 10 sculptures and four alternates were selected entirely by the public. Prior to launching the public survey, the City Arts Commission and a curatorial panel evaluated all submissions for Phase VII at the December 9, 2021, regular City Arts Commission meeting. Only pieces that met the following criteria were included in the public survey:

1. Artistic Merit: the artist has strong professional qualifications, and the artwork is of high quality and demonstrates originality and artistic excellence.
2. Durability: the artwork is made of high – quality materials, requires minimal maintenance and can withstand the outdoor elements of coastal Orange County.
3. Practicality: the artwork is appropriate for audiences of all ages and does not exhibit unsafe conditions that may bear on public liability.
4. Site Appropriateness: the scale of the artwork is suitable for the environment and the artwork is suitable for viewing from all angles.

Using these criteria, the City Arts Commission approved 25 submitted pieces for the survey. The online public survey launched on December 10, 2021, and closed on January 10, 2022. According to Hetherton, there were 390 successfully logged entries, registering a total of 1,084 votes. Once potential double votes were eliminated, there was a validated total of 346 voters, casting 985 votes. For more information on the sculpture exhibition and cultural arts in Newport Beach, visit www.newportbeachca.gov/government/departments/library-services/cultural-arts.