



WEST HARBOUR - JAMES STREET PLAZA PUBLIC ART PROJECT JURY REPORT

December 10, 2019

BACKGROUND

This report is an overview of the discussion and decision of the volunteer citizen jury that met on the evening of Tuesday December 10, 2019 to determine which of the six short-listed artists' proposals for a permanent public art work(s) to be located on the James Street North Plaza (as part of the Redevelopment of the waterfront on Piers 5 to 7) should be implemented. They reviewed the submissions in terms of technical issues, artistic excellence, response to context, public consultation results and the proposals' response to the following competition goal:

“That the public art work should be a beacon - visible along James Street North - marking the entrance to the West Harbour and recalling an aspect of the city's historic connection with water; natural, recreational and industrial (or the interrelation of these elements). The work should celebrate reconnection to the water's edge being advanced currently through the West Harbour development.”

AWARD

After discussing the various aspects of all of the short-listed proposals the jury determined that ***All our Relations*** by **Angela DeMontigny** was the proposal that best satisfied the majority of the selection criteria. The commission for the work will therefore be awarded to Angela DeMontigny.

JURY COMMENTS

The jury members applauded the efforts of all 24 artists and artist-led teams that made submissions to the competition and extended their thanks to all of the artists that shared their ideas by submitting to this competition, particularly the six short-listed artists whose proposals were presented for public comment.

The jury also shared their appreciation for the 307 people that took the time to review the short-listed submissions, select their preferred proposal and provide comments. This feedback offered important insight into how the public might respond to the proposals.

Staff noted that this project had an ambitious goal statement which resulted in a very diverse set of artistic responses to the site and themes. This was reflected in many of the public comments which indicated a preference for multiple proposals. The jury had a difficult task in coming to a final consensus as they saw artistic merit and unique responses to various aspects of the project goal in each of the six proposals. Jury comments on each proposal are as follows:

All our Relations, Artist: Angela DeMontigny

The jury recognized that *All Our Relations* is a very innovative and collaborative proposal using traditional indigenous symbols, themes and beadwork to create a unique art work at an industrial scale employing industrial materials. There was concern about the necessity of extensive text panels to understand the indigenous symbols used in the work. However, there was ultimately consensus that while the interpretation was important the art work could stand alone with its compelling, colourful images of nature. The work provides potential for public enjoyment on multiple levels and could therefore be re-visited by residents over time to better understand the interpretation. They noted that the glass beads could look different in the daytime and lit in the evening – and could project impressive coloured reflections when struck with sunlight. The jury felt that this was one of the proposals that most effectively met the project goal of serving as a beacon. Moreover, they recognized it recollects the historic connection with water, both in the watery quality of glass as a material, and the Indigenous symbolism employed in the design which speaks to humanity’s larger relationship with nature. This proposal was also well received by the public.

Ship Shape, Artist: Two Smiths

The jury found *Ship Shape* to be a beautifully realized clear concept. They praised its ability to transcend cultures due to its abstracted yet discernable form as a ribcage of a ship or fish. The jury also noted that it effectively responded to the goal in its clear connection with water and weaving of the natural and industrial through its form and use of materials. They enjoyed that it could create a gathering space that the public could physically enter and interact with one another. While the jury was overall positive about this proposal, they expressed reservations that the work was distinct from that found at other cities’ waterfronts. Moreover, a lack of visibility from James Street would mean that it would not be as effective as other proposals to serve as a beacon marking the entrance to the West Harbour – a key goal of the project.

Fountain, Artist: Figureground Studio

The jury found *Fountain* to be elegant in its simplicity; a form that is very light looking despite its structural strength. They found it to be a celebratory proposal that invites interactivity and that it would likely be enjoyed by children. The jury believed *Fountain* successfully references the connection to the harbour and Hamilton’s many water-based assets such as its waterfalls. They also felt that this piece could function effectively as a beacon. However, the jury expressed concerns that the proposal may be overly simple and formal and may not maintain public excitement or discovery over time. They noted that it was not as reflective of Hamilton’s unique context as some of the other proposals.

***The Harbour Boat*, Artist: Ernest Daetwyler**

The jury loved the form of *The Harbour Boat*, expressing that it evoked an ancient memory – such as a primordial forest - and a deep connection to the water’s edge. They felt it effectively referenced the theme of water and the natural – both in its form as a boat and its driftwood components. The jury appreciated the invitation to interact with the boat and imagined children and adults alike climbing in and out of the boat and sharing memories there. However, they jury echoed public concerns expressed through consultation that this form is already well known at McMaster University and therefore may not read as site-specific. They also felt that this proposal would not serve as a beacon as effectively as some other proposals.

***Cloud Tower*, Artist: Brandon Vickerd**

The jury found *Cloud Tower* to be very contemporary and novel. They noted a playful reference to Hamilton’s connection to both water and industry. They also praised this proposal as particularly successfully in meeting the goal of serving as a beacon to the West Harbour visible along James Street North. The jury found that this proposal was very successful in reflecting the industrial heritage theme and aesthetic that the waterfront is traditionally known for. However, they noted that it did not address the natural and the evolving character of the waterfront as well as other proposals. Moreover they noted that the public seemed to have difficulty connecting this proposal to the project themes. While the jury appreciated the clarity and ambition of this proposal, they felt other proposals were better received by the public and met the project goals.

***Echo of the Trumpeter*, Artist: Nicholas Crombach**

The jurors agreed that this proposal was playful and could encourage public interaction. They noted that *Echo of the Trumpeter* is human scale and intimate and imagined that it would invite a lot of social media sharing by locals and visitors. Some jurors loved the nostalgic aspect of the paddle boat form, however others who did not share this reference found it confusing. This split was also reflected in public comments. The jury also found that while the connection to the water was clear, the proposal did not successfully meet the goal of serving as a beacon to the West Harbour.

THE JURY

Bassem Alshamali	Visual Artist
John Jukes	Community Representative / Artist
Marianne Mokryke	Landscape Architect
Hollie Pocsai	Resident / Downtown Business Owner / Artist
Simon Frank	Visual Artist / Public Art program
Bernie Mueller	Hamilton Waterfront Trust Board of Directors
Lisa LaRocca	Arts Advisory Commission
Bob Carr	Community Representative

Advisors to the Jury:

Ken Coit, City of Hamilton, Manager, Placemaking, Public Art & Projects (Facilitator)
Jen Anisef, City of Hamilton, Cultural Projects Specialist, Placemaking, Public Art & Projects
Werner Plessl, Executive Director, Hamilton Waterfront Trust