

Community Foundation Selects Artist for Weatherwax Project

Local News

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Adam Kuby, a Portland-based artist, has been recommended to create a significant public artwork that will be funded by the Grays Harbor Community Foundation in cooperation with the City of Aberdeen.

The Simpson Triangle, a highly traveled site between the business districts of Aberdeen and Hoquiam, will be the location of the art.

An artist selection panel comprised of four community representatives and one experienced public artist reviewed all 56 applications received in response to an open call publicized in January. The panel selected three finalists to participate in a project orientation and create artwork proposals for the panel to consider. The panel reviewed the finalists' artwork proposals on Monday, June 18th and recommended Kuby as the artist for this project. The selection panel's recommendation will be considered on July 11th by the Foundation Board, Aberdeen Arts Commission and the City Council. Implementation of the artwork proposal is contingent upon approval of those bodies.

The intent of the artwork commission is to honor the legacy of the Weatherwax family and inspire both local residents and those that pass through Grays Harbor towards generosity and commitment to community. Each of the artist finalists were asked to incorporate architectural sandstone blocks previously installed on the façade of Aberdeen's J.M. Weatherwax High School as a significant feature of the artwork.

Adam Kuby's proposal is an earthwork, landscape and sculpture, integrated with the sandstone blocks into one singular design. The working title for the art is "Resurgence." The artwork repurposes all of the available sandstone into the form of a large, cresting ocean wave. Four of the scroll-shaped sandstone blocks ingeniously serve as the crest of the 64-foot long wave shape.

In his presentation to the panel the artist explained that the wave metaphor is appropriate in many ways: Aberdeen is a coastal town and the Simpson Triangle is on a major travel route to the beach. Conceptually the wave is also a fitting tribute to Aberdeen and to the Weatherwax family. Waves are powerful, strong and constant, yet also fluid and changeable. They are a timeless, universal symbol that everybody can understand. A cresting wave is also emblematic of the present moment when the wave is at its apex. And yet in that moment are also carried the forces of the past... To me, these tough, enduring stones represent the forces that shaped Aberdeen and all the accomplished people who grew up here. The Weatherwax family was one of those significant forces.

Oriented towards drivers approaching on Simpson Avenue, the wave begins to swell from the left, cresting towards the middle, and then tumbling on the right. This unfolding movement works naturally with the directional flow of the traffic, and is designed to not impinge on any sight lines for driving visibility and safety.

The panel was particularly impressed with the scale of the proposed artwork and its potential to serve as a dramatic and iconic symbol for the community. The panel also felt that this work would captivate the imaginations of both local residents and visitors — perhaps even engaging passers-by to stop and pose for photos with the wave. The poetry of the piece and its smart and

elegant use of the salvaged stone also appealed to the selection panelists.

Adam Kuby is an artist known for collaborations with the built and natural world that aim to foster a sense of connectedness in our increasingly fractured environment. In his art practice he strives to provide an opportunity to explore how human activity and natural systems can better coexist and how art can promote a deeper sense of place. Examples of his past work can be found on his website. Approval to proceed with implementation of the artist's proposal is scheduled for Wednesday, July 11th, with presentations to the Aberdeen Arts Commission, the Grays Harbor Community Foundation Board and the Aberdeen City Council. The Arts Commission review will occur at 4:00 p.m. at the office of the Grays Harbor Community Foundation. At 5:00 p.m. a special Community Foundation Board of Directors meeting will be held to present the recommended proposal including a scale model of the proposed artwork. At 7:00 p.m. the presentation will be made to the Aberdeen City Council.

The consulting firm, 4Culture, King County's cultural services agency, has been working with the Grays Harbor Community Foundation and City of Aberdeen since May 2011 to ensure that this artist selection process is successful and models best practices in the field of public art. Cath Brunner from 4Culture will represent the recommended artist and present the artwork proposal at the July 11th meetings.

If approval is received by the Foundation Board, Arts Commission and the City, the project will begin this summer. The City of Aberdeen will provide physical improvements to the Simpson Triangle site prior to the artwork installation in consultation with the artist.

For more information about the project contact Cath Brunner at cath.brunner@4culture.org or (206) 296-8680 or Tom Quigg, Chair, Aberdeen Arts Commission, tomquigg@windermere.com or (360) 533-6464.

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