

Public art can both engage and be fun

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As part of Vancouver Biennale, 30 sculptures were installed throughout the Lower Mainland this summer. The sculptures were erected throughout 12 neighborhoods along beaches, bike and walking paths, parks and urban plazas. The show will be open until June 2011.

Much of the work now on display perfectly represents public art at its finest - or, at least, its most functional.

Art snobs might look at some of it and think "yuck," but, for one major reason, we disagree: so many of these sculptures have the public interactively engaged.

Perhaps the best example of how brilliantly this program engages the public stands outside the Westin Bayshore.

The Meeting by Wang Shugang is made up of eight identical life-sized crouching figures and was first exhibited during the G-8 summit meeting in Heiligendamm, Germany in 2007.

Since its arrival in Vancouver this summer, thousands upon thousands of tourists and locals have stopped to crouch beside one of the figures for a photo or two.

Some people have played leap frog with the figures, while others have dressed them up in hats and scarves.

Undoubtedly, given its history, The Meeting is loaded with irony and ultimately makes a profound political statement.

But right now, right here, The Meeting is mostly goofy fun for kids and adults alike.

It's a brilliant example of public art.

What do you think? E-mail a brief comment, including your

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