

YOUR NORTH SHORE GUIDE *to* HOME & GARDEN

Public art a powerful force

North Vancouver spaces house impressive works

Next time you pass the intersection of 21st and Lonsdale take a moment and look at the new piece of public art situated in the green space just south of the Gordon Smith Gallery.

The art piece, called *The Meeting*, was created by Chinese sculptor Wang Shugang and is composed of eight life-sized squatting red men grouped in a circle. It's a beautiful piece of work that stimulates an immediate response from the viewer and has the unique facility of drawing someone in. *The Meeting* was one of the most photographed pieces of public art in Vancouver's international sculpture Biennale and now it makes North Vancouver its home for the next two years.

It may come as a surprise to some readers but the City and District of North Vancouver between them have more than 100 pieces of public art in various locales, including city parks, public plazas, nature trails and boulevards. Each piece of public art in their collection is a unique artwork commissioned specifically for a given location.

I challenge readers to think about the pieces of public art they have seen in the community over the years. There's the obvious ones, like *Veil*, the splash of colourful neon decorating the northwest corner of the Centennial Theatre facade, or Douglas Senft's undulating steel beams of his piece *Cathedral* on Esplanade.

How about the striking laminated cedar and stainless steel *Lost Stream Found* on Mount Seymour Parkway or *The Long Ascent* off Keith Road, an equestrian sculpture of a bronze and steel horse that pays homage to the workforce of yore? It's a fun exercise, one I went through myself when I first joined North Vancouver's public art advisory committee a couple of years ago.

As a member of the committee I get to see firsthand the passion and commitment needed to artistically enhance the character of our community and it's not always a smooth ride. Public art is exactly that, it's public, and the character of its expression needs to be appropriate for it's locale.



Kevin Vallely
Building by Design

Many readers may remember the big fuss over the 17-foot tree-like stainless steel structure called *Mirara* that was proposed for Deep Cove some years back. Certain individuals thought the sculpture looked like an oversized bong — an apparatus to smoke marijuana — and before long the installation was stopped in its tracks.

I always thought the correlation to be amusing but a little far-fetched but once the image was implanted there seemed to be no turning back. The piece ultimately found a happy home in Princess Park. This kerfuffle happened before my time on the committee but has made me well aware of the power of public art to stir public emotion. And in that lies its magic.

North Vancouver has an excellent public art program that looks to stay



The Meeting, created by Chinese sculptor Wang Shugang, will make its home in Upper Lonsdale's Rey Sargent Park for the next two years. PHOTO MIKE WAKEFIELD

strong into the future. Take a look at the Arts Office website (artsoffice.ca/public_art/index.php) and see the work that's out there now.

And take it from me, there's lots more to come. Kevin Vallely is a residential designer in North Vancouver. vallely.ca