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West Commons Park begins to look like an outdoor art gallery

By Vera Kochan



By Buddy Brodwin: "Meter Maidens" Photo Vera Kochan

Four new sculptures have recently begun to grace the town of Moraga. Three of them are whimsical, and one is meant to impart a thought-provoking message.

□ The Art in Public Spaces Committee, along with the Parks and Recreation Commission, have been busy acquiring these new pieces (all on loan) and installing them outdoors for residents and visitors alike to enjoy beginning this summer.

□ The Town Council agreed to accept the new pieces during its March 8 meeting, however due to installation issues, the sculptures didn't see the "light of day" until early July. Moraga now has a total 13 art sculptures placed around town.

□ In addition to the four new pieces, APSC is in the process of engaging residents to take a short survey letting committee members know what about Moraga they would like to see represented on a brand new mural space, located along the wall outside of the Public Works Corp Yard/Town Chambers at 335 Rheem Blvd.

□ The three new pieces installed inside of West Commons Park were done by artist Buddy Brodwin, who retired after 35 years in the dental field to pursue his true passion producing metal kinetic sculptures. Upon entering the Park from Moraga Road, the first sculpture is located just beyond the bridge. Titled "LOL," the piece is a yellow and silver aluminum kinetic sculpture on galvanized pipe, weighing 100 lbs. It measures 12 feet high with a 5-foot swing radius. The creation of "LOL" took a long and winding road for Brodwin. "During a visit a decade ago to San Francisco, I stumbled on a George Rickey kinetic metal sculpture, gyratory "L"s blowing smoothly in the constant city breezes. That inspired me to take up welding and metal sculpture, both of which I studied at The Crucible in Oakland. Each piece is inspired by found materials available at the time."

□ Added Brodwin, "As for 'LOL,' I followed George Rickey's use of bearings embedded into the metal, in this case aluminum, to allow the wind to move it. I tend to see things from the humorous side, so I thought a kinetic sculpture spelling `Laugh Out Loud' would be clever and went about creating this."

□ Brodwin's second piece is located not too far and across the path from "LOL." Tiara-wearing parking meters sporting red lips and earrings are called "Meter Maidens." The work comprises four parking meters placed on "pipe," weighing 100 pounds., standing 10 feet high by 3 feet wide. A friend of Brodwin's had asked him if he could make something out of decommissioned parking meters that came into her possession. "I said drop them by and I'd give it some thought. They looked like faces to me and as a group seemed to accent each other. Thus, using some pipe to support them, I created the grouping that became `Meter Maidens.'"

□ Finding Brodwin's third piece, "Double Helix," requires a walk to the opposite side of the park as one passes last year's installation, "The Fisherman."

□ "Double Helix" is made of stainless steel, with 4-inch-wide strips spiraled around 2-inch Electrical Metallic Tubing (EMT) pipe. Weighing 30 pounds, it stands 10 feet high by 3 feet wide. "'Double Helix' was inspired by research on Pinterest, where I saw similar ideas and expanded on those for this kinetic piece made of stainless steel ribbons and a central pipe with bearings to allow movement," explained Brodwin. "Having studied biology in college, I loved how this really had the look of DNA, especially in motion. So, as you can see, the inspiration for my sculptures is serendipitous and impulsive, and I love it!"

□ The fourth piece, located in front of the Town Chambers, is on loan from the city of Orinda through its Art in Public Places Committee. "Measure of Man," by artist Keith Bush, is a steel structure representing three symbolic human beings, trapped in a giant measuring tool. The piece is plasma cut, welded and painted, weighing 650 pounds, with a height of 96 inches and a width of 36 inches.

□ Bush's career spans over 35 years with works made for indoor, outdoor, public and private spaces. He favors the bold use of geometric shapes and expresses himself through color, line, texture and scale. With regards to "Measure of Man," Bush states, "In this sculpture I have used an abstract micrometer (a precision measuring tool) as the symbol of the bureaucracies trying to impose perceived standards on individuals. The three figures are fighting off the process of being measured by someone else's standards or ideas."

□ Special thanks to APSC Chairperson Teresa Onoda and APSC Member Holly Hartz for the tour.



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