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## Opening Elk Grove's 'Avenue of the Arts'

City unveils sculptures at civic center site

By Matthew Malone Citizen Contributor Jun 14, 2019



Two visitors view 'Ravishing Retire' by Arizona artist Trevor O'Tool.

Members of the public got their first official look at Elk Grove's newest public art installation Saturday, June 8, at the site of the city's future civic center.

A small crowd of art enthusiasts gathered for the dedication of the four sculptures, which form part of an "Avenue of the Arts" leading between the community center building and the newly built aquatics center. When complete, the complement of artworks will double in size, with one more exterior piece and three interior installations.

“Art has the ability to transcend time, language and culture to unite all of us in a city that is home to many lively, dynamic and creative people,” Elk Grove Mayor Steve Ly said in a speech, flanked by Vice Mayor Pat Hume and City Council Member Steve Detrick. “Our public art reflects who we are and dares us to think, dream and play.”

The members of the Elk Grove Arts Commission were also in attendance. The commission played a central role in selecting artists to create the pieces, three of which represent different artistic fields.

The artists behind the sculptures dedicated Saturday are Gordon Huether of Napa, Viktor Verhovod of Sacramento, Adrian Litman of Santa Rosa, and Trevor O'Tool of Arizona.

Huether realized the fourth sculpture, “Cloud Fountain,” which stands 24 feet tall at the west entrance to the civic center's common area, at the intersection of Big Horn Boulevard and Civic Center Drive.

Inge Estela, who attended the dedication with her husband and daughter, said she came to see the undulating aluminum sculpture in person. Her daughter, Isabella, compared it to an “upside-down droplet.”

Estela said she appreciated that Elk Grove “has grown to this diverse community, and putting in this art from different artists exemplifies that.”

Next on the way to the civic center building is the stainless steel “Artist and Model” by Verhovod. Representing painting, it depicts a man holding a paintbrush while a woman poses. Silhouettes of the figures are cut into a screen behind them.

“This one here is neat,” Elk Grove Vice Mayor Hume said. “It looks like the pieces in the front, the actual statues, were cut from the pieces in the back.”

Several people interviewed focused on Litman's “Literature.” The stainless steel and copper sculpture looks like two giant books leaning against each other with a pair of eyeglasses sitting on top.

The arts commission chose to have the sculpture feature John Steinbeck's novel “The Grapes of Wrath” to symbolize the migration of farm workers to California during the Dust Bowl era.

Dedication attendees Cate and Jan Pyle said they particularly connected with “Literature.”

"It has whimsy," Cate said. For Jan, the piece also reminded him of the copper artwork he and Cate do together.

At the eastern end of the Avenue of the Arts stands the dance-themed "Ravishing Retir " by O'Tool. Painted deep red, the steel sculpture sketches out a dancer with dozens of triangular facets.

"I was actually just posing for it and taking a picture," said Kerry Young, who was touring the art with her family. "I really like that one a lot ... because I just like the structure of it. I used to do a little bit of dancing, as well, so it was really fun to kind of connect with it a little bit."

Arts Commissioner Liz Irons said the benefit of public art lies in its longevity, noting a piece could remain "after I'm gone, so my children, grandchildren, descendants will see it," and become a gathering place for locals and tourists.

"You know, something that I can enjoy," Irons said.