

Artist to dye 100 Squamish tree trunks blue

Vancouver Biennale art celebration continues here with the work of Konstantin Dimopoulos

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MARCH 19, 2015 08:54 AM



Students work on pieces of Urban Furniture created by Hugo Franca. The installation is part of the 2014-2016 Vancouver Biennale. The artist is willing to give the installation to Squamish as a long-term legacy piece. Photo: File photo

Vancouver Biennale, a two-year-long initiative aimed at bringing the work of international artists temporarily to public spaces, continues in the Sea to Sky Corridor this year with a plan to bring blue trees to Squamish.

The installation, by artist Konstantin Dimopoulos involves tree trunks being coloured with an environmentally safe blue pigment.

“It is in keeping with the Biennale mandate, which is art as a catalyst for learning, community engagement and social action so it sort of fulfills all of those,” said Barrie Mowatt, the founder and president of

Vancouver Biennale, who presented to the District of Squamish committee of the whole on Tuesday.

Dimopoulos's Blue Trees installation, which first appeared with the 2009-2011 Vancouver Biennale in Port Moody, Richmond and West Vancouver, will grace about 100 trees on the Sea to Sky highway from Cleveland Avenue to Garibaldi Highlands this October. "They will alter the environment, of course, because they will be done in the fall and as spring moves in the foliage will create another sort of interesting art work," Mowatt said.

The community will be involved with painting the trees, Mowatt said, through initiatives with local schools.

"It is an apropos kind of installation in Squamish, given Squamish's history and the commitment to environment now and being the gateway to recreation and wilderness," said Mowatt, adding that the trees remind him of Code Blue, which indicates a patient in a hospital requiring immediate resuscitation.

"Trees, as the artist says, are the lungs of the universe," said Mowatt.

The Blue Tree project will cost Squamish \$15,000. The district is contributing \$7,500 and private donors will cover \$7,500. The actual cost of the project is closer to \$30,000, but Vancouver Biennale will cover the difference of \$15,000 through its donated funds, Mowatt said.

Other works in Squamish left from 2014 are going to be reinvigorated, according to Mowatt.

Artist Hugo Franca is willing to give Squamish his Urban Furniture, installed last summer, as a long-term legacy piece. The installation is made up of recycled giant wood pieces and is on display in the diamond-shaped space near Squamish Elementary School.

But first community volunteers need to come forward to clean them up and shellac them, so they will last, Mowatt said.

He would also like to see people in the community say where they would like the pieces to be permanently placed, and why.

Anyone interested in volunteering or commenting is asked to contact Vancouver Biennale at info@vancouverbiennale.com.

The Vancouver Biennale also includes an artist residency program at Quest University, which will start May 10 and continue through to 2017; the artists have yet to be announced, Mowatt said.

The Vancouver Biennale is a non-profit organization.

The 3rd Vancouver Biennale exhibition began Spring 2014 and will finish in 2016. For more information go to www.vancouverbiennale.com.

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