



CHURCHILL PARK PUBLIC ART COMPETITION

JURY REPORT

April 17, 2019

BACKGROUND

This report is an overview of the discussion and decision of the volunteer citizen jury that met on the evening of Wednesday April 17, 2019 to determine which of the six short-listed artists' proposals for a permanent public art work(s) (to be located along a new path in the western section of Churchill Park, also known as the Royal Botanical Gardens Teaching Garden) should be implemented. They reviewed the submissions in terms of technical issues, artistic excellence, response to context, public consultation results and the proposals' response to the following competition goal:

“That the proposed Public Art work(s) be a hopeful Interactive piece inspired by the actions and legacy of Raoul Wallenberg and reflective of the universal principles of Human Rights, inviting those who engage with it to embark on a journey of self-awareness to investigate how they can act in their own lives against injustice and in support of our common humanity.”

AWARD

After discussing the various aspects of the short-listed proposals the jury gave the highest overall score to the proposal **be:longings** by **Gary Barwin, Simon Frank and Tor Lukasik-Foss**. The commission for the work will therefore be awarded to Gary Barwin, Simon Frank and Tor Lukasik-Foss.

JURY COMMENTS

The jury members applauded the efforts of all 44 artists and artist-led teams that made submissions to the competition and extended their thanks to all of the artists that shared their ideas by submitting to this competition, particularly the six short-listed artists whose proposals were presented for public comment.

The jury also shared their appreciation for the 166 people that took the time to review the short-listed submissions, select their preferred proposal and provide comments. This feedback offered important insight into how the public might respond to all the proposals.

In light of the complex thematic context of this Public Art project, the jury were impressed by the depth of understanding shared by those who offered feedback. The jury saw artistic merit in each of the six proposals and the perceptive comments in support of the *be:longings* proposal influenced the jury in making their decision to award this proposal the highest score.

Jury comments on each proposal are as follows:

***be:longings*, Artists: Gary Barwin, Simon Frank and Tor Lukasik-Foss**

The jury enjoyed that *be:longings* doesn't immediately reveal its message and could therefore be re-visited by neighbourhood park users, revealing itself over time and inviting ongoing reflection. They felt that this proposal most effectively met the project Goal of interactivity as the viewer will be inspired to investigate each piece as they journey along the pathway. The jury observed that the proposal speaks to themes of universal migration and would therefore appeal to a broad range of people. Additionally, they noted that *be:longings* evokes the piles of suitcases found at Auschwitz, thereby drawing a connection to the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg. The jury appreciated the site-specificity of this proposal, noting that the lower profile of the suitcases is appropriate to a neighbourhood park. They also found that the work is responsive to the nearby forest and natural character of the area in its inclusion of natural materials and a tree growing from a suitcase. They additionally noted that this symbolism inspires hope. While the symbolic character of this proposal was appealing to the jury, they noted that the luggage tags provide an opportunity for some interpretation that draws a link to the project Goal; having a writer on the Artist team was seen as an asset to including text that supports this connection.

***Edge of the Woods*, Artist: David M. General**

The jury found *Edge of the Woods* to be very strong artistically and well suited to the site in its organic forms and materials. They appreciated the interweaving of Indigenous reconciliation and Human Rights themes through the lens of empathy and felt that it would be powerful to have an Indigenous work on Indigenous lands. They noted that this proposal is forward-looking, asking the visitor to reflect on what tools we have available to assist us in moving ahead; some found it uniquely hopeful in this sense (thereby addressing an aspect of the project Goal). While the jury was overall very positive about this proposal, they expressed uncertainty about the potentially triggering carved words in the granite work, as there are many schools and pre-schools in the area and subsequently, neighbourhood children that use the park. They felt that *Edge of the Woods* is a beautiful and powerful proposal but it may be best suited to another context.

***Still I Rise*, Artist: James Cameron Smith**

The jury appreciated the symbolism of the doves that feature prominently in *Still I Rise* – a universal sign of peace and freedom, as well as an important Indigenous symbol. They felt that it strongly evokes a sense of casting off shackles and becoming something different - becoming free. They also felt that this piece would be seen from a distance and draw the visitor towards it. However, the jury expressed a preference for the lower scale pieces as more appropriate for a neighbourhood park. The jury also suggested that this proposal may not be as specifically responsive to the site on a thematic level as some of the other proposals. Finally, they were concerned that the symbolism of birds in cages and birds

escaping was too singular in meaning and may not encourage a nuanced personal journey as effectively as some of the other proposed works.

***Courage Against Injustice*, Artist: Ted Fullerton**

The jury felt that *Courage Against Injustice* is uniquely impactful in that park visitors would be able to absorb the UN Human Rights declarations via the seven plinths proposed. In this sense, they felt that this proposal addressed the project Goal most directly. Also, as the proposal with the tallest feature, the jury felt that the piece would be a beacon to visitors at a distance. However, they expressed concern that some visitors may not see themselves in the nuclear family depicted in the proposal and that some visitors (e.g. those with mobility devices) may not be able to pass through the archway. The jury also felt that the architectural forms in the piece (limestone wall and plinths) may be seen by some as having an institutional and imperial feel that would not be welcoming to visitors to the site. The jury appreciated the strength and clarity of the proposal's response to the project Goal, however they wondered whether it would engender an evolving and transformative experience on the part of the visitor as effectively as some of the other proposals.

***Tribute*, Artist: Brandon Vickerd**

The jury noted the highly skilled artistry and compelling physicality of *Tribute*. They enjoyed that this proposal cleverly plays with meanings assigned to traditional sculpture and monuments. However, due to the sensitive and complex themes inherent in the project Goal, the jury expressed concerns about a monumental and (potentially) male figure. They wondered whether some marginalized groups may find an elevated figure disturbing in the project's context. While they lauded the artist's sophisticated conceptual approach, they felt that in execution there may not be enough of a perceivable connection to the project theme.

***Each and Every One*, Artist: Xiaojing Yan**

The jurors agreed that the proposal successfully addresses themes of immigration and is powerful in recalling the Jewish people saved by Raoul Wallenberg in material form. They felt that the thousands of glass balls featured in *Each and Every One* would be beautiful in the park, however the jury expressed concern that the other materials and forms may not be in harmony with the natural context as they are hard and cool rather than organic. The jury was particularly worried that the obelisk had funerary and imperial connotations and may therefore be at odds with the project Goal. They felt that while the materials and forms may be stunning in a different context, this proposal did not reflect the natural context of the site as well as some of the other proposals.

THE JURY

Madeleine Levy
Dr. Gary Warner
Yvonne Maracle
Leslie Bullock
Tobi Bruce
Ken Moyle

Citizen advocate
Former Westdale Resident – McMaster University retiree
Indigenous artist and advocate
Board of Directors, Royal Botanical Gardens
Head Curator, Art Gallery of Hamilton
Vice-President, Ainslie Wood Westdale Community Association

Mary Louise Pigott
Tricia LeClair

Churchill Park Clubhouse Committee
Arts Advisory Commission

Advisors to the Jury:

Ken Coit, City of Hamilton, Program Manager, Placemaking, Public Art & Projects (Facilitator)

Jen Anisef, City of Hamilton, Cultural Projects Specialist, Placemaking, Public Art & Projects

Ken Wheaton, City of Hamilton, Landscape Architectural Services