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More art coming to Moraga

By *Sophie Braccini*



"Urus Redivivus" and Torenski Kokey's "Journey" now on display near the Orinda Library. Photo Sophie Braccini

A timeless question the Moraga Arts in Public Spaces committee grapples with is this: What is art? The all-volunteer group meets quarterly and has on its charter the delicate mission to select the statues that adorn the town's public places. New statues are getting ready to be approved for installation in the spring of 2018; they will be added to the ones that initially found a place in Moraga at the end of 2016.

Over a year ago the town of Moraga approved a type of free leasing of large statue contracts allowing local artists to set their creations in public places for a year or two. There is no cost to the town, aside from transportation costs, and in return the artists get exposure and sometimes sell their art to residents. The city of Orinda was the pioneer of this activity in Lamorinda and the Moraga group has benefited from that city's experience and support.

Like in 2016, many of the proposed statues will be coming to Moraga after they have graced Orinda. But it is still quite a painstaking task to select the statues and find an appropriate location for display.

Take for example the magnificent bear statue call Ursus Redivivus (bear reborn) by Alex Nolan, Phillip Glashof and his son Chad that is currently erected next to the Orinda Library. Vice Mayor Teresa Onoda, who launched the sculpture program and chairs the committee, thought of it for the Rheem Center, but the owner of the center, Jay Kerner and his team, who said that they wanted to be part of the art program, thought Ursus might be frightening to children. Also the piece that is made of recycled metal weighs a ton.

Torenski Kokey's Journey by Glenn Takai will come to Moraga, however. But Onoda questioned where it should be placed. She suggested the new West Commons Park, but this location, which was developed by SummerHill Homes as part of its development agreement to build Harvest Court, had not yet been officially transferred to the town. At the Feb. 26 meeting Onoda said she was confident that ownership would be transferred in time for the March sculpture installation.

Other sculptures coming to Moraga include: Imagine by Amy Evans-McClure at 335 Rheem Blvd.; Rosette by Susannah Israel, 329 Rheem Blvd.; Briar by Susannah Israel, 329 Rheem Blvd.; and Solar Horn by Alex Nolan & Justin Grant, West Commons Park.

The sculptures are scheduled to be installed on March 20 and the committee is seeking volunteers to help. If interested, contact the parks and recreation department at (925) 888-7045.

The first sculptures were installed at the end of 2016 and include pieces that are still on display around town, at the library, at the city offices (329 Rheem) and city chambers (335 Rheem) such as the two horse sculptures by Evans McClure or "Asymmetric Loveseat," a bench by Colin Selig.

The commissioners decided to take a field trip together to the city of Cloverdale in the coming months. That town is part of the Creative Sonoma initiative and displays tens of sculptures along its "Sculpture Trail." The commissioners expressed their gratitude to Ted Urban in particular and to Orinda Art in Public Places, which is helping in so many ways. They will also reach out to different artists for Moraga.

Sculpture Funding

The Art in Public Spaces committee has an annual budget of \$5,000, which may be enough to move the statues, but not to purchase any. Moraga Vice Mayor Teresa Onoda asked the committee about fundraising to purchase one of the metal benches by Colin Selig, suggesting titling the piece "Strong Women of Moraga" and reaching out to Moraga women for donations. Onoda can be contacted at tonoda@moraga.ca.us.

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